

EXPRESSIVISM AND THE USE OF
MORAL LANGUAGE

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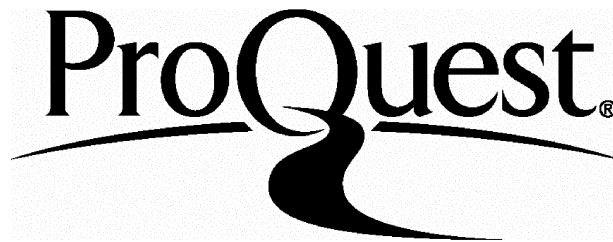
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Abstract

The most stubborn challenge moral expressivism has faced so far is how to explain the propositional surface of moral language, a challenge, illustrated by the so-called Frege-Geach problem, about our linguistic behaviour of treating moral judgments as propositions, which regarded by the expressivist as belonging to different category from moral judgments. The purpose of this dissertation is to see how the two most prominent expressivists in recent years, Simon Blackburn and Allan Gibbard set out to explain the surface. I shall first present the core doctrines of expressivism, demonstrating the problem, in order to see what is in issue. After that I turn to Blackburn's quasi-realism, arguing that he fails to devise a logic of attitudes required by his theory and his quasi-realism cannot be done without damaging expressivism he wants to defend. Next, I turn to Gibbard's norm-expressivism, arguing that his theory can at best be seen as a version of normative fictionalism, which is not expressivism at all. I then conclude that both of Blackburn's and Gibbard's attempt come out as a failure. Their failing, I suggest, indicates the difficulties of what I label *expressivism-rooted* and *expressivism-targeted approach* of expressivism. I finally examine an approach proposed by Horwich who argues that his minimalist theory of truth can help expressivism. The conclusion I come to is exactly opposite to what Horwich has claimed. The final upshot of this dissertation is that we do not so far have any expressivistic theory capable of doing justice to the propositional surface of moral language, nor do we have any clear idea how the job can be done.

Contents

Chapter 1 Expressivism and its problem	4
1. Expressivism	4
2. Propositional surface	6
3. Structure	10
Chapter 2 Blackburn's solution	11
1. Blackburn's theory of meaning	12
2. Projectivism and quasi-realism	16
3. <i>Modus Ponens</i>	20
4. Moral truth	24
5. Critical assessment	28
Chapter 3 Gibbard's solution	37
1. Fact-value distinction	37
2. Norm-expressivism	42
3. Normative logic	45
4. Critical assessment	50
Chapter 4 Concluding remarks	61
1. Lessons from Blackburn and Gibbard	61
2. Minimalism and Expressivism	63
3. Conclusion	69
Reference	71

Expressivism and The Use of Moral Language

Chapter 1 Expressivism and its problem

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine how the two most eminent expressivists, Simon Blackburn and Allan Gibbard, account for the propositional surface of moral language. In the first section of this very first chapter, I shall first characterize the central doctrines at the core of expressivism. And then, in the second section, I turn to the problem that poses the need for an explanation of the propositional surface, the so-called Frege-Geach problem, to see what is in issue. In the third section, I shall then give a brief description of the structure of this dissertation.

1. Expressivism

There is no such thing as *the* theory of expressivism, though the term *expressivism* can ostensibly refer to a set of prominent meta-ethical theories, including Ayer's emotivism, Hare's prescriptivism, Blackburn's quasi-realism and Gibbard's norm-expressivism. Given notable differences among these theories, there is no point in identifying any one of them as orthodox, the others variations of it. Yet there are some theses that persist as their common concern. Two such theses are:

The expressivistic thesis

The meaning of a normative judgment does not consist in the proposition expressed, whose content is contributed by the representation of normative properties denoted by the normative predicate contained in the judgment. Rather, the meaning consists in the speech act performed by predicating the normative terms in the judgment.

The non-cognitivist thesis

Normative judgments are not genuine propositions that can play the role as truth bearers.

For example, in the classical form of expressivism, namely Ayer's emotivism, it is argued that normative ethical concepts¹ are pseudo-concepts; that the presence of a normative ethical symbol in a sentence adds nothing to its factual content (Ayer 1971,

¹ Ayer distinguishes normative ethical symbols from descriptive ethical symbols by saying that "a complex sign of the form 'x is wrong' may constitute a sentence which expresses a moral judgement concerning a certain type of conduct, or it may constitute a sentence which states that a certain type of conduct is repugnant to the moral sense of a particular society." (Ayer 1971, 108) It is

110); that a moral judgment is used to express feeling about certain object; and that there is no sense in asking whether it is true or false (Ayer, 1971, 112). Ayer is simply propounding these two theses. Another example is a recent attempt at expressivism, Blackburn's quasi-realism, which seeks to deepen aspects of expressivism. It is argued that, on the basis of these two theses, we can earn the right to speak of moral facts and moral truth. (see Blackburn 1984). Therefore it is fair to say that these two theses have long been in the core of various expressivist theories. For convenience, let us call them the *theses of norm-expressivism*.

By looking at motivations for expressivism we can see why these two theses play such a central role. They are at the root of the reasons for constructing the theory. To begin with, expressivism is motivated by two doctrines that dominate Ayer's meta-ethical thinking: one is Moore's criticism of ethical naturalism, the other is the logical positivist's doctrine of the verification principle. Ayer's thought is that, if moral judgments are taken to be propositions that represent something factual, they must be understood by means of naturalism or intuitionism. However, according to Ayer, we cannot embrace either of these theories. We cannot embrace intuitionism, because we cannot empirically verify the intuitionist doctrine that there are special kinds of moral properties which can only be perceived by an intellectual intuition, and, according to the verification principle, a judgment is meaningless if it cannot be empirically verified. We cannot embrace naturalism either, since both forms of naturalism, subjectivism and utilitarianism, commit what Moore calls the naturalistic fallacy. (see Ayer 1971, 106-8) Consequently, we cannot think of moral judgments as descriptivistic, but only as expressivistic, and no truth-value should be ascribed to judgments that are not aimed to represent facts, but to express attitudes.

As problems with The Open Question Argument and the verification principle become clear, expressivism finds different *raison d'être*: although there is no argument to show conclusively that it is *wrong* to think of moral predicates as representing moral properties denoted in the fabric of the world, expressivism is theoretically *superior* in explaining what we are doing when engaged in ethical discourse. Blackburn (1984), for example, thinks that, first, expressivism is more economic than its rival moral realism; second, only expressivism can explain why moral properties, if there are any, supervene on natural properties; thirdly, expressivism can explain better the internal links between moral judgments and the motivation to comply with them. Gibbard, in his analysis of what it is to say "it is rational to do *x*", says "any descriptivistic analysis leaves a puzzle. It misses the chief point of calling something 'rational': the endorsement the term connotes.

the former he is concerned with.

More specifically, we find that even the best descriptivistic analyses fail. They yield meanings that are inadequate to the basic purposes to which the term ‘rational’ can be put.” (Gibbard 1990, 10) We should accept the expressivistic thesis, because it can explain best our moral commitments. And we should accept the non-cognitivist thesis, because moral judgments do not represent the world as it is at all.

We can now see the centrality of the two theses in the philosophical motivations behind theories of norm-expressivism. It is the denial of either the validity or the cogency of descriptivistic theories that leads to expressivism. So, now we can turn to the most powerful challenge ever posed on expressivism. We will see what problems they need to solve in order to arrive at a plausible understanding of our moral practice.

2. Propositional surface

The Frege-Geach problem is primarily a problem concerned with the expressivistic thesis, yet in view of the close relation between the two theses of expressivism, it can be extended to cover the non-cognitivist thesis. The dissatisfaction with the expressivistic thesis originated from dissatisfaction with the speech act theory of meaning employed in it, which was criticized, from different points of view, by Peter Geach (1960, 1965) and John Searle (1962, 1969) from different points of view.

Geach (1956) distinguishes *predicate adjectives* from *attributive adjectives*² and argues that the moral terms “good” and “bad” are always attributive, their primary use being descriptive. He further generalizes this point in his “Ascriptivism” by saying that “. calling a thing ‘P’ has to be explained in terms of predicating ‘P’ of the thing, not the other way round. For example, condemning a thing by calling it ‘bad’ has to be explained through the more general notion of predicating ‘bad’ of a thing, and such predicating may be done without any condemnation.” (Geach 1960, 253) The most acute form of his criticism came in, when he introduced and applied Frege’s discussion of negation to compound sentences constituted by logical connectives and atomic sentences containing moral terms, and to inferences that involve these compound sentences³. Consider the following example⁴.

² Geach (1956, 33) makes the distinction by saying “. in a phrase ‘an A B’ (‘A’ being an adjective and ‘B’ being a noun) ‘A’ is a (logically) predicative adjective if the predication ‘is an A B’ splits up logically into a pair of predications ‘is a B’ and ‘is A’; otherwise I shall say that ‘A’ is a (logically) attributive adjective.”

³ For relevant issues, see Frege (1977), Geach (1965), Hare (1970, 1971), Warnock (1971), Dummett (1973), and Hurley (1984).

⁴ This example is taken from Blackburn’s (1984: 190) modification of Geach’s (1965).

It is wrong to tell lies.

If it is wrong to tell lies, it is wrong to get your little brother to tell lies.

So, it is wrong to get your little brother to tell lies.

This is apparently a valid argument, illustrating the general form of *modus ponens* inference: “*P*; if *P* then *Q*; so *Q*”. However, if we accept expressivism, Geach thinks, we will be in a predicament in explicating its validity. For, although the expressivist can account for the first premise, he cannot have the same story to say about the second premise. On the one hand, the expressivist would say that the first premise is asserted to express the attitude of condemnation of telling lies. On the other, the expressivist would have difficulties in accounting for the second premise, because although it is safe to say that the conditional as a whole is asserted, the antecedent or the consequent of the conditional alone is hard for the expressivist to interpret. It is implausible to say that when one expresses in a putative voice his opinion, “if it is wrong to tell lies, it is wrong to get your little brother to tell lies”, he is evincing condemnation toward telling lies. What he says is merely “if telling lies is wrong.” without indicating whether he thinks it is wrong to tell lies. The problem then arises. According to expressivism, the meaning of the first premise is to condemn telling lies, yet the meaning of the antecedent in the second is not. How is it possible for the meaning of the antecedent to be identical with the first premise? If the expressivist cannot explain the identity of meaning, then he cannot explain the validity of the *modus ponens* inference above. For the inference can only be translated as “*P*; if *P** then *Q*; ergo *Q*”, where *P* and *P** are syntactically identical but different in meaning, which is evidently invalid. Based on this, Geach thinks that the force of moral terms has no part in the meaning of judgments in which they are contained. What expressivism misses, according to him, is *Frege’s point*, which says “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”. (Geach 1965, 449) Because Frege’s point is necessary in explicating embedded use of moral terms, and the descriptivistic understanding of them can fulfill Frege’s point, Geach thinks that we should therefore accept a descriptivistic theory instead of expressivism.

Searle (1962) expresses his worry in a similar vein, yet leading to different conclusion. He thinks the theory of meaning embodied in the expressivistic thesis can be stated as: if *W* occurs in a sentence *S* and has its literal meaning in *S*, then characteristically in the utterance of *S* one performs *A*. More sympathetically, it can be put to fend off some counter examples as: if *W* occurs in a sentence *S* and has its literal meaning in *S*, then characteristically when one utters *S* speech act *A* is in the

offing. If *S* is a simple indicative sentence, it is performed; if *S* is interrogative, it is elicited and so on through other forms. Searle thinks that even if the theory of meaning is formulated in this way, there are still many counterexamples conceivable. One of the examples he lists is a conditional:

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

If Hare's version of expressivism is right, then Searle thinks it should be translated as:

- (2) If I commend this electric blanket, then perhaps we ought to buy it for Aunt Nellie.

Yet Searle argues that in uttering (1) there is no speech acts of commendation performed, nor are such speech acts even in the offing, such that the translation from (1) to (2) is legitimate. Thus, Searle thinks, it may be the case that the word "good" is used in simple indicative sentence to commend, but it is not so in complex sentences in which it is embedded. The speech act theory of meaning therefore fails to meet a *condition of adequacy*, which any analysis of meaning must meet: any analysis of the meaning of a word (or morpheme) must be consistent with the fact that the same word (or morpheme) can mean the same thing in all the grammatically different kinds of sentences in which it can occur. (Searle 1969, 137) The fallacy committed by the speech act theory of meaning embodied in the expressivistic thesis, according to Seale, is that they mistakenly treat the correct observation, that calling something "good" is characteristically commending it, as if it were itself an analysis, whereas in fact it might form the starting point of an analysis of the word "good". (Searle 1969, 139) Understanding moral terms in this way, Searle's theory, unlike Geach's, actually leaves room for expressivists to develop their theory in terms of a more sophisticated version of theory of speech acts.

Now, the question as to who is right is not our concern. Our concern is that there are moral practices which expressivism seems to fail to explain. Indeed both Geach and Searle notices that the same problem also occurs in negation, disjunction, interrogative and propositional attitudes, where moral terms are embedded. Consider the following judgments.

- (3) It is not the case that telling lies is always wrong.
- (4) Either Jane is wrong or Jim is.
- (5) Is killing innocent always morally wrong?
- (6) John believes that stealing is wrong.

In every sentence, moral terms are embedded in a context and arguably unasserted. For people who are attracted to expressivistic theory, they have to explain what we are doing when we make judgments in the form not only (1) but also (3) to (6). The condition to satisfy is what Searle calls the condition of adequacy. In fact, the condition of adequacy and Frege's point are two sides of a coin; they all require the same thing, that the meaning of a word has to be interpreted as the same in each of its occurrences. Although in the case of Searle it is a condition any analysis of theory of meaning has to meet and in the case of Geach it is a starting point which a theorist has to accept to make sense of various logical forms. Obviously, the expressivist cannot adopt Geach's strategy; accepting Frege's point in the first place and making sense of moral language accordingly. On the contrary, what he needs to do is to construct a theory which can meet the condition that every occurrence of the same word can mean the same. The expressivist needs not only to tell us what we are doing when we use moral predicates in unasserted contexts, but also tell us what we are doing when we embed moral judgments in a complex structure by deploying truth-functional connectives or attitude verbs such as "believe", "wish", "hope", etc., treating them in the way that we treat propositions.

This is exactly the point where we can see why the non-cognitivist thesis of expressivism is under attack by the Frege-Geach problem. It is a phenomenon of our moral language that we use truth-functional connectives to construct complex moral judgments from simple ones. If expressivism insists moral judgments are not truth-apt, it has to explain what we are doing when we are doing so. Indeed, the standard way of determining the truth-value of a compound statement is to determine the truth-values of its components first and then see how these components are linked together by truth-functional connectives. And the standard way of determining the validity of an inference is to see if it can guarantee the truth-value of its conclusion when all its premises are true. If the non-cognitivist thesis of expressivism is true, then the expressivist has to tell us what we are doing when we use truth-functional connectives to connect moral judgments and to tell us how to account for the validity of a moral inference in terms of things other than the notion of truth.

In sum, the two tasks involved in solving the Frege-Geach problem are, first, explaining the meaning of moral predicates in unasserted contexts to the extent that there is no equivocation of meaning of moral predicates in any moral inference, and second, explaining why we can treat moral judgments in the way that we treat propositions without appealing to the notion of truth. Following Blackburn (1992b), let us call this task as the task of explicating the *propositional surface* of moral language.

3. Structure

The purpose of this essay is aimed to see how two of the most prominent expressivists in recent years, Simon Blackburn and Allan Gibbard, propose to solve the Frege-Geach problem. In this very first chapter I have presented the two theses of expressivism and explained what the Frege-Geach problem is.

In the second chapter, I shall go through Simon Blackburn's quasi-realism to see how he brings a theory of meaning, projectivism and his quasi-realist project together to form the basis of his solution. We will see how he constructs a logic of attitudes and he endeavors to allow a notion of truth for moral judgments. I shall argue, however, that his quasi-realist project is a failure and he does not have the apparatus to solve the Frege-Geach problem.

In the third chapter, we shall look at Gibbard's efforts to secure the fact-value distinction from critics like Putnam, as a foundation for his norm-expressivism. After that, we will see how he constructs his norm-expressivism and how he devises a normative logic based on the theory to fend off the Frege-Geach problem and also account for the propositional surface of normative judgments. I shall argue, however, Gibbard's theory cannot really be a version of expressivism. Rather, it is a form of normative fictionalism. The Frege-Geach problem is not a problem for him only because the target of the problem is expressivism, rather than fictionalism.

In the concluding chapter, I shall offer some lessons which we can learn from Blackburn and Gibbard. I shall also raise an issue concerning minimalism about truth for normative judgments, which is said to be able available for expressivism to solve the Frege-Geach problem. I shall argue, despite its advantages, that minimalism about truth would put expressivism in danger of losing its point, and then conclude that the Frege-Geach problem and propositional surface are still insurmountable barriers for expressivism to overcome.

Chapter 2 Blackburn's solution

The target of this chapter is to see how Blackburn provides his explanation of the propositional surface of moral language by seeing how he proposes to solve the Frege-Geach problem. The first section is to work out what is the best formulation of Blackburn's theory of meaning. I shall argue that Blackburn's convention-belief theory of meaning is not so well-founded as he thinks. It needs to be revised to adopt cases in which some new words or new uses of familiar words are introduced, and to avoid perplexities emerging from a misapplication of his theory to undue areas.

In the second section, I shall argue that Blackburn's theory of meaning alone is not applicable until we have a theory to tell us what particular form his theory of meaning should take in the disputed areas. We shall see that in the case of morality, it is projectivism fulfilling this need: it tells us which particular form of the theory of meaning is to be applied to ethics. It is also demonstrated that projectivism is at best to be seen as an explanatory theory - its cogency wholly depends on its explanatory power in each disputed area where it is applied. There is nothing compulsory to require us to take a projectivist stance. I shall also show that the quasi-realist project is initiated to solve the puzzle of the propositional surface of moral sentences; its success is constituted in the fulfillment of two separate but related goals.

In section 3 and 4 we shall see how Blackburn attempts to fulfill these two goals by giving accounts of the semantics of conditionals and of the notion of moral truth. In section 3 we shall see how Blackburn constructs his theory of conditionals. By going through his struggles of giving a quasi-realist theory of the logic of attitudes, we can anticipate some difficulties that persistently trouble Blackburn's theory. Section 4 will expose two versions of Blackburn's theory of moral truth. I shall offer a few criticisms on his first version which force Blackburn to adopt a minimalist theory as his second theory of truth. I shall examine the adequacy of this adoption in the final section, in which I aim to give a critical assessment of the whole picture of Blackburn's effort. The upshot will be that, though Blackburn's appeal to a minimalist theory of truth can seem to earn us a right to talk of moral truth and moral fact in ordinary senses, he nevertheless cannot achieve both at the same time without damaging projectivism he wants to defend. From this, I conclude that quasi-realism cannot be endorsed without doing harm to projectivism. I shall also argue that the logic of attitude Blackburn devises to solve the Frege-Geach problem cannot make sense of some basic inferences we often make involving applying moral standards to states of affairs, and that Blackburn's logic still fails to locate the logical inconsistency and validity of moral inferences. I shall therefore conclude that

Blackburn's effort cannot be successful as it claims.

1. Blackburn's theory of meaning

According to Blackburn, a dog-legged theory is a theory which explains the fact that words have meaning in terms of other media, such as ideas, images, innate language of thought, etc., whose explanatory power is self-contained. A classical example of this theory, so regarded by Blackburn, is Aristotle's thought that spoken words are signs of the mental likeness' of external things, and thence derivatively, of things in the world. The difficulty this theory brings, Blackburn reckons, is that this theory makes it difficult for us to have any reason to suppose we know anything at all about the world, because we can always raise a question like "how do we know those mental likeness do represent the world?" To answer this question, if we need to introduce another medium whose powers explain the powers of any given medium, we face a regress of interpretations. Or if we leave the question unanswered, we are in danger of not advancing at all. Blackburn thinks of this as a *regress-or-elephant problem* (Blackburn 1984, 43), an essential difficulty for dog-legged theorist to deal with. He thinks most of the attempts dog-legged theorist develop to solve this problem fail¹. What went wrong with the thought that leads philosophers to a dog-legged theory, according to Blackburn, is a little step the dog-legged theorists make: the transition from thinking that "we need to take words in a particular way, if we understand them" to thinking that "we need a way of representing to ourselves what those words stand for". The step is wrong, because there are some other possible explanations of how we take words in some particular way except the representational picture deployed by dog-legged theorists. One possible approach mentioned by Blackburn is to think of what meaning is in terms of thinking about how we detect it. This line of thought was inspired by Quine's proposal of radical translation. The other is to investigate how do *we*, rather than some foreign language speakers (of whose language we have no idea at all) really use words to express what we want to express. In both ways, the representative picture is not required by the need for taking words in this or that way.

Then we turn to the question what is the theory of meaning Blackburn accepts. The theory he accepts is what he calls a convention-belief approach, a theory drawing upon David Lewis' work on convention. Blackburn puts the theory in a simple formulation as follows: (Blackburn 1984, 133)

(RD) A sentence *S* means that *p* in the language of group *G* if it is a regularity,

¹ Those who fail, according to Blackburn, include mainly, Locke, Berkeley, early Wittgenstein, Fodor, Quine and Dummett. See Blackburn (1984, chap. 2)

or the consequence of a system of regularities, with the status of a convention that one who utters S with basic assertive force may be regarded as having displayed that p ,

where p is the belief correlated with a sentence S .

A few things need to be noticed. First, the convention used here is what Blackburn calls as S/p regard-display convention, which means that “[i]t is a conventional regularity in group G that someone uttering S with an indication of assertive force, may be regarded as having displayed that p ”. (Blackburn 1984, 126) This convention does not require that one who utters S with an indication of the speech act of assertion *must* be regarded as having displayed his belief in p . People who are ignorant or mistaken about the regularity of how S is used to be taken may not regard S as having displayed p . But this is fine, because, according to Tyler Burge (1975), the status of a regularity, to be conventional or otherwise, is presumably a matter about which discoveries can be made and about which people can be ignorant or mistaken.

Secondly, as Blackburn (1984, 133) noted, although (RD) concentrates only upon the display of belief, a similar approach can be applied to such things as attitudes or questions. For example, in the case of attitudes, it could be the case that a sentence S uttered by A with basic relevant force is regarded as having displayed A 's attitude of approval or disapproval of a state of affairs. If this display is regarded as a regularity, or the consequence of a system of regularities, with the status of a convention, then we can say that A means to express his attitude toward the state of affairs by uttering S ; or alternatively we can say that the meaning of S is constituted in A 's expression of attitudes toward the state of affairs. We can therefore formulate a variant of (RD) which is suitable for expressions of attitudes:

(MRD) A sentence S means that f in the language of group G if it is a regularity, or the consequence of a system of regularities, with the status of a convention that one who utters S with basic assertive force may be regarded as having displayed the attitude f ,

where f is the attitude correlated with a sentence S .

Thirdly, (RD) maintains that a sentence S can mean something only when there is an S/p regard-display convention present governing what is displayed by S . This is of course not enough for making sense of all of our language. There are certain situations in which no regularity governing how to use or to understand words has obtained the status of convention. Suppose, for example, there is a new word \ddot{o} being introduced into a science fiction. The word is used regularly in the book, yet

without an explicit definition being formulated by the author. Then the understanding of the word is not dependent upon any convention governing the use or the understanding of the word, because there is no such convention. Rather it depends upon the reader's capacity of cross-referencing several occasions in which the word is used in a particular way, to grasp some common features among these occasions to the effect that a certain regularity of the use of this new word is to be obtained. Here we have, in Blackburn's term, a one-off predicament in which there is no convention present. So, to supplement Blackburn's convention-belief approach, it seems necessary to adopt one more theory of meaning to cope with these one-off predicaments. This is not a problem for Blackburn, because he already has a theory for one-off predicaments which, bringing in Grice's theory about meaning and intention, can be formulated as follows: (Blackburn 1984, 110-8)

(One-off) For a one-off utterance of sentence *S* to mean that *p* would be for it to regularly (i) be made with the intention of inducing belief that *p*, (ii) rely upon the audience's recognition of the intention for success, and (iii) be performed by a speaker who wants all his intentions in so acting to be recognized.

Thus Blackburn theory of meaning should be regarded as bipartite: in normal cases, it is (RD) determining a sentence's meaning; in one-off cases, it is (One-off). Furthermore, in the case of attitudes, the theory can be modified slightly to suit the need:

(MO) For a one-off utterance of sentence *S* to mean that *f* would be for it to regularly (i) be made with the intention of inducing the attitude *f*, (ii) rely upon the audience's recognition of the intention for success, and (iii) be performed by a speaker who wants all his intentions in so acting to be recognized.

Finally, (RD) plus (One-off) does not provide us any account of the semantic structure of language, by which a competent speakers' ability to understand any of a potential infinitude of new sentences can be illuminated. Usually such a theory would show how knowledge of finitely many words and constructions could be composed together to facilitate understanding of new sentences. Blackburn, while granting that there is a need for some account of semantic structure, rules out the compositionality of language as an essential issue for meaning, for the simple reason that it leaves untouched some very important philosophical problems. Problems like "when is a sign, in a community, used as a name or a predicate?", "what determines the particular thing a name does name?", "what determines the application of the predicate?", etc. The compositional approach does not advance philosophy in these respects. (Blackburn 1984, 263) On the contrary, Blackburn thinks that it is very easy to see how his theory can account for a sign being used this way or that way: it is

the mix of convention and intention that determine how a sign is used and how a sentence is meant to mean something. So, his theory is better than that advocated by compositionists.

We are now in place to query the cogency of (MRD) plus (MO). Let us begin with an example. Suppose John asks Smith if he wants to go swimming. Smith answers "I am tired". Now this answer would normally be taken to display Smith's attitude that he does not want to go swimming. To explicate the meaning of this sentence, we will try to apply Blackburn's theory by first reckoning that since the subject matter is attitude rather than belief, and since this is not a one-off situation, we should use (MRD) rather than (MO), (RD) or (One-off). Then, the explanation goes like this: it is a regularity with the status of convention that when someone replies to another's request to do something by saying "I am tired", he can be regarded as displaying his attitude that he does not want to do the thing. Hence, according to (MRD), the meaning of the sentence "I am tired" is equivalent to the attitude expressed by the sentence "I don't want to do the thing requested."

Nevertheless, this is a quite unacceptable result. There is no denial that "I am tired" can be taken to display the attitude expressed by "I do not want to do the thing requested", but it is just wrong to say that the meaning of "I am tired" is equivalent to the attitude expressed by "I do not want to do the thing requested." For "I am tired" is presumably to describe a combination of physical and mental states, whereas "I do not want to do the thing requested" looks more like to express volition, an unwillingness to do something. The same point can be seen in a like example given by Sinnott-Armstrong (1987): when I am asked to go to Bentley's for lunch, I might answer "Bentley's is very expensive". The answer can be taken to display my attitude that I do not want to go to Bentley's for lunch, without really intending to say Bentley's is very expensive. The problem seems to be that Blackburn's theory is somehow defective to the effect that a sentence's literal meaning conflates with what Grice (1989, 22-40) calls the *implicature* of it. When saying "I am tired", the competent speaker Smith, according to (RD), does express some belief *p*, namely that he is tired, which seems somehow to have not answered John's question. Under the assumption of the cooperative principle², Smith cannot be doing this unless he is expressing that *q*, namely he does not want to go swimming, by saying the sentence.

² According to Grice (1989, 26-7), the cooperative principle is: "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. Four categories are subsumed under the principle. The category of quantity: make your contribution as informative as required; do not make your contribution more informative than is required. The category of quality: try to make your contribution one that is true. The category of relation: be relevant. The category of manner: be perspicuous."

If Smith knows that John can see that the supposition that he thinks that q is the answer required, and has done nothing to stop John thinking that q , then he intends John to think, or is at least willing to allow John to think, that q . Therefore, Smith's utterance "I am tired" has *implicated* that "I do not want to go swimming". The problem of Blackburn's theory is that (MRD) can only capture what is implicated by the sentence "I am tired", whereas (RD) can only capture what is literally meant by the sentence. And since Blackburn's theory of meaning seems to be so clear-cut about the distinction between attitudes and beliefs, there is no room for allowing that "I am tired" both means what it means literally and what it means implicatively. This example shows that what is captured by (MRD) can be grasped by (RD) and Grice's mechanism, and it is often the case that a sentence can mean what it means literally and implicatively at the same time. Then there raises a question about Blackburn's theory: why is he in need of (MRD)? Is it not the case that we can cover all that can be captured by (MRD) by using (RD) and Grice's mechanism?

I think the answers to the above questions are obvious to Blackburn. When he thinks that there is a sharp distinction between (MRD) and (RD), he is thinking that there is a particular sort of sentence which is used merely to express attitudes. To capture the meaning of this sort of sentence, (RD) plus Grice's mechanism is not a suitable theory, because what (RD) can capture is presumably beliefs, rather than attitudes. The only theory he can rely upon is (MRD). He does not pay full attention to the possibility that there are such sentences part of whose meaning can be explained by both (MRD) and (RD) plus Grice's mechanism. To avoid such perplexity, Blackburn can restrict (MRD) to be applied to that sort of language, not to others. We can then reformulate (MRD) as:

(MRD*) For a sentence S belonging to a sentence-type which is used merely to express attitudes, its meaning is the attitude f in the language of group G if it is a regularity, or the consequence of a system of regularities, with the status of a convention that one who utters S with basic assertive force may be regarded as having displayed the attitude f ,

Thus revised, Blackburn's theory, in an area whose subject matter is concerned about attitudes, can be regarded as two-fold. To apply this theory in grasping the meaning of a newly uttered sentence S , one needs in the first place to check whether it is a one-off case. If it is, then we use (MO) to determine its meaning; if not, we proceed to use (MRD*) to determine its meaning.

2. Projectivism and Quasi-realism

Now we are in place to ask whether this theory of meaning can help us to see the

distinctness of moral language. At first glance it seems not, because none of Blackburn's principles tell us how to divide moral sentences from other sentences in other fields. Indeed, as we have seen in last section, Blackburn allows (RD) to be formulated in different forms, dependent upon what kind of sentences are at issue. In other words, Blackburn's theory of meaning has presupposed that there are different kinds of sentences in natural language and for each kind there will be different formulations of principles governing ways of understanding their meaning. This cannot help us to see a way out of the Frege-Geach abyss, because one of the effects of this abyss is to cast a doubt on whether expressivism is right to regard moral sentences only as the same as those used to express attitudes. It is exactly the question as to what the function of moral sentences is, that is at issue. A theory which has presupposed the function of particular kind of sentence cannot help. Since Blackburn's theory of meaning can apply only when we have decided in advance what a particular kind of function moral sentences play, it cannot tell us how to find a way out of the Frege-Geach problem. To solve the problem, Blackburn needs some other elements.

One such element is what Blackburn calls *projectivism*³, a doctrine usually attributed to Hume, who maintains that human beings have two different kinds of faculties, ".one discovers objects as they really stand in nature, without addition or diminution: the other has a productive faculty, and gilding or staining all natural objects with the colours, borrowed from internal sentiment, raises in a manner a new creation." Two notions presupposed in the theory are *the nature as it really is* and *the nature as we experience it as being*. Projectivist theorists recognize there being cases in which human beings' nature would come out in shaping the judgments they make. In cases where evaluations, causation or probability are the subject matter, projectivist theorists propose that the best explanation of them is not to regard judgements made as expressing nature as it really is, but as expressing our attitudes or reactions to the states of affairs in question. For example, the judgement that killing innocent for fun is wrong is regarded by projectivist not as describing any moral property, but as expressing the judge's disapproval attitude toward killing innocent. A moral sensibility, on this account, is defined as a function "from input of belief to

³ In his recent book, Blackburn (1998) agrees with Gibbard (1996) that the term "projectivism" might be misleading. "It can make it sound as if projecting attitudes involves some kind of mistake, like projecting our emotions onto the weather, or projecting our wishes onto the world by believing things we want to believe. This is emphatically not what is intended." (Blackburn 1998, 77) He then prefers "expressivism", "non-descriptive functionalism", "practical functionalism" or "expressivism". However, since he does not change his stance, and since the misled thought is quite unlikely to emerge in philosophical discussions, I shall still adopt "projectivism" as the label of his theory, to distinguish the stance from other forms of expressivism.

output of attitude.” (Blackburn 1984, 192). Thus, projectivism works as an instruction: it tells one who accepts Blackburn’s theory of meaning to apply (MRD*) and (MO) rather than otherwise in the case of morality. And it is at best to be seen as an explanatory theory: whether it is cogent relies on whether it can make sense of issues in each disputed area. There is no compulsion to accept projectivism: to accept the theory is to commit to the belief that “some aspect of the world is not as independent of us as we might think.” (Blackburn 1998a)

Now the question we should ask is whether projectivism is really a better explanation than its rival, moral realism, in the case of ethics. Blackburn, of course, thinks it is. His reasons are three. (Blackburn 1984, 181-9) First, projectivism is theoretically more economic than moral realism, because it need not postulate either mysterious features of things (moral properties) or a mechanism (intuition) to know about the features. Secondly, if there are moral properties, then moral properties must be understood in projectivist terms, rather than realist ones. That is so, because only the projectivist view can explain why it is true that moral properties supervene upon natural ones, and why it is true that they are not necessitated by the natural properties on which they supervene. In Blackburn’s terminology, (let A be moral properties, and let B* be a complete base description of a thing), only an expressivist theory can explain how there can be B*/A supervenience without B*/A necessity. Thirdly, projectivism can explain better the phenomenon that accepting a moral judgement is to feel a pull toward the thing recommended by the judgement, or to feel disapproval toward the thing denounced.

Suppose these three arguments work⁴. We will then have a conjunction of projectivism and a meaning theory formulated, telling us that (i) it would be best to regard moral sentences functioning as expressions of attitudes, and (ii) to make sense of moral sentences we should apply (MRD*) and (MO) to identify their meaning. For example, consider Smith’s utterance “it is wrong to tell lies”. Someone who accepts a combination of projectivism and the theory of meaning would analyse the sentence in the following way: Smith is uttering a moral sentence, according to projectivism, he is expressing his moral attitude toward telling lies. There is a conventional regularity governing the utterance of the sentence that when it is so uttered with assertive force, the speaker is to be regarded as displaying his disapproval toward telling lies. So the meaning of the sentence “it is wrong to tell lies” is equivalent to the attitude of disapproval of lying.

⁴ Some problems of the three arguments are discussed by Wright (1985) and Sinnott-Armstrong (1987).

Still, this combination falls short of tackling the Frege-Geach problem, because there is no element in the combination able to explain the propositional surface of moral sentences. There is no theory telling us why moral sentences appear to function as expressing propositions, rather than expressing attitudes. Blackburn is in need of one more component to show how moral sentences can be looked like performing what they are not supposed to do. This need of explanation is what Blackburn's project of *quasi-realism* is aiming at. Accordingly, quasi-realism is ".the enterprise .seek[ing] to explain, and justify, the realistic-seeming nature of our talk of evaluations the way we think we can be wrong about them, that there is a truth to be found, and so on". (Blackburn 1984, 180) Recall the moral realist holds that there is a class of moral facts in virtue of which some moral sentences are true or false. We can see what is meant by "realistic-seeming nature of moral languages". It is to say that we can talk *as if* there are moral facts or moral properties, in terms of which the sentences we utter can be true or false, although actually there are no such moral facts or moral properties to be discovered.

Given this is what is said by Blackburn, one may suggest that quasi-realism is to say that when expressing attitudes by uttering moral sentences, people commit an error, an error that mistakenly treats moral sentences as representing genuine moral properties. Blackburn's theory is then regarded as a variation of Mackie's error theory (1977, 30-5). Nevertheless, this is not what Blackburn's quasi-realism is trying to say. What he wants to say is quite the opposite: he wants to say that there is no error involved.⁵ There is no error involved in talking of moral truth or falsity, nor error in talking as if moral properties exist somewhere in the fabric of the world. The quasi-realist project is to earn the right for people to talk of moral truth, as if moral sentences were true of moral properties represented in those sentences. This is, of course, not saying that there *are* moral properties, because projectivism has taken the stance that there are no such properties. There is no error, because we talk simply *as if*, but do not really think, there are moral properties. The success of quasi-realism is therefore constituted in two goals to be satisfactorily achieved:

(QR1) Projectivism is right that there are no moral facts or properties and moral sentences are used to express attitudes.⁶

⁵ He views quasi-realism as ".the enterprise of showing there is [no error] - that even on anti-realist grounds there is nothing improper, nothing "diseased" in projected predicates .it tries to earn, on the slender basis, the features of moral language .which tempt people to realism." (Blackburn 1984, 171)

⁶ As Blackburn (1984, 180) notes, quasi-realism does not necessarily presuppose projectivism. "One might believe that quasi-realism is successful, yet still dislike projectivism." An emotivist, if endorsing the quasi-realist project, can claim (QR1)_e: Emotivism is right that there are no moral facts

(QR2) People have the right to use moral language to talk of moral truth, to talk as if there are representing moral properties, by virtue of which moral sentences can be regarded as true or false.

There is a great doubt about whether this second goal can be reached. I shall show later that Blackburn himself fail to do so. I shall argue that this task cannot be done without damaging projectivism. But at the moment it is quite enough to make explicit the reason for Blackburn to regard Quasi-realism as an indispensable component of his theory. It is because the combination of his theory of meaning and projectivism is still not sufficient to explain the propositional surface of moral language, so he needs quasi-realism to remove the obstacles standing in the way of projectivism. If unfortunately the project of quasi-realism fails, then it is fair to say that the Frege-Geach problem is still troubling for Blackburn's meta-ethical theory. In order to see how quasi-realism fulfills the two goals, we need to turn to Blackburn's explication of *modus-ponens* inference and the notion of truth.

3. *Modus-ponens*

It is widely recognized that Blackburn has three sequential solutions for the Frege-Geach problem, each built on the previous version. The first version is found in Blackburn (1971), where he introduces the concept of "propositional reflection". A "propositional reflection" is ". [a] 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." (Blackburn 1971, 126)⁷ This is the passage that anticipates quasi-realism in *Spreading the Word*. With this quasi-realist spirit in mind, Blackburn suggests that a conditional containing evaluative sentences as its components should be regarded as a propositional reflection of a claim about attitudes. The content of a conditional, say, "if *P* then *Q*", where *P* and *Q* are moral sentences, is taken to be that an attitude issued by *P* involves another attitude issued by *Q*. For anyone to assert "if *P* then *Q*" is for him to *assert* that the attitude of the former involves the attitude of the latter. (Blackburn 1971, 127) Blackburn thinks that there is a *logical* inconsistency if one expresses his attitude by saying *P*, and asserts the relationship between *P* and *Q*, but refuses to hold the consequent attitude issued by *Q*.

or properties. Other variants of expressivism can alter the principle in accordance with their own theory. Here I regard a quasi-realist as the one who also endorses projectivism simply for the reason that it is Blackburn himself and no one else who, as a projectivist, pursues the quasi-realist approach. Nevertheless, it is worth mention that quasi-realism can be combined with other expressive theories.

⁷ Page reference is to Blackburn (1993).

Later in his *Spreading the word*, Blackburn sharpens the thought by proposing a formal language as his second version of the solution. He introduces a language, *Ex*, which contains two attitudinal operators, H! and B!. H! attached to descriptions of things stands for hooray attitude toward the things; B! for boo attitude. Consequently, H!(X) expresses an attitude of approval toward X; B!(X) an attitude of disapproval. In order to talk about complex of attitudes, he also introduces a notation of bars: /H!(X)/ refers to the attitude of approval toward X; /B!(X)/ to that of disapproval; and notation of semi-colon “;”, to denote the view that one attitude or belief involves, or is coupled with, another. Then the *modus ponens* inference about telling lies can be formalized as:

B!(telling lies)
 H!(/B!(telling lies);/B!(getting your little brother to tell lies/))
Ergo, B!(getting your little brother to tell lies),

translated as: a combination of the attitudes, of disapproval of lying and of approval of making (disapproval of getting your little brother to tell lies) follow upon (disapproval of lying), results in disapproval of getting your little brother to tell lies. One prominent effect of this translation is that a conditional with evaluative elements is understood as expressing a second order attitudes towards the relation between attitudes issued by its antecedent and its consequent. By so doing, Blackburn provides a special outlook of the logical form of moral *modus ponens*: it is a combination of a first order attitude with a second order attitude that produces another attitude.

Although it has been pointed out by many writers that the thought adumbrated above is not as persuasive as it looks, it is easy to see why Blackburn thinks this is capable of solving the Frege-Geach problem: it seems that he can provide a logic of attitude to account for moral inferences which occur in our daily moral practice. The general approach of devising a logic of attitudes is adopted and endorsed by Blackburn in his later responses to critics. His intention has always been clear: that should the combination of his theory of meaning, projectivism and quasi-realism have been successful, there will be no problem in devising such a logic to solve the Frege-Geach problem. His confidence, I suspect, mainly comes from his strategy of carrying out the project: rather than appealing to well-known interpretations of conditionals, he adheres firmly to projectivism in the first place, thinking that an evaluative expression must express the same attitude everywhere. And then he endeavors to devise a logic of attitudes to show that what is going on in our moral inferences is actually characterized by this logic of attitudes, rather than the ordinary propositional calculus. And then he can be comfortable in thinking that all we need

in accounting for propositional surface can be found in principle in this logic.

Let us have a look at how this crude version of the logic of attitudes suffers from criticism before turning to his more complicated version of the theory. One serious difficulty of this logic concerns the notion of inconsistency. Consider someone who shows /B!(telling lies)/ and /H!(/B!(telling lies);/B!(getting your little brother to tell lies/)), without showing /B!(getting your little brother to tell lies)/. What is wrong with this man's attitude, according to Blackburn, is that his attitudes clash and "[h]e has a fractured sensibility which cannot itself be an object of approval. such a sensibility cannot fulfill the practical purposes for which we evaluate things. *Ex* will want to signal this. It will want a way of expressing the thought that it is a logical mistake that is made . ." (Blackburn 1984, 195) Nevertheless, Schuler (1988) has pointed out that a clash of attitudes is not a logical inconsistency. Consider someone who accepts "It is wrong to tell lies" and "If it is wrong to tell lies, it is wrong to get your little brother to tell lies", but rejects "It is wrong to get your little brother to tell lies", in contrast with the one mentioned above, who has clash attitudes. Now this man's rejection of the conclusion commits a logical inconsistency. He commits a conceptual error that casts in doubt his capacity to understand these statements. However, for the one who has a fractured sensibility, his rejection of the conclusion is not totally unreasonable. At least one can imagine that it may be the case that there are some reasons that force him to reject the conclusion and fracture his sensibility. Logical inconsistency is presumably stronger than moral inconsistency. If someone commits a moral sin of being inconsistent in his attitude, it does not follow that he commits a logical sin of inconsistency. If Blackburn's quasi-realism is to grasp the propositional surface of moral sentences, he simply fails to locate the notion of logical inconsistency.

The other difficulty that looms behind the scene is pointed out by Hale (1986) and Schueler (1988). Blackburn's reading of "H!(/B!(telling lies);/B!(getting your little brother to tell lies/))" as "approval of making (disapproval of getting your little brother to tell lies) follows upon (disapproval of lying)" involves reading "A;B" as "making B follow upon A". Although this is a straightforward translation of "if A then B", a doubt arises as to whether this translation gives any substantial explanation of the concept of conditionals, rather than smuggling in by the back door what is to be explained. It seems that Blackburn will be in need a further explanation about the reading or he will need to provide a different explanation instead.

Facing these challenges, Blackburn (1988) proposes his third version of the theory, trying to (1) retain all logical connectives, rather than merely working on "if..the..." clauses, without giving them a new interpretation, and (2) envisage a

notion of logical inconsistency suitable for his projectivism and quasi-realism. In his new theory, he retains $H!$ and add the toleration operator $T!$. Unlike before applying the operators $H!$ and $B!$ to gerundives, he now applies the operators $H!$ and $T!$ to well-formed formulae capable of entering other constructions as components. And he seeks to adopt a system of inferential rules, which can retain all logical connectives used ordinarily without altering their use. For negations, this seems not to be too difficult: $T!A$ can be introduced as a substitution for $\sim H!A$, and conversely $H!A$ a substitution as $\sim T!A$. As for other binary connectives, Blackburn thinks they can be treated in tableaux methods. One who affirms $p \& H!q$ registers a conjunctive commitment - he commits himself both to accepting that p and to approving of q ; one who affirms $p \text{ or } H!q$ commits himself to disjunctive commitment - he commits himself to (either accepting that p , or endorsing that q), where the brackets show that this is not the same as (being committed to accepting that p) or (being committed to endorsing that q). One who has this commitment is, as Blackburn puts it, tied to a tree. The conditional “if telling lies is wrong, getting your little brother to tell lies is wrong” can be understood as the speaker of the sentence being tied to the tree of (either assenting to “telling lies is not wrong” or to “getting your little brother to lie is wrong”). The higher order attitude construal in the second version is replaced, in the new theory, by a notion of commitment.

For the consistency of sentences, Blackburn proposes using realization of goals or ideals to be the final test. The rationale of this thought is based on the intuition that one can find out whether a set of recommendations are consistent by imagining a situation in which all of them are carried out and seeing if that can be consistently done. Blackburn then borrows Hintikka’s semantics to define a *next approximation to the ideal*, L^* , of L .

- (i) If $H!A$ belongs to L , then $H!A$ belongs to L^* .
- (ii) If $H!A$ belongs to L , then A belongs to L^* .
- (iii) If $T!A$ belongs to L , then a set L^* containing A is to be added to the set of next approximations for L .
- (iv) If L^* is a next approximation relative to some set of sentences L , and if L^* contains $H!(A)$ then a subsequent approximations to the ideal $L^{*(2)}$, contains A and all the other sentences of L^* .⁸

Then we can define a set of *final ideals*, $L^{*(n)}$ by saying:

⁸ Blackburn’s original formulation was attacked by Bob Hale (1992). He then modified the rule as it is formulated here in his “Realism, Quasi, or Queasy” (Blackburn, 1992).

A set of final ideals $L^{*(n)}$ of L is obtained, when further use of the rules above produces no new sentence not already a member of $L^{*(n)}$.

We can define the notion of inconsistency in terms of unsatisfiability:

A set of sentences is inconsistent 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.

Now we can see why the rejection of “getting your little brother to tell lies is wrong”, whilst accepting of both “telling lies is wrong” and “if telling lies is wrong then getting your little brother to tell lies is wrong”, commits a logical inconsistency. Using Blackburn’s notation, we can see that this man’s stance can be translated into a set constitutive of three sentence $\{H!P, H!(H!P \rightarrow H!Q), \sim H!Q\}$, whose next approximation of ideals is $\{H!P, H!P \rightarrow H!Q, \sim H!Q\}^*$ (by i and ii), which splits into two branches $\{H!P, \sim H!P, \sim H!Q\}^*$ and $\{H!P, H!Q, \sim H!Q\}^*$, which are of the same form as $\{H!P, T!\sim P, T!\sim Q\}^*$ and $\{H!P, H!Q, T!\sim Q\}^*$ (by the rule of negation), which respectively have as a next approximation $\{P, \sim P, \sim Q\}^{*(2)}$ (by i, ii, and iii) and $\{P, \sim P, \sim Q\}^{*(2)}$ (by i, ii and iii), both of which are easily seen unsatisfiable. So, the man’s stance now becomes a matter of logical inconsistency. It is logically inconsistent, because there is a logical procedure to show that his commitments cannot be all carried out satisfactorily in an ideal world.

Is this logic of attitudes plausible? The answer seems to me to be no. Yet let us pause for a while and turn to the notion of truth, which is the final element Blackburn needs to complete his project.

4. Moral truth

Blackburn now has a theory, which seems to be able to meet many requirements for resolving the Frege-Geach problem. It is a combination of a modified convention-belief theory of meaning, projectivism, quasi-realism and a logical system capable of making evaluative inferences by deploying all the logical connectives we ordinarily use. What is left to be considered is the notion of truth and the embeddings of moral judgments in propositional attitudes. Although Blackburn did leave propositional attitudes for good, it is part of his quasi-realist project to explain that there is nothing wrong with our talking of moral sentences as if there are moral facts in virtue of which moral sentences, allegedly representing these facts, are either true or false. It is quasi-realism “. trying to earn our right to talk of moral truth, while recognizing fully the subjective sources of our judgements, inside our own attitudes, needs, desires, and natures.” (Blackburn 1984, 197) Blackburn now needs to tell a story about what is going on with our thinking so. He has two versions of

theory of truth.

Blackburn's first proposal starts with thinking of a "best possible set of attitudes", "a limiting set which would result from taking all possible opportunities for improvement of attitude." (Blackburn 1984, 198) Following Blackburn, let us call this set M^* . The truth of a moral sentence m expressing an attitude U can be defined as:

(MT) m is true iff U is a member of M^* .

This means that a moral sentence is true only when the attitude the sentence expresses is a member of a best possible set of attitudes. So defined, the plausibility of the notion of moral truth would depend upon the plausibility of the notion of the best possible set of attitudes. Is there any set of attitudes which is the best possible? Is it one of the motivations for expressivism to explicate the phenomenon of persistent moral disagreements, to the effect that one can have attitudes toward a thing incompatible with others? Whence comes the best possible set of attitudes?

Blackburn's answer is as follows. First, the best set of attitudes is a *focus imaginarius*, something on which our efforts are targeted. (Blackburn 1998, 313) That is to say, a best set of attitudes is a practical goal guiding people's moral development. It is true, Blackburn may answer, that people may have different opinions about a state of affairs - that is why we have moral disagreements; but it does not follow that people on each side of a disagreement can have the right to think that they are right and others are wrong. Take Hume's example of contrasting a young man who has M^*_o as his best possible set of attitudes preferring Ovid to Tacitus, with an old man who has M^*_t as his best possible set of attitudes preferring Tacitus to Ovid. Blackburn thinks that for the young man to have the right to think "it is true that Ovid is better than Tacitus", and for the old man to have the right to think "it is true that Tacitus is better than Ovid", it must be the case that for each of them there is no possible improvement on either M^*_o and M^*_t . However, Blackburn argues, it is not the case that there is no room of improvement. For either the young man and the old do know each other or they don't. If they do not, then there will be an improvement when one day they are aware of the other; if they do know each other, then they will judge that one or both of their views is capable of improvement, because evidence that there is a disagreement is treated as a signal that truth is not yet argued. In other words, Blackburn thinks that there is no such a thing as unimprovable set of attitudes. What is called the best set of attitudes is simply a goal. When there is no sign of any moral disagreement, a particular set of attitudes M^*_k could be regarded as the best possible set; but once there is a sign of rival views equally respectable, M^*_k can face a challenge and thereby transforms to, say, M^*_{k+1} . Blackburn's view is therefore

somewhat different from classical expressivism, in that it grants the possibility that morality can in principle converge; moral disagreements are not necessarily persistent.

So understood, a few features of (MT) should be made explicit. First, the truth of a sentence m is not true absolutely. It is true with respect to a particular best set of attitudes, say, M^*_k . Once M^*_k is subject to improvement and replaced by M^*_{k+1} , and once the attitude U expressed by m , previously in M^*_k , is no longer in M^*_{k+1} , then m is no longer true. In this sense, we can say the truth of a particular sentence is *cancelable*. Nevertheless, since we still use the same word “true” to describe those sentences in which attitudes expressed are members of M^*_{k+1} or even later modifications, we can say that the notion of truth in general is *transcendental*. Secondly, (MT) is a substantial definition of truth - it does tell us whether a particular sentence is true or not. It is agreeable that a competent moral agent does, to a certain degree, have, and think they have, a best set of attitudes toward worldly states of affairs. It is thus agreeable that, to a certain degree, they can make moral judgements like “it is true that X is wrong”, etc, by applying (MT) to the state of affairs X . Thirdly, (MT) is a variant of coherence theory. It is a necessary condition for a coherence theory that the truth of a sentence is defined as membership of a coherent set of the relevant area. Now every best possible set of attitudes is presumably coherent, otherwise it is itself unstable and needs improvement; and the truth of a moral sentence is given by membership of a best possible set; so (MT) as formulated is a standard form of coherence theory.

Given these features, we can see that (MT) is not a good definition of truth. One question that immediately comes to mind is how can a notion be transcendental in general but cancelable in particular cases? Though the truth of a sentence m is defined, it is said, as membership of a particular best possible set of attitudes M^*_k , when M^*_k is no longer to be seen as the best possible set the truth of m has to be reevaluated in accordance with a modified best set of attitudes, say, M^*_{k+1} . The question is, how do we know M^*_k is no longer the best? Blackburn tells us that when there are equally reasonable rivals of moral sensibilities coming into view, we know M^*_k is not the best. But why is M^*_k not the best, if there are rivals to it? Why cannot M^*_k be one of the best sets? Blackburn’s move here seems to be circular: there can only be one best set of attitudes, because if there are rivals, we know that *truth* is not yet argued - the evidence that there is a diversity itself implies that “it is *wrong* to maintain either of the conflicting commitments”. (Blackburn 1984, 201) But why it is wrong to hold either of them? Blackburn seems to hint that the notion of truth has a certain feature of normativity, which would require the pursuer of truth to pursue the greatest coherence of his position. When there are signs

indicating that two equally reasonable sets of attitudes are in conflict, the agent would be forced to abandon the set of attitudes he has at the moment and to look for a better one. However, if this is what Blackburn intends, then he has presupposed a notion of truth which has the feature of normativity. How can he then define truth in terms of membership of the best possible set of attitudes, which presumably is a matter of fact having no feature of normativity? This is not necessarily a vicious circle, if we make a distinction on behalf of Blackburn: though what has been presupposed is indeed a notion of truth, namely, truth is something disallowing its opponents, what has been given in (MT) is not a *definition* of truth, but a *criterion* of it. (MT) is used to determine whether a particular sentence is true. Nevertheless, if this is really what Blackburn intends, then he must have lost his direction of completing the quasi-realist project. For what quasi-realism endeavors to establish is that we have the *right* to apply the notion of truth to moral sentences, rather than that we can construct a criterion to determine whether a particular moral sentence is true or not. What is needed in this project is to show that we have the right to construct such a criterion in moral cases.

Hence, Blackburn seems to be facing a dilemma: either (MT) is not defining a notion of truth, but rather give a criterion of truth; or (MT) is defining a notion of truth, but goes astray from quasi-realism. One way to rescue Blackburn's theory of truth is to give an independent account on how M^* can be made sense of without appealing to the notion of truth. This will be an account on how a coherence theory of truth can incorporate attitudes as appropriate candidates for ascriptions of truth. For this to be possible, Blackburn has to first explain why divergence of attitudes will eventually converge or will tend to be coherent; secondly, he will need to devise a valid coherence theory of truth capable of dealing with the standard objection to coherence theories. He does try to take on the challenge in *Spreading the Word*, claiming that a coherence approach has some advantages to commend it. The theory he depicts is to put on one more requirement for a system to be true, in addition to consistency and comprehensiveness, namely the requirement of control. If coherence theorists can single out the right kinds of control and explain why they are the right kinds without appealing to the notion of truth, then the prospect of coherence theory will be good. Nonetheless, Blackburn did not fully develop this theory and left some puzzling questions remaining.⁹ Later on in his writings, Blackburn seems totally to give up his defense of coherence theory as a component of his quasi-realism, turning instead to embrace a minimalist theory of truth. (Blackburn 1996, 1998) It is fair to say that eventually (MT) is not given full support and should be regarded as a

⁹ For a useful discussion, see Hale (1986).

failure.

Minimalism about truth, on the other hand, is the theory that the predicate “is true” is basically a device of disquotation, and that the meaning of it is fully given by the equivalence equation:

(E) It is true that p iff p .

Blackburn takes the implication of this theory to be that “.we can talk of metaphysical, mathematical, modal [and moral] truth because that is just to repeat our commitments in these areas.” (Blackburn 1998, 78) In the case of morality, Blackburn thinks moral truth can be understood in terms of the following:

(ME) It is true that X is good iff X is good.

Given (ME), we can say that any competent speaker who understands the judgment that X is good would be prepared to accept the left hand side of (ME) if and only if he has the commitment to the approval of X .

One immediate reason to think (ME) is suitable for furnishing the quasi-realist project can be seen from the doctrine of minimalist theory: if the function of the truth predicate “is true” is used only to repeat the speaker’s commitment to his belief that snow is white when snow is white, then there is no reason to prohibit a competent speaker from applying “is true” to moral sentences of which he approves to repeat his commitments. That is to say, because we are entitled to use the truth predicate in such a broad sense by our language we can apply it to moral sentences. The other reason is pointed out by Blackburn (1998, 79): “[m]inimalism seems to let us end up saying, for instance, that ‘kindness is good’ represents the facts. For ‘represents the facts’ means no more than: ‘is true’”. That is, given that we are entitled to use the truth predicate in such a broad sense, and given that the meaning of “is true” is understood as “representing the facts”, we are therefore justified to move from “it is true that X is good” to “‘ X is good’ represents a certain sort of facts.” And if “ X is good” is seen as representing a certain sort of facts, it is seen as a proposition. If it is seen as a proposition, we can talk of it as talking of knowledge. We have thereby an explanation of the propositional surface of moral sentences. What quasi-realism is aiming to do seems to be completed in this final step.

5. Critical assessment

So far we have presented a picture of Blackburn’s ethical theory relevant to the Frege-Geach problem. It is constituted by a theory of meaning, projectivism, quasi-realist principles, a formal logic and semantics of moral sentences, and a notion of moral truth. The theory of meaning gives a general account of how a sentence is

to be regarded as meaning something. Projectivism dictates that in the case of morality the relevant principles of the theory of meaning are (MRD*) and (MO). Quasi-realism is initiated to solve the puzzle of the propositional surface of moral language on the basis of projectivism; its success consists in the fulfillment of two goals (QR1) and (QR2). The formal logic, and its semantics has the advantage of preserving all logical connectives and giving an explanation of the logical inconsistency involved in moral inferences. The minimalist theory of truth furnishes quasi-realism by telling us both why we have the right to apply the truth predicate to moral sentences and of why we think that there are moral properties by virtue of which moral sentences, allegedly representing them, are true or false. I shall now argue that this picture is not so perfect as it appears at first glance. Let us start with the minimalist theory of truth.

Blackburn's argument here can be divided into two parts: the first part shows that we have the right to apply the truth predicate to moral sentences; the second that we can talk as if there are moral properties. His argument for the first part can be reformulated as:

The argument for the applicability of the notion of truth to moral sentences

1. According to the minimalist theory of truth, the functions of the truth predicate in the equivalence equation (E) are to repeat the speaker's commitment to *p*.
2. In the field of morality, it is innocuous to repeat one's commitment to *p* by saying that it is true that *p*.
3. So, it is innocuous to hold the equivalence equation concerning morality:
(ME) It is true that *X* is good iff *X* is good.
4. So, we are justified in applying the very same notion of truth as we have applied elsewhere to cases of moral sentences.

The plausibility of this argument fully depends upon the symmetry between the first step and the second. However, the symmetry might be thought an illusion. For, according to projectivism, there are *the nature as it really is* and *the nature as we experience it as being*. In the former, the speaker's commitment to the content, i.e. proposition, of a sentence is presumably a commitment to the relation of correspondence between a judgment and the worldly affair it stands for. In the latter, however, the speaker's commitment to the content of the utterance that "*X* is good" is true is presumably a commitment to the acceptance of the attitude expressed in the utterance. Incorporating this difference between the two kinds of commitments, (1) should be reformulated as:

(1*) According to the minimalist theory of truth, the functions of the truth predicate in the equivalence equation (E) is to repeat the speaker's commitment to the relation of correspondence between the judgment that p and the worldly affair represented by the content of the judgment by saying that it is true that p .

(2) can be reformulated as:

(2*) In the field of morality, it is innocuous to repeat the speaker's commitment to the acceptance of the attitude involved in the judgment that X is good, by saying that it is true that X is good.

Is there any symmetry between (1*) and (2*)? A person, say, A , may think that there is not. So he may go on to construct two different kinds of notion of truth, namely, " true_p " and " true_m ", one used in the realm of nature as it is and the other in the nature as we experience it as being. The instances of the corresponding equivalence equations are respectively:

(PE*) It is true_p that snow is white iff snow is white.

(ME*) It is true_m that X is good iff X is good.

He may then go on to argue that this cannot be what Blackburn's quasi-realism originally proposes to achieve. For, he would say, if quasi-realism ends up with (ME*), it does not earn us a right to talk of moral truth in the ordinary use of the word "true", which is supposed to be " true_p ". What (ME*) provides for us, he would say, is merely a new vocabulary " true_m ", which does not mean the same as " true_p ". So he would conclude that minimalism fails to earn us a right to talk of moral truth.

To this, another person, say, B , may reply on behalf of Blackburn that, first, it is not clear that " true_p " is the ordinary use when we predicate something as true. It is more likely that ordinary people use the notion of truth in a vulgar way that it is used in many different subject areas without distinguishing between them. That is to say, the ordinary way may be a way that covers both " true_p " and " true_m " without distinguishing them. Second, even if people do distinguish " true_p " and " true_m ", it does not follow that we have two different notion of truth, because, according to the minimalism Blackburn endorses, the notion of truth is needed only to repeat one's commitment. " True_p " and " true_m " are different only because they are used in different areas to repeat different commitments - it is the same notion used in different contexts.

I agree that if one accepts minimalism about truth one will appreciate B 's argument. It seems that A 's insistence on the difference between " true_p " and " true_m " results from his presupposition of a substantial notion of truth, namely that truth must be the relation of correspondence between worldly affairs and propositions. For he

seems to think that in (PE*) what makes true the judgment snow is white is the fact that snow is white and that since in (ME*) there is no such fact, “true_m” and “true_p” must be different. Blackburn seems to have no difficulty here in appealing to minimalism. Yet I shall argue that if we bring in another element of minimalism which Blackburn himself also endorses we will see that it will damage the projectivism Blackburn wants to defend. Let us then have a look at Blackburn’s second part of the argument:

The argument for the seeming existence of moral properties

1. According to the argument for the applicability of the notion of truth to moral judgments, we are entitled to apply the truth predicate “is true” to moral sentences to repeat our commitments.
2. The predicate “is true” means nothing more than “represents the facts”, because the predicate “represents the facts” is used to repeat our commitments as well.
3. We are therefore entitled to say that moral judgments represent moral facts.
4. However, according to projectivism, there is no moral fact for moral sentences to represent.
5. Therefore, we simply deploy the notion of fact in a way that when we say “it is a fact that *X* is wrong” we simply speak as if there are moral facts that “*X* is wrong” represents, although there are no such facts.

What Blackburn is suggesting in this argument is that when we use the phrase “represents the facts”, we simply use it in a very slender sense, that it is deployed only to repeat the speaker’s commitment to the content of the sentences he utters. That is to say, we have:

- (F) The function of the predicate “represents the facts” in “the judgment that *p* represents the fact” is to repeat the speaker’s commitment to the content of the judgment that *p*.

This amounts to say that the predicate “represents the facts” is simply synonymous with the truth predicate “is true”. The same story aforementioned about the notion of truth therefore can apply again here to the notion of fact. Consider the following:

- (ME) The judgment that *X* is good is true iff *X* is good.

Since “is good” is synonymous with “represents the facts”, we can replace (ME) with:

(MF) The judgment that X is good represents the fact that X is good iff X is good.

According to projectivism, what (PF) shows is actually:

(PF*) The judgment that snow is white represents the fact that snow is white iff there is a worldly state of affair that snow is white.

Yet what (MF) shows is:

(MF*) The judgment that X is good represents the fact that X is good iff there are mental states tending to evince the attitude of approval toward X .

Then, what is captured by the predicate “represents the fact” in (PF*) is a relation of correspondence between a sentence and a worldly affair, and what is captured in (MF*) is nonetheless a relation of correspondence between a sentence and some mental states. We should then distinguish two notions of the predicate “represents the facts”.

(PF**) The judgment that snow is white represents the fact_p that snow is white iff there is a worldly affair that snow is white.

Yet what (MF) shows is:

(MF**) The judgment that X is good represents the fact_m that X is good iff there are mental states tending to evince the attitude of approval toward X .

Now, oddly enough, the person A mentioned above, who is refuted by the minimalist B , can seem to talk as if there are moral facts, yet the person B , who defends Blackburn’s notion of moral truth, seems to fail to be able to speak as if there are moral facts. Let me explain.

In the same vein of his arguing for the difference between “true_p” and “true_m”, A would say that “fact_p” is different from “fact_m”. For it is obvious that there are no moral facts in the formula of (MF**) where we talk of fact_m. The judgment that X is good represents a fact_m simply consists in there being moral sensibilities endorsing X . So, the correct way to make sense of the judgment made by a competent speaker, that it is a fact that X is good, is to think of him as making a quasi-judgment - he is not really claiming that there is such a moral fact that X is good, rather he is simply speaking *as if* there is such a fact and expressing his commitment to the judgment that X is good. He may then go on to distinguish two different levels of use of the notion of truth. At the *vulgar level*, he can admit that ordinary people do use the notion of truth in many areas to the extent that they seem to be able to use the notion of fact in the way minimalist describes. Nevertheless, he would maintain that at the *reflective level* only “fact_p” captures the correct way of taking of notion of truth.

On the other hand, if *B* is to make his minimalist position coherent throughout, he needs to criticize *A* for having presupposed a substantial notion of fact. The notion of fact, he would say, like the notion of truth, is used to repeat the speaker's commitment. It may be the case that we use the notion of fact to repeat our commitment in different areas, but it does not follow that we have two different notions of fact, namely fact_m and fact_p . The notion of fact_m can be distinguished substantially from fact_p only when we have in mind in advance a notion of truth in general. In the case of *A*, the notion presupposed is that a fact is something existing independently of a judge's opinion about the fabric of the world represented by a proposition. When *A* agrees that we can talk *as if* there are moral facts, in terms of fact_m , and distinguishes the two levels of using the notion of fact, what he is saying is actually that minimalism can only be right when applied to the vulgar level. This position, however, is incompatible with minimalism. For what minimalism would like to assert is that we cannot have a notion of fact besides the one it describes. That is to say, we can talk of fact_m as well as talk of fact_p , and even though they are deployed in different areas, they nevertheless mean exactly the same. There is no room for one to say that fact_p is the genuine fact and that when one speaks of fact_m he merely speaks *as if* there is a fact.

The oddity for Blackburn's argument then is easy to see: to earn us the right to talk of moral truth one needs to accept a minimalist theory of truth, that is to take *B*'s position, but to earn us a right to talk *as if* there are moral facts one has to, to some extent, reject a minimalist theory of facts, that is one has to take *A*'s position. If Blackburn is to take *B*'s position, then he cannot really talk *as if* there are moral facts; if, on the other hand, he is to take *A*'s position, then he cannot earn us a right to talk of moral truth. Certainly, Blackburn cannot take *A*'s position in talk of moral facts, but take *B*'s in talk of moral truth. This would commit him to a charge of inconsistency. Blackburn then seems to fall into a dilemma: the argument for the applicability of the notion of truth to moral sentences and the argument for the seeming existence of moral properties cannot succeed at the same time. If minimalism can make sense of the former, then it fails in the latter; or contrary, if it succeeds in the latter, it fails in the former.

A general doubt then arises concerning whether the quasi-realist project can be complete without doing harm to projectivism. Blackburn himself tries to build quasi-realism on the basis of projectivism. If carrying out the quasi-realist project would inevitably jeopardize projectivism, can his theory on the whole be coherent? Crispin Wright (1985, 1988) insightfully makes the point that Blackburn's quasi-realism seems not be able to escape the dilemma between quasi-realist project and projectivism. Either his quasi-realist project fails - in which case he does not

explain how projectivism can account for the propositional surface of moral language - or it succeeds, in which case “it makes good all the things the projectivist started out wanting to deny: that the discourse in question is genuinely assertoric, aimed at truth, and so on”. (Wright, 1988) Our dilemma is actually a version of this further dilemma.

In his reply to Wright’s criticism, however, Blackburn does not think that there is anything incoherent or dilemmatic here - although he started his analysis with the contrast postulated by projectivism that there are nature as it is and nature as we experience it as being, the contrast somehow evaporates in the process of fulfilling his quasi-realist project. His project ends up with saying that “attitudes . . . properly sustain the appearance of being beliefs, so they are beliefs. They belong to the subset of beliefs that are also attitudes . . . We would not say things like [moral sentences] are not propositions; they are commitments of a different sort. We would say [moral sentences] are propositions; they are the subset of propositions belief in which is (functionally and logically) equivalent to having certain [attitudes]”. (Blackburn 1992a, 367) That is to say, projectivism functions as a “throw-away ladder” - once it has been deployed to reach the goal aimed at, it can be discarded as such without incurring any damage to what has been established.

I find this retort quite puzzling for three reasons. First, there is nothing in Blackburn’s writings indicating his dissatisfaction with projectivism, nothing indicating what is wrong with projectivism, except the problem of the Frege-Geach abyss, a problem which he vows to solve along the lines of projectivism. If there is nothing wrong with projectivism, why abandon it all of a sudden? Secondly, in *Spreading the Word* quasi-realism emerges, as we have said above, as a goal to reach, aimed at removing obstacles standing in the way of projectivism. It functions rather like a working principle providing a direction of how to seek for explanations of conditionals and the notion of truth. Its content is nothing but (QR 1) and (QR 2). However, in this retort quasi-realism appears to be a substantial position, maintaining that we are justified in extending the concept of belief or proposition to moral sentences. His reason for claiming that we are so justified is that there are beliefs of the kind that belong to the subset of beliefs but are also commitments and there are propositions of the kind that belong to the subset of propositions but are also attitudes. And he says that the fact that there are such kinds of belief and proposition will take all the work that quasi-realism tries to carry out. Nevertheless, none of what has been attempted in *Spreading the Word* can do the job. Thirdly, if projectivism is eventually to be thrown away, then the integrity of his theory developed in *Spreading the Word* would be torn down. Blackburn will have to modify his theory of meaning to tell us how to regard what a moral sentence means, if a moral sentence is a

particular kind of proposition, which is not suitable to apply (RD), (One-off), (MRD*), or (MO). And the logic of attitudes he constructed along the line of projectivism would be a detour - if moral sentences are not attitudes, then the operator H! and T! simply lose their teeth. With these puzzles in mind, I suggest that either Blackburn's new proposal is *ad hoc*, or he is giving up what he has done but proposes a new way of doing his philosophy. Either way, it is fair to say, is to vindicate Wright's dilemma. Thus, we conclude that Blackburn's quasi-realism cannot be achieved without damaging projectivism.

The other difficulties I shall address concern the plausibility of Blackburn's logic of attitudes. One such difficulty has been hinted by Blackburn (1988, 197). Consider an inference of the form:

$$P; H!(p \rightarrow H!q); \text{ ergo } H!q.$$

To examine its validity, let us apply rules for the next approximation to the ideal L^* of L and the tableau method. At beginning, we should start by considering whether $\{P, H!(p \rightarrow H!q), \sim H!q\}$ can come to close at the end of the proof. The first approximation of the set would be $\{p \rightarrow H!q, \sim H!q\}^*$ (by i and ii), which divided into two branches, $\{\sim p, \sim q\}$ and $\{H!q, \sim q\}$. Although the next approximation of the latter branch, $\{q, \sim q\}^{*(2)}$ (by i and ii), does close, the first branch remains open. This means that the inference is invalid on Blackburn's logic of attitude. Unfortunately this is not a welcome result. Suppose John holds a moral view that anyone who lies should be punished, and suppose he apply this standard hypothetically to his best friend Smith, saying "if Smith lies, he should be punished." Suppose one day he happens to discover Smith did lie to him about something. Then, to be consistent in his stance, John has to conclude that Smith should be punished. Now John's inference is obviously valid and it is of the form given above. Blackburn's theory of logic simply fails to grasp any inference made by applying moral standards to states of affairs.

The other difficulty is a familiar ghost. The problem of making sense of the logical inconsistency involved in moral modus ponens is one the main motives for Blackburn to modify his theory of logic so many times. His most recent answer rests on a notion of an ideal world and a logical procedure devised to bring all commitments into the ideal world. A set of commitments is inconsistent, he thinks, if they cannot all be carried out satisfactorily in the ideal world. The notion of logical inconsistency seems to be secured here by the logical procedure. Unfortunately this security can at most be regarded as a disguise. Set aside those awful logical calculations, one can still ask the question that what is wrong with people who have conflicting commitments. It is not only unusual but also unnatural that people could

have conflicting commitments. Consider a student who makes such an inference: if I want to get good score in tomorrow's exam I need to work hard tonight; I want to get good score; *ergo* I need to work hard tonight. Suppose it happens that the student also has a strong desire to go out tonight and he finally decides to go out. Now it is obvious that there is a logical procedure to show that the student's commitment to the inference and his commitment to the desire cannot be satisfactorily carried out in an ideal world. Yet this fact, *pace* Blackburn's theory, does not change the fact that the student's decision does not commit any logical inconsistency. There being a logical procedure does not help an evaluative inconsistency become logical. Blackburn's theory still fails to grasp the logical inconsistency involved in moral modus ponens¹⁰.

Bringing all my objections together, I shall conclude that Blackburn's quasi-realism is a failing project. It sets out by firmly holding (QR 1) and seeks to defend (QR 2). However, his theory of truth cannot earn us a right to talk of moral truth and as if there are moral properties at the same time. (QR 2) fails just because it will inevitably do harm to (QR 1) - (QR 2) cannot be endorsed without damaging (QR 1). Furthermore, Blackburn's theory of logic, aimed to solve the Frege-Geach problem, comes out as a failure as well. The consequence of this failure is: the Frege-Geach problem is still troubling for projectivism and the phenomenon of the propositional surface of moral sentences is still in need of an explanation.

¹⁰ Gideon Rosen (1998) suggests that the difficulty of making sense of logical inconsistency in moral cases is not insurmountable. He thinks there is no need to talk of an ideal world and the negation of an attitude of approval toward X is not toleration of $\sim X$, rather it amounts to rejection of the attitude of disapproval toward X . "This friendly amendment", he writes, "provides for a neat ... account of what is wrong with asserting S & $\sim S$ in ethics. The idea is that to do so is to violate in one breath a commitment one undertakes in another. It also provides the basis for a general, non-truth-theoretic account of 'inconsistency' ". A set of propositions may be said to be inconsistent if it is impossible to fulfill jointly the commitments its members express." I shall not go deeper than remarking this position. For, first, to adopt this suggestion, Blackburn would need to give up the logical theory he has constructed; secondly, as noticed by Rosen, putting so much weight on the notion of commitment would require a projectivist understanding of it, and it is still unclear what this understanding would look like.

Chapter 3 Gibbard's solution

The aim of Gibbard's norm-expressivism is to provide a naturalistic account of human normative life. We shall therefore focus on his discussion of normativity instead of morality. In the first section, I shall discuss Gibbard's defense of the fact-value distinction, which is the foundation of expressivism and is thought to be in danger of collapse. We will see that Gibbard's argument is not complete and its success depends on the success of norm-expressivism as a version of an expressivist theory. This very feature of Gibbard's theory makes the nature of norm-expressivism utterly explanatory. Its validity lies in its cogency compared to rival theories.

In the second section, I then turn to norm-expressivism itself, to see what are the main claims of Gibbard's theory. I mention four, namely Gibbard explains normativity in terms of rationality, his theory is expressivistic and non-cognitivist, and his intention is to account for the propositional surface of normative language. We shall also encounter an objection to the first point in order to give us a sharper idea of Gibbard's approach.

In section three, I come to the normative logic Gibbard devises to solve various problems, including the Frege-Geach one. I shall go through his formalism first and see how it can solve part of Frege-Geach problem. And then I argue that what has been achieved by this formalization can be done with a simpler version.

In the final section, I shall point out a mechanism embodied in the simple version of normative logic and show that the advantage of this mechanism is that it characterizes the nature of Gibbard's discussion on normative discussion. I go on to argue that if we are to treat this mechanism seriously, we would encounter difficulties caused by the expressivistic and non-cognitivist theses of expressivism. Finally I suggest that to avoid these difficulties and appreciate the merits of Gibbard's theory, Gibbard's theory can be best understood as a version of normative fictionalism. The upshot then is that Gibbard does not need to defend the fact-value distinction and he does not really solve the Frege-Geach problem, because the problem is not a problem for fictionalism at all.

1. Fact-value distinction

Gibbard starts his norm-expressivistic analysis with an acknowledgement of charges he needs to address. One charge to which he gives particular weight is the recent attack on the so-called fact-value distinction. Putnam (1981), for example, criticizes the distinction, by saying that we cannot have a notion of fact that is utterly

independent of values. His points can be put roughly as follows. In scientific inquiries, it is an important and useful constraint that we should have an epistemic story to tell us whether our theory is correct, which in turn means that we are in need of some criteria of rational acceptability of scientific theories. These criteria are said to include simplicity, coherence, comprehensiveness, etc. As these criteria are themselves values, our notion of the empirical world presupposes values. Value then infuses into our notion of facts. (Putnam 1981, 130-4) Furthermore, in perceptual knowledge, which seems to be more immediate and less tainted by our acceptance of values, Putnam uses a simple example to show that there are a lot of factors at play. Consider someone from a culture which does not have furniture nor any vocabulary for furniture. When he enters a room with a table and a chair inside, and is required to give a description of the room, he may try to convey his knowledge of the room by using the language he has. Yet, he cannot adequately describe the room, Putnam (1981, 138) argues, because for his descriptions to be adequate he has to have a certain set of concepts including table, chair and furniture. The fact that he did not have the concept of furniture makes him fail to describe the perceptual content of the room. In other words, even facts given by perceptual knowledge have presupposed some cultural backgrounds. The sharp distinction between fact and value is therefore susceptible to skepticism.

Putnam also remarks that this skepticism has a bearing on moral theories. He says "one of the many distinctions which have gotten confused together under the general heading 'fact-value distinction' is the distinction between using a linguistic expression to describe and using that linguistic expression to praise or blame". (Putnam 1981, 138) Putnam considers a pair of evaluative terms, *considerate* and *inconsiderate*, and says "[t]he judgment that someone is inconsiderate may indeed be used to blame; but it may be used simply to describe, and it may also be used to explain or to predict." (Putnam 1981, 138) Therefore he suggests that the distinction between expressing attitudes and representing facts cannot be drawn on the basis of the fact-value distinction.

As we see, Putnam has two points here: first, the fact-value distinction collapses because norms infuse into our understanding of facts, and secondly, the distinction between the expression and representation of evaluative phrases collapses accordingly. The second point is a direct denial of the expressivistic thesis of expressivism. To defend the core of expressivism, Gibbard sets out to accommodate the thought that norms infuse facts with the thought that evaluative judgments are used expressively. His strategy is, first, to agree that there are norms governing the acquisition of knowledge, but, second, insist that this does not make norms become facts, especially, our evaluative norms are still different from our factual knowledge, in that they do not

represent the natural world at all.

He then distinguishes two sorts of representation and argues that normative judgment is no part of them. There is a *system of natural representation* for a feature *S* of the world, whose function is to adjust some feature *R* of the world to correspond to *S* by deploying our immediate sensory perceptions and prosaic concepts. There is also a more complex *system of artificial representation* for a feature *S* of the world, whose function is to adjust feature *R* of the world to correspond to *S* by deploying our theoretical constructions. Now Gibbard argues that normative judgment is not a product of our system of natural representation:

The argument that normative judgment is not a product of natural representation

- P1. The biological function of the mechanisms underlying our normative capacities is to coordinate what is in one's head with what is in another's.
- P2. However, the biological function of natural representation is to put something in the head in correspondence with the subject matter.
- P3. To coordinate what is in one's head with what is in another's is not to put something in one's head in correspondence with the subject matter.
- C. So, normative judgement is not a product of natural representation.

Gibbard acknowledges a defeater for this argument: judgments of fact can themselves coordinate. Think of two people managing to move a piano from one room to another. The men's success, Gibbard thinks, is due to their ability to coordinate their movement in accordance with the factual judgments they make about their situation. They correctly apprehend the positions of various obstacles and each other's last and next move to the effect that they can act accordingly. "Thus even if we have the normative capacities we do because they coordinate, the coordination might work through judgments of fact." (Gibbard 1990, 108) Premise three is therefore in doubt. We need to ask whether normative judgments coordinate in virtue of natural representations of some particular normative facts.

Putnam's talk of "considerate" and "inconsiderate" seems to provide evidence that there are evaluative terms which can be used both to naturally describe states of affairs and to express attitudes. It might be said that for the judgments containing such terms, their normativity relies on such terms' natural representation of facts. Following others, Gibbard calls concepts denoted by such terms *thick concepts* and judgments containing these terms *thick judgments*. (Gibbard 1990, 112-3) Gibbard wants to deny that the normativity of thick judgements is consisted in the natural representations of thick concepts contained in the judgments. Consider a thick

judgment made by Jones that Fowler is inconsiderate. Gibbard can agree that this judgment can be used to describe naturally a characteristic of Fowler, namely, that Fowler does not always show regard for the feelings or circumstances of others. He can also agree that the judgment that Fowler is inconsiderate can be used to blame Fowler's behaviour in some circumstances. What he insists is that when "inconsiderate" is used propositionally, what the term naturally describes is not a normative fact - it describes, according to Gibbard, merely the plain fact that Fowler does not show regard to other people. This plain fact itself is not normative. Furthermore, Gibbard argues that when thick judgments are used evaluatively, they are normative not in virtue of the plain facts they naturally describe. Consider an outsider who encounters a circumstance in which Jones would make the judgment that Fowler is inconsiderate, without himself producing any attitude towards Fowler. Gibbard thinks that there is nothing unintelligible in the outsider. People do have the ability to describe circumstances in which others would be disposed to issue normative judgments, whereas they themselves remain neutral. The normativity of the thick judgment does not supervene upon the plain fact it naturally describes. For these two reasons, Gibbard thinks that it is reasonable to say that there are no normative facts represented by thick judgments.

Of course Putnam's point should not be restricted to thick concepts only. What he intends to say is that all of our normative language is used both propositionally and expressively. He says "We invent moral words for morally relevant features of situations, and we gradually begin to make explicit oral generalizations, which lead to still further refinement of our moral notions, and so on." (Putnam 1981, 144) Yet, for Gibbard, this amounts merely to saying that we are adapted to make normative judgments that bear a certain complex relation to the circumstances judged. Now, as Putnam's example of thick concepts fails, Gibbard thinks that it is reasonable to say that other normative judgments do not naturally represent normative facts either. The complex process of the refinement of moral words does not make them capable of representing naturally normative facts.

Gibbard goes on to argue that normative judgments are not a product of an artificial system of representation. A system of artificial representation, like physics, represents its content artificially by elaborated schemes of concepts. For example, to explain why Millikan thought there were electrons in 1911, physicists need to tell us what Millikan observed and explain why he observed what he did by citing electrons to the extent that "[n]o explanation without electrons will be complete and credible". (Gibbard 1990, 121) Similarly, to decide whether a set of normative judgments belongs to a particular system of artificial representation one needs to decide whether it is necessary to cite normative facts, in order to explain what he observes in moral

phenomena and why he sees it as such. Now Gibbard thinks that, if his norm-expressivistic analysis is successful, we can do the job without citing normative facts. Let us then put together his argument in favor of the fact-value distinction:

The argument against there being normative facts

- P1. If there are normative facts, then at least some of them must be represented by normative judgments.
 - P2. There are two different systems of representation, namely natural and artificial system of representation.
 - P3. Normative judgments are not products of a system of natural representation, because even if normative judgments do naturally represents something, its normativity does not come from the thing they represent.
 - P4. Normative judgments are not products of a system of artificial representation, because we can elaborate a scheme of representation which need not cite the notion of normative facts.
- C. So, there are no normative facts.

Two remarks concerning this argument should be borne in mind. First, if the argument is successful, we can say that a sophisticated version of the fact-value distinction has been secured, though the crude form of it is rejected. On the one hand, it seems that we can talk of facts represented naturally and artificially, with acknowledgment that normative judgments are no part of it. On the other hand, the thought that norms infuse into facts is accommodated with the thought that the norms and facts are still different. This line of thought, which allows values to infuse into facts yet insists the difference between values and facts, we shall call the *sophisticated version of the fact-value distinction*. On the contrary, the notion rejected by Putnam, and Gibbard as well, that facts are absolutely distinct from values, we shall call the *crude version of the fact-value distinction*. Then we can say that Putnam's argument goes wrong, because it moves too quickly from the collapse of the crude form to the conclusion that normative terms can be used propositionally, without noticing the possibility of the sophisticated version of the distinction.

Secondly, the success of the argument has not been demonstrated so far in our formulation of Gibbard's theory. For it remains to be seen whether his norm-expressivism can give a satisfactory story without appealing to the notion of normative facts. In this sense, the argument is by no means a decisive one. The explanatory power of norm-expressivism is central to the argument. If norm-expressivism cannot give a satisfactory picture of what we are doing in uttering

moral language, it will be fair to say that the question whether normative facts are artificially represented by normative judgments is an open question and the sophisticated version of the fact-value distinction would be cast into doubt again. In fact, in the final section of this chapter, we shall see that Gibbard's norm-expressivism is better understood not as expressivism, but as a version of normative fictionalism. In view of the fact that normative fictionalism holds that normative sentences stand to express propositions that represent normative facts, we should conclude that this argument fails, and it remains as a possibility that normative facts can be treated as a product of a system of artificial representation. Yet for the present purpose, let us follow Gibbard's approach for a moment, to see how he develops his theory. We now turn to Gibbard's norm-expressivism.

2. Norm-expressivism

In a preview of his norm-expressivism, Gibbard briefly characterizes his analysis as follows:

The analysis is not directly of what it is for something to be rational, but of what it is for someone to judge that something is rational. In this sense the analysis is expressivistic, and in too big a mouthful, I shall call it the norm-expressivistic analysis.

The analysis is non-cognitivist in the narrow sense that, according to it, to call a thing rational is not to state a matter of fact, either truly or falsely. None of this leaves normative language defective or second-rate. The analysis explains why we need normative language, and as it takes shape, it ascribes to rationality many of the features on which theories of normative fact insist. In many ways, normative judgments mimic factual judgments, and indeed factual judgments themselves rest on norms - norms for belief. Normative discussion is much like factual discussion, I shall be claiming, and just as indispensable. (Gibbard 1990, 8)

Four glosses can help to see the points of the theory.

First, Gibbard explains normativity in terms of rationality. He proposes, as the first attempt at an analysis, that to call something rational is to express one's acceptance of norms that permit it. (Gibbard 1990, 7) This formula itself, according to Gibbard, is not a definition of the term "rational", but a characterization of our use of it.¹ By "norms" here, Gibbard means possible rules or prescriptions, expressible by an imperative. (Gibbard 1990, 46, 70). A norm as an imperative is a constraint that prescribes a pattern of behavior, which a competent agent can accept or reject.

¹ The rationale for saying this is Gibbard's acknowledgement of Quine's attack on the synthetic-analytic distinction and his conclusion that all philosophically interesting notions resist definition. See Quine (1951) and Gibbard (1990, 31-3).

Acceptance of a constraint or a norm, according to Gibbard, is basically a state of mind, which can be identified through a socio-biological picture of us as part of nature. Roughly speaking, the picture is that: in the history of human beings' evolution, systems of normative control in human beings are adapted to achieve interpersonal coordination and to improve the probability of success of their reproduction under selection pressure. A norm is a linguistically encoded precept produced for the need of normative control. People use language to coordinate with other members of their society: they use language to communicate with and to motivate others by engaging in normative discussion. They work out what to do, what to think, and how to feel in possible situations, to the effect that they might do what they think they ought to do, might think what they think they ought to think, and might feel what they think they ought to feel. To accept a norm, then, is "to be disposed to avow it in unconstrained normative discussion". (Gibbard 1990, 74) In Gibbard's terminology, acceptance of a norm results from putting oneself under the *normative governance* of normative discussion. (Gibbard 1990, 72)

Second, he proposes that to call something rational is to express one's acceptance of norms that permit it, and that acceptance of a norm is to be disposed to avow it in unconstrained normative discussion, together bringing us to the thought that to call a thing rational is to endorse it in some way. This is the reason why Gibbard thinks his analysis is expressivistic: the analysis of rationality seems at bottom to embrace the expressivistic thesis of expressivism, namely that the meaning of a normative judgment consists in the speech act performed by predicating the normative terms in the judgment.

Thirdly, norm-expressivism is also non-cognitivist. For Gibbard denies that moral judgments are apt for truth-ascription. His rationale for thinking so is exactly the same as other expressivists: if there are no normative facts to represent and normative judgments are to perform speech acts, then there is no reason to ascribe truth-values to normative judgments.

Fourthly, like Blackburn, Gibbard also appreciates the need to explicate the propositional surface of moral language. His saying that "normative judgments mimic factual judgments" (Gibbard 1990, 8) indicates his intention to tell a story of how normative judgments can be treated like propositions, playing a role in moral inferences and communications. What makes his strategy distinct from Blackburn is his not trying to earn us the right to talk about normative facts or normative truth. Rather he starts from a neutral phenomenon – acceptance of norms – seeing to develop an expressivistic analysis of our normative practice to the extent that the two theses of expressivism can be accommodated with the propositional surface of moral

language.

Several criticisms have been attempted to cast doubt on the general approach of norm-expressivism. One of them is particularly worth mention, because it allows us to see an important point of Gibbard's. The objection worries about the prospect of explicating normativity in terms of rationality. After all, the notion of normativity is on the face of it different from that of rationality. Sinnott-Armstrong (1993, 307), for example, provides a counter-example: it is not impolite to smoke when you are alone. This is a normative judgment and the speaker who utters this judgment, we might say, is expressing his acceptance of norms that permits smoking in private. Then, according to Gibbard's theory, what the speaker is saying is that it is rational to smoke in private. Yet, it is conceivable that someone might make the judgment that it is not impolite to smoke in private, without thinking it is rational to smoke in private. Rationality is simply different from normativity.

Gibbard (1993) replies that norm-expressivism can account for it to the extent that it is not a counter-example. When people engage in normative discussion, Gibbard says, they are working out norms that govern their reaction to various states of affairs. In the case of politeness and impoliteness, they are working out norms that govern when to feel offended and when not to. Suppose Emily does say that it is irrational to smoke, but it is not impolite to smoke if you smoke in private. What she is doing is actually expressing her acceptance of two different norms. One norm says that it is rational not to be offended by other people's smoking in private; the other norm says, however, not to smoke. The seeming conflict detected by Sinnott-Armstrong, the conflict between Emily's acceptance of norms that say it is rational to smoke in private and her thinking it is irrational to smoke, vanishes when the use of rationality in both cases has been understood by means of the norms that are relevant to the judgments. After all, it makes perfect sense for people to think that one should not be offended by others' smoking in private at the same time think that one shouldn't smoke.

The problem with Sinnott-Armstrong's argument is that he does not appreciate Gibbard's point that all norms are in a sense norms of rationality². He insists that normativity is somehow different from rationality, to the extent that "[j]udgments about rationality do not express one's acceptance of just any norms. They express one's acceptance of norms of rationality." (Sinnott-Armstrong 1993, 307) He therefore suggests that if Gibbard is to analyse normativity in terms of rationality, he would commit a vicious circularity. His criticism is of course not based on a

² See Gibbard (1990, 47).

charitable reading of Gibbard. For Gibbard explicitly says that his analysis of the word “rational” is not intended to cover all uses of the term (Gibbard 1992a) and he is concerned only with the meaning he wants to exploit. (Gibbard 1990, 49) For his purpose, what is needed is that there is indeed a sense of “rational” which can be explicated by appealing to norms that govern peoples’ reactions to states of affairs. And this seems unproblematic. Carson (1992) and others, who attack Gibbard on the ground that there are some ordinary uses of the term “rational” incompatible with Gibbard’s account, simply misplace Gibbard’s point.

Other objections have also been attempted. For example, it may be doubted whether we can use the word “rational” in such a way that we can say that it is *rational* to feel anger toward a person. Or it may be doubted that we can rationally express our emotions only when moral judgment is involved.³ All these objections Gibbard has tried to rebut and I shall not attempt to address them. I shall simply assume Gibbard’s retorts concerning these objections and then proceed to see how he accounts for the propositional surface of moral language.

3. Normative logic

Gibbard constructs his normative logic by considering first the notion of a system of norms. “The norm-expressivistic analysis”, he says, “speaks of a ‘system of norms’, and not simply of norms”. (Gibbard 1990, 86) His reason is that when we consider the situations in which people experience weakness of will or suffer in moral conflicts, we can see that there are many norms involved, governing in different ways how to think, feel and act, with one weighing over the others or all of equal weight. He says, “Our normative judgments thus depend not on a single norm, but on a plurality of norms that we accept as having some force, and on the ways we take some of these norms to outweigh or override others”. (Gibbard 1990, 86-7) It should be noted that in talking about a system of norms Gibbard is not trying to work out the priority of competitive norms, rather he is observing the structure of normative deliberation. With this observation, he can go on his discussion of normative logic.

Equipped with a system of norms, Gibbard thinks it is natural to talk of any moral judgment in terms of a set of basic predicates: “*N*-forbidden”, “*N*-optional”, and “*N*-required”, with any one of them mutually definable by the others⁴. Now, a system of norms can be said to be *complete* if these predicates trichotomize⁵ the

³ For the former objection, see Gibbard (1990, 52); for the latter, see Gibbard (1990, 129-32). Blackburn has a useful discussion about the latter in a review of Gibbard. (Blackburn 1992b)

⁴ For example, “*N*-permitted” can be defined as “either *N*-optional or *N*-required”.

⁵ If we take only two of the *N*-corresponding predicates as basic and define the rest in terms of the

possibilities: if, that is, on every occasion, actual or hypothetical, each alternative is either N -forbidden, N -optional, or N -required. Suppose a goddess Hera, who is “entirely coherent and completely opinionated both normatively and factually”, has a completely determinate way w she thinks the world to be, and has a complete system n of general norms that she accepts. The world w and the system of norms n Hera accepts constitute a completely opinionated credal-normative state, which can apply to any states of affairs. “Any particular normative judgment holds or not, as a matter of logic, *in* the factual-normative world $\langle w, n \rangle$.” (Gibbard 1990, 95) In contrast, for an ordinary person like Cleopatra, who suffers both factual and normative uncertainty, what she can have in mind must be an incomplete factual-normative world. This incomplete world, Gibbard thinks, can be represented by a disjunction of all the complete factual-normative worlds. Formally, an incomplete factual-normative world N^* can be put as:

$$N^* = \langle w_1, n_1 \rangle \text{ or } \langle w_2, n_2 \rangle \text{ or } \langle w_3, n_3 \rangle \dots \langle w_n, n_n \rangle,$$

where $\langle w_i, n_i \rangle$ ($1 \leq i \leq n$) is a complete factual-normative world and the number of such worlds is between two and an infinite number, i.e. $2 \leq n \leq \infty$ ⁶.

A judgment made by a competent but not omniscient person that it is rational to do X , would be taken to express the judge’s acceptance of N^* , which treats X as N^* -permitted under the circumstances in which X is considered. Note that N^* is not something an ordinary person can have in mind - if it is impossible for him to have any $\langle w_i, n_i \rangle$ ($1 \leq i \leq n$) in mind, it is certainly impossible for him to have in mind the disjunction of all complete factual-normative worlds. N^* is simply a theoretical device constructed to represent ordinary people’s incomplete world-views. Note also that when Gibbard characterizes N^* in such a way, his inspiration is from possible world semantics. Drawing on such theory, Gibbard goes on to suggest the content of a statement S , $\langle S \rangle$, being represented by the set of all factual-normative worlds for which S holds, the set symbolized as O_S . Formally, it is:

$$\langle S \rangle = O_S = \{ \langle w_{s1}, n_{s1} \rangle, \langle w_{s2}, n_{s2} \rangle, \langle w_{s3}, n_{s3} \rangle \dots \langle w_{sn}, n_{sn} \rangle \},$$

where $\langle w_{si}, n_{si} \rangle$ ($1 \leq i \leq n$) is a complete factual-normative world for which S holds and the number of such worlds is between two and an infinite number, i.e. $2 \leq n \leq \infty$.

Note $\langle w_{si}, n_{si} \rangle$ ($1 \leq i \leq n$) is not something we can have in mind either. It follows that we cannot have in mind the represented content of S , $\langle S \rangle$. To some

two we pick out, then a system of norms can be said as complete if these predicates dichotomise the possibilities.

⁶ The number n cannot be 1, for in that case N^* would become complete.

degree, this is fine, if $\langle S \rangle$ is not proposed to characterize the state of mind generated by S , but to give a formal representation of it using the apparatus of possible world semantics. The value of this representation, according to Gibbard, is that it can tell us why a certain combination of normative statements and factual statements does not hold. Consider an example given by Gibbard:

A: Antony finds himself outnumbered or it makes sense for him to give battle.

P: Antony finds he slightly outnumbers the enemy.

N: Never give battle unless you find that you vastly outnumber the enemy.

On the theory described above, we can formulate the content of each statement as follows:

$$\langle A \rangle = O_A = \{ \langle w_{A1}, n_{A1} \rangle, \langle w_{A2}, n_{A2} \rangle, \langle w_{A3}, n_{A3} \rangle \dots \langle w_{An}, n_{An} \rangle \},$$

$$\langle P \rangle = O_P = \{ \langle w_{P1}, n_{P1} \rangle, \langle w_{P2}, n_{P2} \rangle, \langle w_{P3}, n_{P3} \rangle \dots \langle w_{Pl}, n_{Pl} \rangle \},$$

$$\langle N \rangle = O_N = \{ \langle w_{N1}, n_{N1} \rangle, \langle w_{N2}, n_{N2} \rangle, \langle w_{N3}, n_{N3} \rangle \dots \langle w_{Nm}, n_{Nm} \rangle \},$$

where $2 \leq n, l, m \leq \infty$.

The problem for the combination is that we cannot find any $\langle w_i, n_i \rangle$ ($1 \leq i \leq \min(n, l, m)$) to be shared in common by $\langle A \rangle$, $\langle P \rangle$ and $\langle N \rangle$. In other words, the content of the combination, $\langle A, P, N \rangle$, is empty. This means, according to Gibbard, that *A*, *P* and *N* are inconsistent. We thus have a systemic way of talking about inconsistency. Furthermore, Gibbard thinks that what *A* is doing in this combination can be regarded as ruling out the combination of *P* with *N*. To generalize this point a little bit further, Gibbard thinks *A*'s meaning can be regarded as ruling out everything outside $\langle A \rangle$. Then it seems that what *A* is doing in the whole set of our language is to ruling out various combinations of descriptions and normative principles.

Gibbard then concludes that "[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." (Gibbard 1990, 99)

Note that the example given above is actually a variation of the Frege-Geach problem. We have said in chapter 1 that Frege-Geach problem is a problem which appears, not only in conditionals, but also disjunctions, negations and propositional attitudes. Gibbard's success in explaining the variation of disjunction suggests that he can succeed, if not anywhere, at least in other logical connectives. Take the familiar example of modus ponens inference:

P1. It is wrong to tell lies.

P2. If it is wrong to tell lies, then it is wrong to get your little brother to tell

lies.

C. *Ergo*, it is wrong to get your little brother to tell lies.

We can go through the formal procedure provided by the possible world semantics to find that $\langle P1, P2, \sim C \rangle$ is empty, therefore conclude the validity of the inference. Alternatively, we can deploy the theory of meaning Gibbard devises, saying things like the following: P1 rules out a set of factual-normative worlds which permits telling lies, and P2 rules out a set of factual-normative worlds which does not permit telling lies but permits getting your little brother to tell lies, therefore the only possible worlds left satisfying P1 and P2 at the same time is the world that does not permit telling lies and does not permit getting your little brother to tell lies. This is, of course, a set of possible worlds which does not permit getting your little brother to tell lies. We then reach the conclusion we want and explain the validity of the inference.

It seems then that with the notion of a system of norms and possible world semantics Gibbard has a device capable of solving the Frege-Geach problem. I shall argue, however, that this seeming success is not completely satisfactory and can be absorbed by Gibbard's even more simple aforementioned idea.

What makes it not completely satisfactory is mainly a psychological and practical consideration. Consider the combination $\langle A, P, N \rangle$ again. Gibbard says that the combination is inconsistent because we cannot find a possible world, $\langle w_i, n_i \rangle$ ($1 \leq i \leq \min(n, l, m)$), to be shared in common by $\langle A \rangle$, $\langle P \rangle$ and $\langle N \rangle$. But how is this possible? We have noticed that psychologically we cannot have any of $\langle A \rangle$, $\langle P \rangle$ and $\langle N \rangle$ in mind – we cannot have, or cannot even imagine we have, conjunctions of every complete factual-normative world which permits $\langle A \rangle$, $\langle P \rangle$ and $\langle N \rangle$ respectively in mind. Then how do we in practice find out that they do not have any set of possible world shared in common? Gibbard agrees as a constraint of his normative logic that “the psychic facts our formalism must match are the inferences the person takes as immediate and unproblematical”. (Gibbard 1990, 101) If we cannot have the in mind the representation of $\langle A \rangle$, $\langle P \rangle$ and $\langle N \rangle$, does it mean that Gibbard's formalism fails to depict the psychic facts? No! On the contrary, I totally agree that his formalism represents the thought we have in making inferences. What I want to say is simply: what makes sense of the representation is not the representation itself, but what makes intelligible the representation.

The dissatisfaction carries over to the talk of “ruling things out”. The meaning of A , says Gibbard, lies in its ruling out everything outside $\langle A \rangle$. If we cannot have in mind $\langle A \rangle$, how do we know what to rule out? We can indeed talk of what A rules out: it rules out “every world in which Antony does not find himself outnumbered, but

whose norms even so, as applied to its facts, say not to give battle.” (Gibbard 1990, 98)
Yet, we can say so, I argue, not because we have $\langle A \rangle$ in advance and then rule out things outside $\langle A \rangle$. It is rather because we have understood what A means in terms of things which make formulation of $\langle A \rangle$ possible, then we can proceed to formulate what is the content of $\langle A \rangle$ and what it rules out. In this sense, I turn to the thing which makes formulations such as $\langle A \rangle$ sensible.

What makes formulations such as $\langle A \rangle$ sensible? I think it is Gibbard’s talk of N^* -corresponding predicates. A few reasons for this are as follows. First, recall Gibbard’s explanation of how to represent the content of a judgment, S , that it is rational to do X . He says that the content of S , $\langle S \rangle$ can be represented by the set of all factual-normative worlds *for which S holds*. But what does it mean to say that S holds in a factual-normative world N ? Presumably, it is saying that doing X is either N -required, N -optional, or not N -prohibited. Whichever is the case, talk of N -corresponding predicates is the ground for the further formalization of S into $\langle S \rangle$.

Secondly, since we cannot really have a complete factual-normative world, the system of norms that says doing X is required, optional or not prohibited must be incomplete. For convenience, we can accept it is represented as N^* . For on the one hand talk of N^* is, psychologically speaking, more friendly; on the other, we do not really need in practice to go through all possible worlds contained in N^* to determine whether doing X is required, optional or prohibited. Every person who is humble enough to admit imperfection of their normative thinking would agree that there may be one or many complete systems of norms superior to his own. He would admit that his incomplete system of norms may be included in one of them, although he does not know which one it belongs to. To determine the N -corresponding property of doing a thing, he only needs to have a look at the incomplete system of norms he has, rather than go through every complete factual-normative world which contains his incomplete one. It seems therefore safe to represent his norms in terms of a disjunction of all complete factual-normative worlds.

Thirdly, with N^* and N^* -corresponding predicates in place the Frege-Geach problem seems to be resolved. Consider the familiar example again. According to this simple version of Gibbard’s theory, it can be translated as follows:

- P1*. Telling lies is N^* -forbidden.
- P2*. If telling lies is N^* -forbidden, then getting your little brother to tell lies is N^* -forbidden.
- C*. *Ergo*, getting your little brother to tell lies is N^* -forbidden.

There is no difficulty of equivocation of meaning. For, as Gibbard notices,



“ N^* -forbidden” is a descriptive predicate, rather than an expressivistic one: by saying X is N^* -forbidden, one is saying that there is an incomplete system of norms prohibiting doing X . The meaning of a descriptive sentence “telling lies is N^* -forbidden” is, of course, the same in each of its occurrences, whether asserted or unasserted. Consequently, there is no worry about identifying the meaning of $P1^*$ with the antecedent of $P2^*$, because they mean exactly the same. Further, “ N^* -forbidden” being a descriptive predicate, it then becomes possible to assign truth-value to each statement of the inference. For $P1^*$ and C^* , when there is such a system of norms that forbids telling lies and getting your little brother to tell lies, then both of their truth-values are “true”. For the conditional $P2^*$, things may get complicated. But for the present purpose, we can assume the classical theory of conditionals. Then $P2^*$ will be true either when its antecedent is false or when both its antecedent and consequent are true. The notion of validity involved in this inference can then be accounted for in the usual way, that an inference is valid if and only if it is truth-preserving.

For these three reasons, it seems to me that talk of N^* -corresponding predicates can take over what Gibbard’s formalizations can do without involving psychological embarrassment. Gibbard should really be content here with the simple apparatus and not bother himself too much with the awkward formalization, which presumably serves merely to represent what N^* -corresponding predicates say about normative judgments without adding something extra to them. I shall therefore concentrate in section 4 solely on this latter resolution of the Frege-Geach problem to see whether it can preserve both theses of expressivism. I shall show that it cannot and conclude that it had better to be regarded as a version of normative fictionalism rather than expressivism.

4. Critical assessment

We have seen merits of talk of N^* -corresponding predicates. Here we can add two more. First of all, it shows us how normative judgments mimic factual ones. Gibbard’s talk of N^* -corresponding predicates has the effect that a normative judgment such as

(N) It is wrong to do X

can turn out to be a factual one like

(F) X is N^* -forbidden.

Let us call this transition the *propositional transformation of normative judgments*. The reason that normative language behaves in a way so similar to factual language is because, Gibbard would agree, there is a process of such

transformation making them factual. Take the Frege-Geach problem in the case of propositional attitudes with which both Blackburn and Gibbard do not explicitly deal. Suppose Jack makes the judgment

(N 1) John believes that it is wrong to do X .

Since Jack can judge (N 1) without himself asserting that it is wrong to do X , expressivists have difficulties in identifying the meaning of the subordinate clause of (N 1) with the meaning of the indicative judgment that it is wrong to do X . However, for Gibbard, there is no such difficulty. For (N 1) can be transformed to

(F 1) John believes that doing X is N^* -forbidden.

Since the subordinate clause in (F 1) is descriptive, it has the same meaning everywhere, asserted or unasserted. Normative judgments mimic factual judgments, because they can be transformed into factual ones.

Furthermore, the transformation is central to the notion of normative discussion Gibbard addresses. To engage in normative discussion, according to Gibbard, is to engage in discussion which is aimed at working out, at a distance, in a community, what to do, think, or feel in a situation discussed. Suppose one makes a judgment of the form of (N) and some others disagree. What is needed for the judge to do is to give reasons of his thinking so. This, according to norm-expressivism, is to say why he thinks the norms he accepts, as applied to the situation discussed, require denial of doing X . These norms include not only those norms which prohibit doing X , but also *higher order norms* that govern the acceptance of the very norms that immediately prohibiting doing X . In other words, to claim the wrongness of doing X is to express acceptance of a series of norms ranked in a hierarchy that altogether rejects doing X . Not only a system of norms as applied to various possible worlds, N^* , is involved in this process, but also arguments for or against the cogency of (F) is involved. Thus, the propositional transformation of normative judgments is required in every normative discussion, because the transformation is what makes normative discussion possible. Talk of the family of N^* -corresponding predicates characterizes the nature of normative discussion.

Despite so many advantages, there is a reservation hanging around. It is obvious that the power of the transformation actually comes from a virtue of it, namely that it itself is a bridge that crosses the Frege-Geach abyss. On the one hand, it admits of there being normative judgments expressing states of mind; on the other, it shows a way leading to the other, factual side of the abyss. This very bridge is the bridge all expressivists aiming to solve the problem are looking for. Gibbard cannot really claim success without demonstrating how this bridge can be built. Has

Gibbard shown the way to build it? Or, more generally, can Gibbard in principle solve the problem? The answer is hardly yes.

One thing that comes immediately to mind, against the possibility of constructing the bridge, is concerned with the status of transformed judgments. The problem is that, if (N) is capable of being transformed into (F), how should we think of (F)? Should we think of it as a normative judgment or not? Suppose we take it as normative. Then we have to face at least two challenges.

First, when (F) is treated as normative, we would have an instance of a judgment being normative and descriptive at the same time. Hence, it seems that we need to revise the distinction between fact and value to the extent that there are some factual judgments which are normative as well.

Second, if a normative judgment like (N) can be transformed into a factual one like (F), we may wonder whether every other normative judgment can be transformed into a factual judgment as well. There seems to be no room for one who accepts Gibbard's theory to say "No, they cannot". Then every non-*N**-involving normative judgment can be transformed into a factual but also normative judgment. In view of the importance of *N**-involving factual and normative judgments like (F) in normative discussion, one may ask why we cannot treat judgments like (F) as what is really going on in our normative practice, and regard (N) only as the surface of (F). It seems to me that Gibbard and his followers would have no space to reject this suggestion. After all, under the supposition that the factual judgment (F) is normative as well, and that the transformation is legitimate, all normative force embodied in (N) must be carried over intactly to (F). It seems to be a better understanding of Gibbard's theory to say that (N) is elliptical for (F). However, if this is right, then Gibbard's norm-expressivism cannot be expressivistic and non-cognitivist. For, in this case, what is going on in our normative judgments are things like (F), which are both descriptive and cognitive. We then seem to be able to talk of normative facts as well as the truth of normative judgments. For these two reasons, Gibbard should be reluctant to think of (F) as normative.

Paradoxically, it is also difficult for expressivists to regard (F) as non-normative. First, if (N) is normative and (F) otherwise, a doubt arises immediately: why should we think the propositional transformation legitimate? After all, in the process of the transformation, something essential to normative judgments has been lost. If, as expressivism says, the meaning of a normative judgment is its expression of states of mind and the meaning of a non-normative, factual judgment lies in its representation, naturally or artificially, of the world, then we should regard (N) as having a different meaning to (F). If the normativity of (N) does not appear in (F), what is the reason

for us to accept the transformation as legitimate?

One possible reply is to appeal to the two component theory of meaning, saying that (F) is (N) stripped of normative elements – (F) retains descriptive meaning of (N) while dissects prescriptive meaning of it. I do not think this reply is persuasive at all. For, first, philosophers distinguish *thick concepts* from *thin concepts* by saying that thick concepts are those having both descriptive and prescriptive meanings. Giving the fact that “is wrong” is thin, it should not have any descriptive meaning to retain. Secondly, Gibbard himself is against the two component view. He thinks there are difficulties in explaining how the two components of a normative word combining together to do the job the word is to do in our language. He thinks he can conceive of three models of explanation, but every one ends up with a failure⁷. Thus we can put our argument as follows:

The argument against judgments containing N-corresponding predicates being non-normative*

1. For Gibbard’s solution of the Frege-Geach problem to be right, the propositional transformation of normative judgments into factual ones must be legitimate.
2. If the propositional transformation is legitimate, then the meaning of a normative judgment (N) must be in connection with the meaning of the factual judgement (F) resulting from the transformation.
3. The connection in between can be one of the following three cases:
 - (a) the meaning of (N) is identical with the meaning of (F), or
 - (b) the meaning of (N) is totally preserved in the meaning of (F), or
 - (c) the factual judgment (F) retains only the descriptive meaning of (F).
4. The connection cannot be identical. For if it is identical, then, first, Gibbard is under attack of the open question argument, which he endorses. Secondly, according to the expressivistic thesis of expressivism the meaning of a normative judgment cannot identical with a factual judgment.
5. The connection cannot be in the relation of total preservation. For if the meaning of (N) is totally persevered in (F), then we would have a

⁷ For detailed discussion, see Gibbard (1992b). Blackburn is more radical than Gibbard, thinking that there are no thick concepts at all. See Blackburn (1992d).

factual judgment, which is at the same time normative. A consequence in disagreement with our supposition.

6. The connection cannot be that (F) retains descriptive meaning of (N). For Gibbard thinks there are difficulties involved in this view.
7. So, there is no way to connect the meaning of (N) with the meaning of (F).
8. So, The propositional transformation cannot be legitimate.
9. Gibbard's solution to the Frege-Geach problem cannot be right.

Secondly, one cannot find resources in Gibbard's theory to deny the normativity of (F) when it is asserted in normative discussion. To see the point, let us consider a speaker making a judgment in normative discussion. Gibbard thinks that he is making a conversational demand on his audience - "he is demanding that the audience accept what he says, that it share the state of mind he expresses". (Gibbard 1990, 172) Certainly, he cannot demand arbitrarily. He must have a basis for his demands. The basis, according to Gibbard, is the objectivity of what he says. Only when he can regard as objective what he says in normative discussion, he can demand authority and influence over others. Nevertheless, Gibbard continues, a fully coherent speaker can regard what he says as objective only when "the higher order norms he accepts ascribe it a standpoint-independent validity". (Gibbard 1990, 193) In other words, Gibbard thinks that a speaker can only demand his audience to accept what he says, when (i) the base norms applied to the circumstance as he understands it make him judge in the way he does, (ii) the higher order norms he accepts say that the judgment applies to every one and (iii) he can reveal his grounds for holding (i) and (ii) without browbeating his audience. For the speaker of (N), what he is doing is satisfying these three requirements. In the system N^* , there are base norms associated with doing X and higher order norms that ascribe standpoint-independent validity to the base norms, and talk of how N^* prohibits doing X itself is revealing of his grounds for prohibiting doing X . Therefore, it is quite natural to think that the speaker of (F) is demanding authority and influence on his audience by his uttering (F). Therefore (F) must have normativity. It would be unintelligible to think that for the speaker of (F), when he engages in normative discussions and asserts (F), he is merely describing the prohibition of doing X by the norms which he think everyone should accept.

A similar story can be said on the audience's part. For the audience to accept a speaker's judgment, it is said, is it him to accept the judgment on the judge's authority. Only when the speaker has either the *contextual authority* or *fundamental authority*

his audience accords to him, can his words be accepted by the audience. The audience accords contextual authority to the speaker, if it thinks the speaker is “guided by norms the audience shares, so that the audience can use the speaker’s reasoning as proxy for its own”. (Gibbard 1990, 174) Alternatively, it can accord fundamental authority to the speaker even when it realizes that there are no common norms shared by itself and the speaker. The very fact that the speaker finds a norm credible may be enough lead it to accept what is said by the speaker.⁸ In other words, when the speaker of (F) claims authority on the basis of N^* , his audience would accept (F) as something with which to comply, if either it shares N^* , or it accords fundamental authority to the speaker. Then the normativity of (F) on the audience’s part is secured by the its share of N^* with the speaker, or by the authority it accords fundamentally to the speaker on the judgment that doing X is prohibited by N^* .

We should then conclude that Gibbard cannot really think of (F) as non-normative. If he thinks of (F) as non-normative, then his solution to the Frege-Geach problems would fail, his explanation of the propositional surface of normative language does not work, and he is contradicting himself.

Consequently, Gibbard’s theory is trapped in a predicament. On the one hand, he has difficulty in regarding (F) as normative; on the other, he cannot regard (F) as non-normative. The status of the transformed judgment therefore poses a difficulty for the propositional transformation.

One more difficulty associated with the transformation comes from truth-ascription. It is Gibbard’s intention to defend the non-cognitivist doctrine of expressivism that normative judgments are not truth-apt. In this spirit, Gibbard would regard (N) as non-truth-apt. Yet, Gibbard also agrees that the factual judgment (F) can be true or false. Then a difficulty arises: what makes it legitimate to transform a non-truth-apt judgment to a truth-apt? If Gibbard is still to insist on the non-cognitivist thesis of expressivism, his solution to the Frege-Geach problem would fail. We state the argument as follows:

The argument against judgments containing N^ -corresponding predicates being non-truth-apt*

1. For Gibbard’s solution of the Frege-Geach problem to be right, the propositional transformation of normative judgments into factual

⁸ Gibbard thinks that one cannot refuse to accord fundamental authority to others. For (i) the very fact that the influence of others has pervaded our thinking since before we could talk requires us to accord legitimacy to past influences of others and (ii) this means that one must also accord legitimacy to, if not all, at least some future influences from others, which in turns means that one has to accord some fundamental authority to others. See Gibbard (1990, 179-80)

ones must be legitimate.

2. If the propositional transformation is legitimate, then the property of a normative judgment (N) must stand in a relation to the factual judgement (F) resulting from the transformation.
3. The property of (N) can be in relation with property of (F) in three ways:
 - (a) the property of (N) is identical with the property of (F), or
 - (b) the property of (N) is totally preserved in the property of (F), or
 - (c) the factual judgement (F) retains only the descriptive property of (F).
4. The relation cannot be identical. For the property of being not-truth-apt in (N) does not contained in (F).
5. The property of (N) cannot be totally contained in (F), because otherwise (F) would have both the property of being truth-apt and the property of being non-truth-apt, which is impossible.
6. The property of (F) cannot retain the descriptive property of (N), because (N) has no descriptive property to retain.
7. So, we cannot find any relation between the property of (N) and the property of (F).
8. So, The propositional transformation cannot be legitimate.
9. Gibbard's solution to the Frege-Geach problem cannot be right.

All these difficulties suggest that the propositional transformation is not as good as it looks. These difficulties show that Gibbard's success in dealing with the Frege-Geach problem and explaining the propositional surface of moral language is an illusion. The introduction of the propositional transformation itself violates the expressivist thesis he wants to defend. In a broader sense, I think the introduction of the propositional transformation itself is a version of the Frege-Geach problem. Indeed, when we ask what is the legitimacy of transforming (N) into (F), we are questioning about the legitimacy of treating a normative judgment as a factual one. This is exactly the problem of how to make sense of the propositional surface of normative judgments. Gibbard does not really build up the bridge across both sides of the Frege-Geach problem. It would certainly not be going too far to claim that Gibbard fails to construct an expressivistic theory to overcome the Frege-Geach problem. Therefore, we should say that Gibbard's failure in accounting for the

propositional transformation of normative judgments is a failure in solving the Frege-Geach problem and explaining the propositional surface of normative judgments.

Yet, this conclusion does not appreciate Gibbard's insight on normative logic and discussion. Especially, it seems to me we can preserve Gibbard's insight by giving up his misled insistence on theses of expressivism, figuring out the nature of his theory, and then surmounting all the difficulties discussed above. Take first the difficulty of the truth-ascription of normative judgments. The argument against judgments containing N*-corresponding predicates as non-truth-apt can be easily overcome by denying the non-cognitivist thesis of expressivism. Indeed, if normative judgments are truth-apt, the argument would not come out at all. Now turn to the predicament concerning the status of factual judgments containing N*-corresponding predicates. The way out is to regard judgments like (F) as normative. We shall see that the two obstacles here can either be avoided or accommodated. Take the second difficulty that if we regard (F) as normative then Gibbard's theory would not be expressivist and non-cognitivist. It is not really a difficulty at all, if we can decline to accept expressivism. And the first obstacle, I shall argue, we can accommodate without difficulty once we figure out the real nature of Gibbard's theory.

Let us consider again why Gibbard thinks his theory is a version of expressivism. His primary reason is that to call something rational is to endorse it in some way. In his reply to critics, he calls this position a loose expressivism (Gibbard, 1993) or expressivism in broad sense (Gibbard, 1992), which means that normative judgements are to be explained in terms of attitudes involved in relevant subject matter, in opposition to strict or narrow expressivism that normative statements are used to express attitudes. Now our question is: what does this remark have to do with our normative practice? Obviously, even if our emotions or attitudes have any bearing on our acceptance of moral judgments, it is very remote. For, in discussing whether it is wrong to do X, what is at stake in normative discussion is whether there is a system of norms which makes the factual judgment (F) true. And when a discussant comes to accept (N), he does so, not on the basis on his attitudes or emotions, but on the basis of accepting the factual judgment (F). What is the point in insisting that in uttering (N) a judge is merely expressing his states of mind and (N) is non-cognitivist?

An analogy may show that Gibbard's reason is somehow misled and is not good

enough to let him insist on his being an expressivist.⁹ Consider a scientific theory of unobservable entities, say quantum mechanics. What is a student doing when he comes to learn and accept the theory from a great researcher? On the one hand, he accepts it on observations which support his theory. Given that empirical observation can only under-determine a scientific theory of unobservable entities, he cannot really accept the theory on the ground that there are such entities or facts corresponding to the theory. He can only accept the theory on the empirical adequacy it has. On the other hand, he accepts the theory on the authority of the teacher; or more broadly, he accepts the theory on the authority of all the researchers which propound the theory. Since there is no determinate way to decide which theory is more true than others, socio-psychological factors inevitably come in to play. For these two reasons, it is arguably appropriate to say that for the student to accept the theory at bottom is a matter of endorsement: he accepts the theory by endorsing the empirical adequacy the theory has and the authority he accords to the teacher.

I argue that the same understanding applies to the acceptance of norms under Gibbard's theory. First, Gibbard has told us that there are sorts of authority, including contextual and fundamental authority, involved in normative discussion. Second, Gibbard also notices that a system of norms has normative adequacy in explaining or guiding people's thought, feeling, and action. For him, his naturalistic account of how we need norms to enhance the chance of reproduction under the pressure of natural selection suggests that a system of norms must have at least some normative adequacy. People apply norms to certain circumstances to coordinate, or coordinate with, other people's thoughts, feelings, and actions, to the extent that they can cooperate with others or accommodate those who do not want to cooperate. When people come to accept a system of norms, they accept it not only on the authority of others, but also on the normative adequacy the system of norms can bring.

The fact that quantum physicists do not call their theory expressivistic and non-cognitivist provides a good reason to think that explaining acceptance of a theory as at bottom a matter of attitude does not itself make the theory a version of expressivism. Gibbard's distinction between strict and narrow expressivism is actually misleading. Loose expressivism may not be a version of expressivism at all. Having seen so many difficulties caused by the expressivistic and non-cognitivist theses, I shall suggest that Gibbard's theory can be best understood, not as

⁹ The scientific theory stated in the following is derived from van Fraassen (1980). I shall not defend van Fraassen's constructive empiricism, but simply assume it is a version of scientific fictionalism.

expressivism, but as a version of normative fictionalism¹⁰. Fictionalism is a theory that

the sentences in the target class express propositions that represent their intended subject matter. However, in accepting a sentence S in the target class, competent speakers who understand S do not believe the proposition expressed. Furthermore, in assertively uttering S, competent speakers who understand S do not assert the proposition expressed; rather they are performing the distinct speech act of quasi-assertion. Whereas sincere assertion normally conveys belief in the proposition expressed, sincere quasi-assertion does not. (Mark Kalderon, 2001)

Let us consider what Gibbard says about what a competent speaker is doing when he judges that (N). Gibbard says that the speaker is actually expressing his acceptance of norms that prohibit doing X. Since we propose to abandon Gibbard's insistence on the doctrines of expressivism, we should not be bothered by the verbal usage of "*expressing*". Alternatively, we can say that what the speaker is doing is *asserting* his acceptance of norms that prohibit doing X, or simply that the speaker is asserting (F). Since Gibbard thinks that (F) is factual, we can say that the judgment (F) purports to represent normative facts, in the sense that quantum mechanics purports to represent quantum facts. Just as empirical evidence can only under-determinate the theory of quantum mechanics, we say that normative evidence only under-determine the system of norms the speaker accepts. Therefore, in asserting (F), what the speaker is doing is, not asserting the proposition expressed by (F), but asserting the normative adequacy of (F), just as a physicist who asserts a quantum theory is not asserting the proposition expressed by the theory but the empirical adequacy of the theory. In the same vein, we can say that Gibbard's theory amounts to saying that when the audience comes to accept (F), what he accepts is not the proposition expressed but the normative adequacy of (F), just as the student comes to accept a quantum theory not because he believes in the propositions expressed by the theory, but because he believes in the adequacy of the theory in explicating empirical observations. Thus, it seems to me plausible to say that Gibbard's theory is a version of normative fictionalism.

So understood, we have avoided all the difficulties caused by the theses of expressivism. The difficulty of the truth-ascription of normative judgments and the second obstacle of regarding (F) as normative are both gone. The only difficulty left is to show that we can accommodate the difficulty of reconsidering the fact-value distinction constructed by Gibbard. This in no way is an insurmountable job. For we have seen that Gibbard's argument for the distinction is itself not complete, the success of it depends on norm-expressivism being a version of expressivism. Since

¹⁰ I thank Mark Kalderon, who has taught me this point.

now we have given up Gibbard's insistence on expressivism, it is left open whether normative judgments are a product of a system of artificial representation. Read as normative fictionalism, I think that Gibbard's theory can happily admit that they are. He can speak of normative judgments representing normative facts in a way we speak of quantum theories representing quantum facts. There is no need for him to defend the fact-value distinction. For he can abandon the distinction without damaging what he says insightfully about our normative practice. For, although the distinction is required as a ground for expressivism, it is in no sense necessary for normative fictionalism. The very fact that we can argue for both scientific fictionalism and normative fictionalism shows that the doctrines of fictionalism do not require the fact-value distinction. Being a fictionalist, Gibbard can simply deny the distinction.

The virtue of regarding Gibbard's theory as fictionalism comes from full appreciation of his success in accounting for how normative language can be treated propositionally. To some extent, his story about higher order norms, normative objectivity and normative logic are marvellous. However, since the Frege-Geach problem is presumably a problem aimed at expressivism; a challenge to give an account of the propositional surface of normative judgments, it itself is not a problem for fictionalism - normative fictionalism treats normative judgments as propositions representing normative facts. Gibbard's effort should not be regarded as an attempt to solve the Frege-Geach problem or account for the propositional surface of moral language; rather it should be regarded as an endeavor to show the rationale of normative fictionalism. It is exactly because our normative language behaves in the way Gibbard describes, that we have reason to accept normative fictionalism as an adequate theory of our normative practice.

In this sense, we should conclude that, although it is Gibbard's intention to develop an expressivistic account of normative judgements, his solution to the Frege-Geach problem and the propositional surface of normative judgments makes his theory fictionalistic. The seeming power of his solution in fact is an illusion. For, when his theory is seen as fictionalistic, there is actually no abyss for him to cross.

Chapter 4 Concluding remarks

In this final chapter, I shall first suggest that from Blackburn's and Gibbard's failure we can see the difficulties a expressivist theorist has to face if they are to follow their approaches, and I shall suggest that think their prospect is bleak. In the second section, I shall examine a different but somehow interesting approach – Horwich's minimalism, although it comes out badly. In the last section, I shall then conclude that so far we do not have any plausible expressivist theories which can give good account of the propositional surface of moral language, nor do we have any idea how to construct such a theory.

1. Lessons from Blackburn and Gibbard

We have seen how the two most prominent expressivists, Blackburn and Gibbard, set out to defend the expressivistic and non-cognitivist theses of expressivism and how their theories either fail or turn out to be doctrines different from expressivism. Since Blackburn's quasi-realism and Gibbard's norm-expressivism can be seen as two different approaches developed to explain the propositional surface of moral judgments, their failure suggests a bleak future of the two approaches. But what are the two approaches?

Remember Blackburn began his analysis with a theory of meaning, according to which the meaning of an ordinary, i.e. not one-off, sentence is a matter of convention governing which belief or attitude is expressed. His projectivism tells us that in the case of morality what is expressed is attitude rather than belief. I therefore suggested earlier in the second chapter that the first step of his approach is to stick firmly to expressivism before he goes on to construct a logic of attitude and adopt a notion of truth needed for tackling the Frege-Geach problem. I shall thereafter call such an approach an *expressivism-rooted approach*.

On the other hand, Gibbard start his analysis from a somewhat neutral element of our normative practice: the states of mind expressed in acceptance of norms. It is obvious that from the study of the states of mind expressed in the acceptance of norms one can construct various meta-ethical positions, depending on how one interprets the states of mind. What makes Gibbard's account distinct from others is his target: he aims at constructing an expressivistic analysis of normativity. He associates acceptance of norms, normative discussion, a system of norms ranked in a hierarchy, and a factual-normative world and normative logic, etc., hoping that all these elements can be explained in terms of the attitudes or emotions involved. I shall call such an approach an *expressivism-targeted approach*.

Blackburn's failure indicates the difficulties of the expressivism-rooted approach. The difficulties rest in the first place on the difficulty of fabricating a theory of attitudinal logic appropriate for the purpose. We have seen how recalcitrant this task is. On the one hand it is so far unclear how to devise the inferential rules for the attitudinal operators to the extent that some basic intuition can be preserved; on the other, there is an almost unbeatable notion of logical necessity which seems by no means to be explained in terms of clash of attitudes. Furthermore, judgments like "it is true that kicking dog for fun is wrong", or "it is a fact that head hunting is wrong", remain stubborn to cope with. The expressivism-rooted approach does not seem to have the apparatus to account for our use of the notion of truth or the notion of fact in moral discourse. Appealing to popular minimalism indeed shed light for a while, yet it ends up losing its bite. It seems to me that no expressivism-rooted theory is plausible without doing justice to these problems and it is still far from clear how a possible resolution can be achieved.

With respect to Gibbard's norm-expressivism, it does look, at first glance, more promising than the opinionated quasi-realism. At least his project is much more modest than Blackburn's: starting from a neutral phenomenon and leading to an expressivistic analysis sounds more rigorous and appealing. In this sense, his failure to give an expressivistic analysis issues an even more serious warning about the possibility of expressivism. The barrier lying in front seems easy to see: the more elements involved in moral discourse are brought into light, the less importance the two theses of expressivism can play. Indeed, it is straightforward enough to illuminate acceptance of norms in terms of emotions and attitudes. Yet, when normative objectivity and higher order norms come in to play, when what is at stake in normative discussion is more lucidly brought out, we find out what is important in elucidating normative phenomenon is not *acceptance* of norms, but acceptance of *norms*. It is not directly our emotions or attitudes in play, but the normative adequacy of the system of norms we accept largely determines almost every aspect of our normative behaviour. No matter whether it is normative logic, or the psychological need to feel warranted in holding the opinions we have, or the sociological need to accommodate other people's thought or behaviour, all these are done in virtue of our acceptance of *norms*. The mental state of acceptance is undoubtedly necessary, yet by no means sufficient. Its necessity can be understood in exactly the same sense as our need to accept quantum theory before we can engage in the research of quantum mechanics, but nothing more. Gibbard's collapse into normative fictionalism is a sign throwing doubt on whether any expressivism-targeted approach can be carried out, and it suggests that the prospect of such an approach is very bleak for sure.

Certainly there is another possibility. It might be the case that some independent theories which do not require, nor are required by, expressivism turn out to have certain implications to the extent that expressivism can be defended. Paul Horwich (1993, 1994), for example, thinks that if his minimalism of truth is true, then expressivism can be justified. This is the final approach we need to have a look at. Since we have seen the failure of Blackburn's appeal to minimalism, the first question to ask is: how is Horwich's treatment an exception? I think it is inappropriate to reject his view simply because of Blackburn's failure. For, as I said, Blackburn started from expressivism, looking for theories to satisfy his need, and came to rest on the minimalism of truth. Horwich, however, starts from a general consideration of truth and then concludes that his theory has bearing on expressivism. Their approach is different. Therefore, although minimalism fails to fulfill the need of Blackburn's quasi-realism, it remains a possibility that Horwich may be right concerning other expressivistic theories. So, I turn to Horwich's theory in the next section, to have a look at the prospect of this very last approach.

2. Minimalism and expressivism

Horwich's minimalist theory of truth is aimed to provide a highly deflationary account of truth but one that nevertheless can explain its role in our language. The best statement of the deflationary account, according to Horwich (1990), is expressed by the equivalence schema:

(E) It is true *that p* if and only if *p*,

because all we need about the meaning of truth is given by the schema. What most distinguishes Horwich from traditional deflationists like Ramsey, Ayer, Strawson and Quine is the axiomatic structure of his theory, according to which the axioms of the theory are propositions like

$\langle\langle \text{Snow is white} \rangle\rangle$ is true iff snow is white, etc, where $\langle p \rangle$ means the proposition that *p*.

That is to say, all the propositions which can be formulated as

(ES) $\langle\langle p \rangle\rangle$ is true iff *p* are axioms of Horwich's theory of truth.

To judge whether a proposition $\langle s \rangle$ expressed by a sentence *s* is true or false is to judge whether it is the case *that s*. Following Blackburn and Simmons (1999), we can formulate the conditions of $\langle s \rangle$'s being true or false under Horwich's theory as follows:

(MiniT) $\langle s \rangle$ is true iff ($s = s_1$ and $\langle s_1 \rangle$) or ($s = s_2$ and $\langle s_2 \rangle$) or ...

(MiniF) $\langle s \rangle$ is false iff ($s = s_1$ and $\sim\langle s_1 \rangle$) or ($s = s_2$ and $\sim\langle s_2 \rangle$) or ...

That is to say, if $\langle s \rangle$ is one of the members of axioms to which (ES) is applicable, then it is true, otherwise it is false. According to Horwich, (1) our commitment to these axioms accounts for everything we do with the truth predicate, we can suppose that this implicitly defines it, and (2) our acceptance of these axioms constitutes our grasp of the notion of truth; no conceptual analysis is called for. The reason we need the truth predicate is that it has roles to play in our ordinary language. For example, consider the inference from “what Jones said was true” and “what Jones said was ‘Snow is white’” to the conclusion that snow is white. It can be translated as follows:

- (1) $(\exists!x) (\text{Jones said } x \ \& \ x \text{ is true})^1$
- (2) $(\exists!x) (\text{Jones said } x \ \& \ x = \langle \text{snow is white} \rangle)$
- (3) $\therefore \langle \text{Snow is white} \rangle$ is true. [from 1,2]
- (4) $\langle \text{Snow is white} \rangle$ is true iff snow is white. [ES]
- (5) \therefore Snow is white. [from 3, 4].

There is nothing uncomfortable in this inference, because the existential quantifier can be given by the ordinary, objectual interpretation of it.

What is more exciting about the minimalist theory of truth, according to Horwich, is that it can apprehend the correspondence platitude that for something to be true is for it to correspond with facts, without appreciating the drive to construct a correspondence theory of truth. The reason for Horwich to think that his theory does grasp the intuition of correspondence is that, for a particular instance of (ES), $\langle \langle \text{snow is white} \rangle$ is true iff snow is white \rangle , it is perfectly fine to say that the left hand side of the proposition is made true or explained by the right hand side of the proposition. That is to say, it is perfectly fine for the minimalist to say that a particular instance of (ES) is a reflection of correspondence between the facts and propositions.

Now, Horwich’s (1993) points are, first, traditional theories of truth presupposed by expressivists, which identify truth with a substantive property, are mistaken. Second, every type of proposition – every possible object of belief, assertion, conjecture, and so on – will be a candidate for truth. Third, parallel accounts will hold of notions such as “fact” and “property” that are closely related to “truth”. That is, the following schemas will hold:

- (EF) *That* p is a fact if and only if p
- and

¹ The symbol “E!” stands for existential quantifier ranging over objects.

(EP) For any object x , x has the property of being F if and only if x is F .

As a consequence, Horwich claims that there is no reason to think that expressivists like Gibbard cannot talk of normative truth and normative fact – if they abandon the traditional view they presuppose and accept his minimalism, then they can of course talk of the truth and the facts of normative judgments. Furthermore, he suggests that if expressivists adopt the same strategy as he adopts in explaining the notion of truth, then he cannot see how there is room for the Frege-Geach problem. He says

that the expressivist is not obliged to explain, on the basis of his story about what is expressed by “ x is rational”, why “rational” must have the inferential role of a predicate. All he needs to do is defend the prima facie plausible assumption that to his story about “ x is rational” he may consistently add the supposition that “rational” has that role. once we have supplemented the expressivist analysis with the principle that “rational” is a logical predicate, there is no reason to suspect that there are constructions involving that term whose deployment cannot be explained. (Horwich 1993, 75)

In fact, he intends this suggestion to apply to not only Gibbard’s but to all expressive theories. This can be seen in a different occasion when he says:

that expressivists should maintain that “right” is defined by means of a combination of two, independent rules of use: very roughly speaking (a) that “ X is right” expresses a desire, and (b) that “right” functions logically as a predicate (so that, for example, one may infer “ X is right or snow is white” from “ X is right”). Therefore the real issue is not whether the second of these rules can be explained on the basis of the first (why should it be?) or whether they are consistent with one another (why shouldn’t they be?); but whether the two together suffice to account for our entire practice with the term. (Horwich 1994, 20)

Many things can be said about this suggestion. The most relevant and immediate concerns whether Horwich can really apply his theory to moral judgments. After all, it is one of the core theses of expressivism that moral judgments are not truth assessable and representing of facts. Michael Smith (1994a), for example, insists that moral sentences are not used to express propositions whose content is contributed by the facts they stand to represent. He complains that minimalists like Horwich and Crispin Wright do not pay enough attention to expressivists’ distinction between belief and desire. The disaster of applying a minimalist theory of truth to moral judgments without appreciating the distinction, to an extreme, would be to deny that expressivism is a live option for understanding moral practice at all, just like Wright did in his book *Truth & Objectivity*. Smith claims that minimalism can support expressivism only in the sense that it tells expressivists that they must explain “how it is that a sentence that is typically used to express desire can yet have so many of the features of an assertion.” (Smith 1994a, 10)

I think Smith is right from expressivistic point of view; but it is a different story from the minimalist point of view. Remember the problem that is continuously bothering expressivists is how to account for the propositional surface of moral language. The minimalist asks: why should we treat them as surface at all? Why do we not regard the use of moral terms in embedded context as just as central as those in declarative ones? The fact is that the minimalists do not want to commit themselves in the first place to some implications involved in or relative to the distinction between language used to express attitudes and language used to represent states of affairs. Especially they do not want to say sharply, as expressivists do, that the former is normative and the latter representational. They would rather be happy with the idea that a judgment is truth assessable, not when the predicate contained in it is associated with a particular subject area, but when it possesses certain syntactic features. As Wright puts it: "It is not necessary to insist that there is no suitable notion of deep assertoric content. It suffices that there is, at any rate, at least a more superficial one, carried by surface syntactic features; and that a minimal truth predicate is definable on any surface-assertoric discourse." (Wright 1992, 29) It is then obvious that it is not that the minimalists do not pay attention to attitude-belief distinction, but that they do not want to associate the expression of attitudes rigidly with normative sentences.²

If this is the minimalists' intention, how does minimalism bear on expressivism? Opinions diverge here among minimalists themselves. Wright (1992, 36) thinks minimalism should turn its back on expressivism, while Horwich thinks we can still defend expressivism by relocating its central theses. Can Horwich be right? Certainly he needs to give up the non-cognitivist thesis of expressivism, regarding ascribing truth to normative judgments as unproblematic. He also needs to give up at least part of the expressivistic thesis of expressivism, because he admits that there are some normative sentences not used to express attitudes. Then, what does Horwich's expressivism hold? According to the passage we cited earlier, Horwich thinks there are two things available:

(HN 1) Normative predicates can be used to express attitude.

(HN 2) Normative predicates can function as logical particles.

From here, Horwich seems to suggest that:

(HN 1*) The meaning of a normative predicate can lie in its expressing

² There is a further issue here. Smith (1994a) claims that minimalism is not as minimal as the minimalists think. I think his charge has been very well rebutted by Divers & Miller (1994). For Smith's reply, see Smith (1994b).

attitudes.

(HN 2*) The meaning of a normative predicate can lie in its logical function.

While (HN 1*) is the familiar speech-act theory of meaning, (HN 2*) is an application of the so-called inferential role semantics³. It should be noted that the inferential role semantics had been introduced by Hare (1970) to rejoin the Frege-Geach problem, yet Blackburn and Gibbard still think there is need to work on the problem. What makes Horwich think his suggestion better than Hare's? I think it is supposed to be his claims that

- (1) there is no need to explain the compatibility between (HN 1*) and (HN 2*),
and
- (2) there is no need to explain how (HN 2*) can solve Frege-Geach problem.

But how to make sense of these two claims? Given Horwich needs a wider theory of meaning to incorporate the speech act theory and the inferential role semantics into one plausible theory of meaning, let us suppose what we need is a more general theory of meaning. Given Horwich needs to allow for both (HN 1*) and (HN 2*), let us suppose that the wider theory of meaning Horwich needs must be pluralistic – a word can have different meanings in different contexts. Thus, we can see the rationale of Horwich's holding (1) and (2). The rationale for (1) is that, since (HN 1*) and (HN 2*) apply to different contexts, they are not incompatible.

Let us now have a quick look at Horwich's wider theory of meaning, in order to see why the claim (2) is acceptable. According to Horwich, the meaning of a word lies in its use and the use of a word lies in its possession of "a basic acceptance property" (Horwich 1998, 44; emphasis added) – a property that gives the circumstances in which certain specified sentences containing the word are accepted. For example, Horwich says that the meaning of truth lies in its possession of "the acceptance property governing our total use of the word 'true'", which is "the inclination to accept instances of the schema 'the proposition *that p* is true iff and only if *p*'". (Horwich 1998, 45)

It is of course very clear that Horwich maintains that there is only *one* acceptance property of every word to the extent that a word can only have *one* meaning. But, as we said, to make sense of (HN 1*) and (HN 2*) Horwich should propose a pluralistic theory of meaning. For this consideration, let us temporarily suppose that there are a few acceptance properties a word can have for it to have different meanings in different contexts. If so, then we can easily see why Horwich

³ It is Dreier who points out Horwich appeals to inferential role semantics. See Dreier (1996).

holds the claim (2): he simply takes all kinds of embedded use of moral words as possessing a certain kind of acceptance properties. The embedding use of moral terms itself is not a target to explain, rather our acceptance of the use constitute the meaning of the word in such contexts.

Under this supposition, we can then formalize Horwich's theory of meaning as follows. Suppose a normative word w has a class of acceptance properties $\{f_1, f_2, \dots, f_n\}$, where $1 < i < n$. Correspondingly, the word may have n different kinds of meaning, $\{m_1, m_2, \dots, m_n\}$, in which one member, say, m_k , is used to express an attitude. How would one who accepts this theory of meaning describe the meaning of the normative word w ? I think the only way is this:

(HM) The general meaning of the word w is the exclusive disjunction of members of $\{m_1, m_2, \dots, m_n\}$.

To decide what the word w means in a particular circumstance, one needs to apply the following principle:

(HMC) The word w means m_i ($1 < i < n$) in a particular circumstance, if and only if the acceptance property f_i , which w has, applies to the circumstances.

Certainly, there are cases where the word w is used to express attitudes, in this case the following conditions must be satisfied:

(HMA) The word w means m_k in a particular circumstance, if and only if the acceptance property f_k , which w has, applies to the circumstances.

Can this picture be said expressivistic? Hardly. Indeed, if expressing attitudes is merely one use of the word among others, why should be regard the whole analysis as expressivistic?

Then it seems clear that Horwich cannot really claim a pluralistic theory of meaning; what he can claim, as he rightly recognise, is: for every word there is only one acceptance property determining its meaning. However, if he really claims so, I think there will be problems stubborn enough to cripple his remarks on the Frege-Geach problem.

A straightforward question is: what is the only acceptance property of a moral judgment that can make sense of both (HN 1) and (HN 2)? For example, what is the only acceptance property of the moral predicate "is wrong" which can entitle us to say both of "it is wrong to tell lies" and "If it is wrong to tell lies then it is wrong to get your little brother to tell lies"? Certainly, this is a question which must be asked. As in Horwich's theory of truth there is an equivalence schema playing the role of the acceptance property of the meaning of the notion of truth, there must be something in

the case of moral judgments that can play this role in his theory of meaning such that his theory of meaning can be sensible. So, the question we asked above is definitely central to Horwich to apply his theory of meaning to meta-ethics. However, if this question is legitimate, then Horwich's claim that the Frege-Geach problem needs not explanation is wrong. For what we are asking is exactly what is the acceptance property that can validate our use of the two premises of the moral modus ponens inference, "it is wrong to tell lies; if it is wrong to tell lies then it is wrong to get your little to tell lies; ergo, it is wrong to get your little brother to tell lies". It is then central for Horwich to account for account for the Frege-Geach problem.

Furthermore, if it is central for Horwich to account for the Frege-Geach problem for his theory of meaning to make sense, it is not clear how his theory of truth can help here. For it is clear that Horwich's theory of truth has presupposed his theory of meaning – it is based on the acceptance property of the notion of truth that his theory of truth can be established. Introducing the minimalist use of the notion of fact or property, (EP) or (EF), into the discussion of the Frege-Geach problem does not help to solve the question how a moral predicate can have the same meaning in its free occurrence and its embedding use. The problem can only be solved at the level of his theory of meaning, not in his theory of truth.⁴

Thus, Horwich seems to fall into a dilemma, either his remark on the Frege-Geach problem is right, in which case we would require a pluralistic theory of meaning and as a consequence not have an expressivistic theory; or his theory of meaning overrides his remark, in which case he needs to explain the Frege-Geach problem, a problem we have seen so obstinate to any expressivistic analysis. Either way, expressivism is the loser. So, I conclude that, although Horwich's minimalist theory of truth seems to allow expressivism to talk of normative truth and normative fact, the theory of meaning required by the minimalist theory of truth nevertheless would undermine expressivism. The approach which seems available as an alternative to expressivism-rooted and expressivism-targeted eventually comes out as a failure.

3. Conclusion

We have seen that the most prominent expressivists in recent years fail to explain the propositional surface of moral language. Blackburn's quasi-realism turns out badly because he has no feasible logic of attitude and he cannot explain why we can both talk of moral truth and talk as if there are moral facts. Gibbard's

⁴ For a similar criticism, see Dreier (1996).

norm-expressivism does not succeed, because it sets out to construct an expressivistic account but ends up with a version of normative fictionalism.

I also suggest that Blackburn's failure is a sign of the bleak future of the expressivism-rooted approach of constructing meta-ethical theories, while Gibbard's labor in vein indicates that the expressivism-targeted approach is hard to achieve. There is no denial that there are other possibilities. Yet, when we come to one of the most hopeful alternatives, we find out that it is not so promising as it claims.

All this being done, it seems reasonable to claim that so far we have no expressivistic theory able to give proper explanation of the propositional surface of moral language, nor do we seem to have any good idea about how to do this. Expressivism, under attack from the Frege-Geach problem, does not look like an adequate account of our moral practice.

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