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EXPRESSIVISM AND THE SYNTACTIC UNIFORMITY OF DECLARATIVE SENTENCES

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Expressivism is most widely known as a thesis that semantically complements non-cognitivism in meta-ethics: if there are no moral facts to be known, if moral judgements or statements are not capable of being true or false, then the meaning of morally evaluative sentences cannot centrally consist in their having a truth conditional content, expressing a truth-evaluable proposition. But since the truth conditional approach to meaning is widely accepted, non-cognitivists are called upon to offer an alternative theory of meaning for moral sentences. What they frequently offer is expressivism, the view that the meaning of moral sentences must be analysed in terms of special kinds of illocutionary act, for the performance of which these sentences serve. To utter the sentence “Gambling is bad.”, for example, is not to assert the truth-evaluable proposition that gambling is bad (there is no such truth-evaluable item), but rather to condemn gambling and thereby to *express* one’s moral attitude towards gambling.

Whether or not “expressivism” is a good label for this view (“speech-act analysis” might be a better one), there are

highly analogous views about sentences other than moral ones, which we might conveniently label in the same way. Thus, as there are expressivists about morals, there might be expressivists about truth, about negation, about causality, about taste, about probability, about modality, about conditionals and more. All these views share the combination of two claims: a denial of the truth-evaluability of (the contents of) the sentences in a certain class X combined with a speech-act-analysis to account for the meaning of the sentences in X . So it would seem to be reasonable to assume that expressivism can be discussed in general for variable X .

The aim of this paper is to re-examine and to generalise a certain line of objection against expressivisms, a line prominently taken by Searle (1969) and Geach (1960, 1965). I shall use the examples of expressivism about morals, about taste and about probability, and the outcome of my re-examination will be that expressivists of these sorts must give up truth conditional semantics across the board (not just for the problematic sentences). My agenda is as follows: in §1, I very briefly introduce expressivism about morals, about taste and about probability. In §2, I discuss the difficulties Searle and Geach raise for expressivism, considering in §3 how they could be circumvented. In §4, I use and generalise an example by Bob Hale (1986) to show that any expressivist semantics for the problematic sentences must be extended to cover all sentences for reasons of grammatical uniformity. Finally, in §5, I put this result into perspective.

1. *Three expressivisms*

Perhaps the most famous statement of expressivism about morally and aesthetically evaluative sentences is Ayer's in ch. VI of his *Language, Truth and Logic*.¹

¹ Ayer's expressivism is also often called "emotivism". An even

The presence of an ethical symbol in a proposition adds nothing to its factual content. Thus if I say to someone, “You acted wrongly in stealing that money” I am not stating anything more than if I had simply said, “You stole that money” In adding that this action is wrong I am not making any further statement about it. I am simply evincing my moral disapproval of it. It is as if I had said, “You stole that money” in a peculiar tone of horror, or written it with the addition of some special exclamation marks. The tone, or the exclamation marks, adds nothing to the literal meaning of the sentence. It merely serves to show that the expression of it is attended by certain feelings in the speaker.

If now I generalise my previous statement and say, “Stealing money is wrong” I produce a sentence which has no factual meaning—that is, expresses no proposition which can be either true or false. It is as if I had written “Stealing money!!”—where the shape and thickness of the exclamation marks show, by a suitable convention, that a special sort of moral disapproval is the feeling which is being expressed. It is clear that there is nothing said here which can be true or false (p. 107).

Ayer seems not to be interested in a detailed account of the meaning of evaluative sentences. His main concern is the verificationist one of ruling out that evaluative sentences can express propositions and therefore admit of truth or falsehood.² This does not mean that he wants to do away with evaluative statements altogether. They do, for him, serve the function of allowing people to express their moral sentiments. However, if two people contradict each other on a pure matter of value, then “there is plainly no sense in asking which... is in the right. For neither of [them] is asserting a genuine proposition” (p. 108). Nevertheless,

earlier statement of expressivism can be found in Ogden and Richards 1923. See also Stevenson 1937.

² Cf. Ayer 1936, introduction to second edition, pp. 14–15 and 22.

his account contains the germ of a more positive expressivist account of the meaning of evaluative sentences which others have later attempted to provide. Most prominent in this respect are Richard Hare and Simon Blackburn. Hare claims, for instance in his (1970), that an explanation of the meaning of “good” must include the fact that “good” is standardly used to perform the speech act of commendation. His account is therefore often called a “speech act analysis” or “pragmatic account” of moral discourse. It is not the linguistic function of the predicate “is good” to describe things, but rather to commend them.

For Blackburn (1984, chs. 5, 6), too, moral sentences are properly used to express certain moral attitudes and this exhausts their linguistic function. Blackburn stands out in that he is the first expressivist to make efforts at developing a systematic positive account of the meaning of the sentences in question. He takes seriously Hare’s idea that evaluative sentences are designed for the performance of particular speech acts, and treats the predicates “is good” and “is bad” as if they were special force indicators.³

Just as Ayer’s verificationism gave rise to his expressivism about evaluative sentences, Keynesianism and Subjectivism about probability can give rise to expressivism about sentences ascribing probabilities. Keynesians about probability believe that probability ascriptions express the speaker’s degree of belief in some proposition, and whether that proposition merits that degree of belief is a relative matter, relative to the evidence available. On some background of evidence, a probability judgement may be correct, on another incorrect. Subjectivists about probability, such as Ramsey or De Finetti, go even further. They too believe that probability ascriptions express a speaker’s degree of belief. But unlike the Keynesians, they believe that

³ More on Blackburn’s account in §3.

the degree to which the speaker believes a given proposition is not subject to any norm of correctness beyond certain norms of coherence. Both Keynesians and subjectivists thus deny that probabilistic sentences are truth evaluable and are therefore called upon to provide an account of the meaning of such sentences that does not presuppose their truth evaluability.

Huw Price is an example of a highly articulate expressivist about probabilistic sentences, who does provide such an account. In his “Does ‘Probably’ Modify Sense?” (1983), he argues that in sincerely using what he calls “single case probability sentences” (SP sentences), one is not asserting, i.e. expressing full belief in, a specifically probabilistic, truth evaluable proposition, but is rather partially asserting, i.e. expressing one’s partial belief in, a non-probabilistic proposition.⁴ For example, the sentence “Whirlwind will probably win.” is not an assertoric sentence with the content that Whirlwind will probably win, but rather a partially assertoric sentence with the content that Whirlwind will win. The same goes for the corresponding judgements: judging that Whirlwind will probably win is not to form a belief with the truth evaluable content that Whirlwind will probably win, but rather to form a partial belief (with high degree of confidence) with the content that Whirlwind will win.⁵

For the next two sections, I shall restrict my attention to three kinds of expressivism: about matters of taste, about morals and about probability. They are typical ex-

⁴ A single case probability (SP) sentence is one which permits paraphrase in “the syntactic form Pq , where P is a sentential operator, containing the probabilistic reference, and q is a non-probabilistic sentence” (1983, p. 396). For example, “There’s a good chance of snow tonight” is an SP sentence, while “Green snakes are probably harmless” is not.

⁵ For more on Price’s motivations, see 1983, p. 403.

pressivisms in the sense that they are theses about a class of sentences that is specified in terms of the *topic* of the sentences, and in the sense that the motivation for treating sentences on these topics in a special way lies in certain metaphysical background views.⁶

2. *Unendorsed contexts, Searle, Geach*

A typical expressivist about sentences on matters of taste will claim that the meaning of the sentence

(1) Haggis is tasty.

is constituted by the fact that it can be properly used to present oneself as aesthetically approving of haggis.⁷ This suggestion runs into immediate difficulties, if one considers what one might call “unendorsed” occurrences of (1). For while the phrase “haggis is tasty” can indeed be used to express approval of haggis when it is used on its own, this is obviously not the case when it occurs in sentences such as

(2) I wonder whether haggis is tasty.

or

(3) Either haggis is tasty or what I had wasn’t haggis but labskaus.

The meaning of these embedded occurrences of “haggis is tasty” in (2) and (3) can obviously not consist in the fact that they can be used to express approval of haggis, or, in Hare’s terms, to commend haggis. Utterances of (2)

⁶ Not all expressivisms are typical in these two senses. For example, expressivism about conditionals (Edgington 1986, 1995) is not, as we shall see in §5.

⁷ I say “can be used to present oneself as approving” and not “can be used to express one’s approval”, because I want to leave room for insincere utterances of sentences like (1).

might serve the expression of the speaker's uncertainty about whether he approves of haggis, which is quite opposed to an expression of approval. Similarly, utterers of (3) in no way commit themselves, by their utterance, to an approval of haggis: were they to learn that it wasn't haggis, they could quite consistently maintain that haggis isn't tasty, i.e. express their disapproval of haggis. We can say that by uttering (1), a speaker endorses the suggestion that haggis is tasty, while by uttering (2) or (3) one does not. Accordingly, we can call the occurrence of "haggis is tasty" in the former "endorsed" and its occurrences in the latter "unendorsed".

Unendorsed occurrences represent a difficulty for expressivists because their meaning analysis only fits endorsed occurrences, but does not fit unendorsed ones. However, the meaning of the relevant phrases seems to remain constant across both kinds of occurrence, just as the meaning of the phrase "haggis is tasty" does not appear to change from (1) to (2) and (3).

The natural reaction for the expressivist might be to insist that, despite appearances, the meaning of the phrases in question varies and that the expressivist account of their meaning only applies to their endorsed occurrences. Therefore I now want to consider two reasons why the expressivist ought not to make this move —the first inconclusive, the second conclusive.

2.1. *Searle's adequacy condition*

The first reason has been put forward by John Searle in his *Speech Acts*. Searle emphasises that we must distinguish the use to which a word or sentence may be put on some occasions from that word's or sentence's *meaning*. Expressivists, he thinks, do not pay sufficient attention to this distinction. By saying that the meaning of, for instance,

(1) consists in its proper use for expressing approval, expressivists do point to a fact about the *use* of the sentence on certain, namely endorsed, occasions, but this fact does not constitute the sentence's meaning. Searle supports this view by his adequacy condition for the meaning analysis of words:

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. Syntactical transformations of sentences do not necessarily enforce changes of meaning on the component words or morphemes of those sentences (p. 137).

Expressivist analyses of meaning of the form given earlier generally violate this condition. For example, if it were part of the meaning of "is tasty" that it can be used to express aesthetic approval in endorsed contexts such as (1), but did not have this meaning in unendorsed contexts such as (2) and (3), then Searle's adequacy condition would be violated. For certain syntactical transformations would alter the meaning of "is tasty". And they would do so necessarily, because it is in the nature of, for instance, embedding in the context "I wonder whether. . ." that one does not, in uttering such contexts, endorse the embedded sentence separately.

In Searle's view, the origin of the expressivist's mistake lies in a wrong understanding of the principle that meaning is use.⁸ According to Searle's own account, the predicate "is tasty", like all predicates, has the function of determining which proposition is expressed, no matter in what context it occurs. That (1) can be used to commend haggis is due to the fact that in (1) that proposition occurs *assertorically*. So the commendatory use of (1) is due to the

⁸ Compare his 1969, pp. 146–148, 152.

meaning not only of “is tasty”, but to that of “is tasty” *together with* that of whatever indicates assertoric illocutionary force in (1). Thus for Searle, the expressivist attributes to “is tasty” a meaning that it has only in combination with assertoric force.

Searle’s adequacy condition appears to be at least a useful hermeneutic principle, which ought to guide meaning analysis. Of course it is better to attribute meanings to words that can explain their use in every context, than to attribute meanings which vary with context. But can we always adhere strictly to Searle’s adequacy condition? After all, there are lexically ambiguous words, i.e. words that have different meanings in different contexts, as for example the English words “bill” and “coach”. Admitting such ambiguity does complicate theories of meaning, and they would doubtless be prettier without it. However, we must acknowledge the fact that there are these lexical ambiguities. So why couldn’t there also be more systematic phenomena of ambiguity, words that systematically change their meaning with syntactic transformation? After all, this form of ambiguity would be much more systematic and tractable than ordinary lexical ambiguity.

Hare points out that Searle himself violates the adequacy condition in his analysis of the meaning of so-called performatives, such as for example the verb “to promise”.⁹ Searle claims that “promise”, although it is a verb, and therefore appears to function as a predicate, really is an illocutionary force indicator. Thus the speech act performed by uttering “I promise to come” is not the act of asserting the proposition that the speaker promises to come, but rather the act of making a promise concerning the proposition that the speaker will come. Similarly, uttering “I don’t promise to come” does not constitute an autobiographical assertion

⁹ Cf. Hare 1970, pp. 9–10; and Searle 1969, pp. 30–33.

but the act of refusing to make a certain promise.¹⁰ But if we subject such a sentence to a syntactical transformation, such as putting it into the past tense (“I promised to come”) or into the third instead of the first person (“He promises to come”), then “to promise” will systematically change its meaning, i.e. become a predicate used for reporting the performance of the speech act of promising.¹¹

Of course, Searle has reasons for violating his adequacy condition in this case. Nevertheless, Hare’s point shows that—even for Searle—there may be cases where there are good reasons for violating the condition. Expressivists have their reasons for being expressivists. So if expressivists could not avoid violating Searle’s condition, then these reasons would perhaps suffice to justify the violation. Searle’s objection is therefore inconclusive.

2.2. *Geach and his Frege-point*

There is, however, a more conclusive reason why we ought not to attribute different meanings to endorsed and unendorsed occurrences of the same word or phrase. It has been put forward by Peter Geach (1960, 1965) in an attempt to refute expressivism in general (he dubs it the “Frege-point”). Switching the example, consider the following argument:

- (4) Gambling is bad.
- (5) If gambling is bad, then *inviting others to gamble is bad*.

¹⁰ This claim alone commits Searle to the systematic ambiguity of “not”, since, as he claims, it normally functions as a modifier of contents, and only in certain contexts involving performatives functions as a modifier of the illocutionary force indicated.

¹¹ Searle is silent on transformations such as “If I promise to come, I’ll come”.

(6) Therefore: *Inviting others to gamble is bad.*

This argument is obviously formally valid and its validity depends crucially on the fact that the two underlined occurrences of “bad” have the same meaning. Had they not the same meaning, the argument would equivocate. The same applies to the two italicised occurrences of “bad”. An expressivist about “bad”, like Hare, however, would claim that “bad” in (4) is not used to describe an action as bad, but to condemn it. But in (5), where “bad” occurs unendorsed (twice), it obviously does not have this condemning function. Thus the meaning of “bad” cannot consist in its condemning function and the expressivist thesis must be false.

I regard Geach’s objection as decisive against the formulation of expressivism discussed so far. It is undeniable that (4)–(6) is a formally valid argument whose validity depends on the sameness of meaning of the two occurrences of “gambling is bad” (and of the two occurrences of “inviting others to gamble is bad”). So the positive expressivist account of the meaning of the sentences whose truth-evaluability it denies needs to be modified. To see how this could be done, let us consider how standard non-expressivist theories of meaning, such as Searle’s, Geach’s or Frege’s would avoid the same problem. For on the face of it, the problem can also be posed against these theorists: they claim that it is part of the meaning of “gambling is bad” in (4) that it can be used to assert that gambling is bad. But the embedded occurrence of the same phrase in (5) cannot be so used, thus seems to have a different meaning. But then Geach’s argument (4)–(6) would equivocate. Does the standard theory face a problem of unasserted contexts where the expressivist faces a problem of unendorsed contexts?

The standard theorist will reply that all that is required to avoid equivocation is that the *proposition* asserted in (4)

be the same as the *proposition* occurring unasserted as the antecedent of (5). So, strictly speaking, it is only a proper part of the meaning of (4) that needs to be the same as a proper part of the meaning of (5). But this part, namely the proposition that gambling is bad, does not include (4)'s assertoric force as applied to that proposition. So, the fact that the meaning of (4) consists partly in its appropriateness for asserting that gambling is bad, while this is not part of the meaning of the occurrence of "gambling is bad" in (5), does not have the consequence that Geach's argument equivocates.

The standard theorist even has a detailed account that explains why the argument is valid and why its validity requires the sameness of the proposition asserted in (4) with that occurring as the antecedent of (5). He might define a notion of logical entailment thus: a set of propositions P logically entails another proposition c iff the occurrences of *logical constants* in the propositions in P guarantee that c is true if each proposition in P is true. Now he can easily say what it is for an argument to be valid: if "argument" is taken to refer to a sequence of propositions, as is often done in logic, then an argument is *valid*, iff its premisses logically entail its conclusion. If, on the other hand, one takes "argument" to refer to a sequence of complete assertoric sentences, i.e. sentence-types which can properly be used, as they stand, to assert something, then an argument is defined as *valid*, iff the propositions assertible by its premisses logically entail the proposition assertible by its conclusion.

With this apparatus, the standard theorist can explain why it is required, in order for (4)–(6) to be valid, that the proposition asserted in (4) be the same as the proposition that constitutes the antecedent of (5): (4)–(6) is an argument in the latter sense of "argument", i.e. it is a sequence of complete assertoric sentences. The propositions assert-

ible by uttering (4) and (5) logically entail the proposition assertible by uttering (6). This is so because (5) is assertoric of a compound conditional proposition whose antecedent is assertible by (4). By the meaning of the conditional connective (one of the logical constants), conditional propositions are not true just if their antecedent proposition is true and their consequent proposition false.¹² So, if both the proposition that gambling is bad and the proposition that if gambling is bad, then inviting others to gamble is bad are true, then the proposition that inviting others to gamble is bad must also be true. This would not be the case, if the proposition expressed by (4) wasn't the same as that expressed by the antecedent of (5).

In a further step, this account of validity can be developed into a fully-fledged logical theory. Such a theory may consist of axiom-schemata and rules of inference which enable the logician to derive all and only valid argument forms, i.e. those argument forms each instance of which is a valid argument. In such a theory, (4)-(6) may turn out to be an instance of the valid argument form of modus ponens, here displayed for both senses of "argument":

$$\text{(MP}^{\text{P}}) \quad \begin{array}{l} A \\ \text{if } A \text{ then } C \\ \hline C \end{array} \quad (\text{for sequences of propositions})$$

$$\text{(MP}^{\text{S}}) \quad \begin{array}{l} \vdash A \\ \vdash \text{if } A \text{ then } C \\ \hline \vdash C \end{array} \quad (\text{for sequences of complete sentences})$$

(In (MP^S), the turnstile ("⊢") symbolises assertoric force.) The use of the same propositional letters at different places of an argument schema, of course, makes it obvious which

¹² Assuming a material treatment of conditionals.

parts of the meaning of an argument must coincide in order for that argument to be unequivocally of that argument form.

Clearly, the standard theorist is well-prepared to deal with the validity of Geach's argument. The question I want to raise now is whether it is essential to the standard solution to the problem of unendorsed contexts, that the sentences in question are treated as expressors of truth-evaluable, assertible propositions, or whether the same *kind* of solution would be available to the expressivist.

It is fairly obvious that the key element of the solution lies in the standard distinction between assertoric illocutionary force and proposition asserted. This distinction allows the bipartite theorist to avoid the problem by saying that only a *part* of the meaning of (4) is identical with a *part* of the meaning of (5). Since this part does not include (4)'s illocutionary force, it does not matter for the validity of Geach's argument that the occurrence of "gambling is bad" in (5) is unasserted, that in (4) asserted. Thus, it seems that the same kind of solution might be available to anyone who distinguishes, in the meaning of (4), between the commitment that an utterance of (4) constitutes and the item to which the utterer is committed: (4)'s content. The expressivist could, for instance, distinguish between a certain attitude towards gambling and the endorsement of that attitude, indicated by an illocutionary force. He can then modify his semantic account, in order to meet Geach's challenge and thus avoid the problem of unasserted contexts: while the meaning of (4) is constituted by the fact that it can be properly used to endorse an attitude of disapproval towards gambling, the occurrence of "gambling is bad" in (5) only shares part of that meaning, namely the (now unendorsed) expression of, or reference to, the same attitude. This *partial* identity of the meaning of (4)

and (5) suffices to ensure the unequivocating validity of Geach's argument.

My sketch of a solution, however, is still incomplete. The standard truth-conditional account could also give a detailed explanation of the validity of arguments. The expressivist can certainly not make use of this part of the standard theorist's solution, because it presupposes that the contents involved are truth-evaluable. And this is precisely what the expressivist wants to avoid. So the expressivist's version of the distinction between illocutionary force and assertible content will need to be part of a non-truth-functional account of the composition of contents which yields the desired logical relations among contents. I will explore the space of possibilities for such an account in the next section.¹³

Let me summarise. The unendorsed contexts problem, together with Geach's argument, imposes the following constraints on the positive account of any expressivist about a class of sentences X . First, it must allow for the sameness of meaning of endorsed and unendorsed occurrences of the same X -sentences. Secondly, it ought to provide an alternative explanation for the validity of arguments such as (4)–(6).¹⁴ The first of these requirements is a must, for it rests on the undeniable assumption that the validity of (4)–(6) depends on the sameness of meaning of the two occurrences of "gambling is bad". Meeting the

¹³ Susan Hurley (1984) discusses a different version of Geach's objection, which is based on a more literal reading of Geach's source in Frege 1919. Her version differs in that it requires not only that (4)–(6) be valid in a way that requires the coincidence in meaning of the occurrences of "gambling is bad", but also that (4)–(6) be an instance of modus ponens.

¹⁴ Hurley's version (see previous footnote) imposes the further constraint that this alternative explanation ought to render arguments like (4)–(6) as being instances of modus ponens.

second requirement is strongly recommended. For as long as the expressivist cannot explain the validity of arguments involving premisses from X , his account will fall significantly short of the conventional one.

3. *Two ways of meeting Geach's challenge*

The problem of unendorsed contexts discussed in the last section imposes certain constraints on a successful positive expressivist account of the meaning of those sentences whose truth-evaluability the expressivist denies. In the very least, the expressivist's account must incorporate a distinction analogous to the standard distinction between the force and the content (proposition) of a sentence. This analogue needs to be part of an account of the composition of sentences to form compound sentences which explains why some arguments are formally valid.

Given the diversity of discourses that one might have reason to be an expressivist about, it is difficult to give a general treatment of the options an expressivist has in developing such a positive semantic account. I do believe, however, that we can initially discern two very general routes any such account might take, and that there are interesting things to be said about both these routes. In order not to operate in too abstract a realm, let us consider the following three sample sentences:

- (7) Haggis is tasty.
- (8) Gambling is bad.
- (9) Joan is probably asleep.

To understand the two routes I have in mind, consider first how a standard bipartite theory of meaning would proceed with these sentences. On a standard account, all the constituent words of these sentences will be classified

as *content indicators*.¹⁵ That is, the meanings of the words in each sentence are viewed as contributors to the determination of the content of that sentence, while the assertoric force of each is indicated by other features, such as word order, punctuation, initial capitalisation and perhaps mood. In (7), for example, it is the job of the term “haggis” to identify a dish, and that of the predicate “is tasty”, to identify a property. In combination, these two determine the content of (7), namely the content that haggis is tasty, a content that is true just if the dish identified by “haggis” has the property identified by “is tasty”. Moreover, (7)’s word order, punctuation and capitalisation determine that the sentence is assertoric. A standard analysis of the other sentences would be very similar, though in the case of (9) more complicated.

Now, in introducing his own force-content distinction, the expressivist can proceed in either of two ways. Either, he classifies sentence features into force- and content-indicators in the same manner as on the standard account, or he does not. More concretely, either he counts the problematic expressions, e.g. “is tasty”, “is bad”, “probably” etc. as pure content indicators, as in the standard account, or he treats them as indicating illocutionary force, unlike the standard account. Let us call the first option *the content indicator approach* and the second *the force indicator approach*. These options arise for each discourse one can be expressivist about, i.e. for each kind of expressivism. However, it seems that the force indicator option has been taken more frequently. For example, Hare and Blackburn,¹⁶

¹⁵ My notion of a content indicator is similar to Price’s (1983) notion of a sense-modifier.

¹⁶ At least in his *Spreading the Word* (1984). In his 1988, Blackburn revises his semantics of evaluative discourse. The new approach seems to me to be a content indicator approach. Blackburn there attempts to legitimate his claim to a genuine expressivist logic by making

pursue a force indicator approach. For they would treat the predicate “is bad” in (8) as a force indicator. Also, Price (1983) argues that “probably” should be treated as modifying a sentence’s force, rather than its content. I shall therefore now concentrate on the force indicator approach and return to the content indicator approach in §3.2.

3.1. *The force indicator approach*

In my above quote from Ayer, he presents the prototype of an expressivist account that treats “is wrong” as a force indicator:

If . . . I . . . say, “Stealing money is wrong” . . . [i]t is as if I had written “Stealing money!!”—where the shape and thickness of the exclamation marks show, by a suitable convention, that a special sort of moral disapproval is the feeling which is being expressed (1936, p. 107).

Filling in the details in the manner of Hare and Blackburn, what Ayer is saying is that we ought to treat “is wrong” as a force indicator which can be combined with an expression denoting an action-type to yield a sentence which can be used to perform a speech act of condemnation, or to express moral disapproval, of that action-type. Such a force indicator would be syntactically curious in that it would operate not on sentential phrases, but on denoting expressions. But I do not see why there could not be force

use of Hintikka’s (1970) model set semantics for deontic operators. However, the syntactic status of “B!” and “H!” is highly obscure in that paper (Do they operate on sentences, nominal expressions? Do they iterate?). Moreover it is unclear what work Hintikka’s semantics for deontic sentential operators is doing for the expressivist’s explanation of the validity of Geach’s modus ponens argument, since the validity of *that* argument already falls out of Hintikka’s semantics before the deontic operators are added. See Hale 1993 for a detailed discussion of the 1988 version of Blackburn’s expressivist semantics.

indicators which behave in this —admittedly unfamiliar— way.¹⁷

We can easily imagine analogous accounts for our three sample sentences. In (7), “is tasty” is the force indicator, which combines with denoting expressions to yield sentences that can be used to express aesthetic approval of the thing denoted. (8), of course, combines the force indicator “is bad” with an expression denoting the action-type gambling, and can be used to express moral disapproval of gambling. In (9) “probably” is the force indicator. Unlike the previous two, this force indicator seems to combine with sentential phrases. We could say that such sentential phrases serve to identify conventional contents, i.e. truth-evaluable propositions, and then sentences containing “probably” could be viewed as expressing a high degree of belief, on the part of the utterer, in the proposition thus identified.

I shall now use the example of moral expressivism to discuss the force indicator approach in more detail. After that, I will try to draw some conclusions about the force indicator approach in general.

The force indicator accounts sketched above are still unguarded against the problem of unendorsed contexts. Consider again sentence (8) and the conditional sentence (10) in which it occurs unendorsed:

- (10) If gambling is bad, then inviting others to gamble is bad.

¹⁷ Alternatively, one could read a deep structure into the surface denoting expression “stealing money”, and view it as expressing a content, perhaps as the content that stealing of money occurs. The attitude expressible by the whole sentence would then be that of disapproval of *there being* thefts of money. I have discussed the merits of this and other deep structure proposals in my 1994. Going into more detail here would lead us too far afield.

As Geach's argument has shown (in the last section), the phrase "gambling is bad" must have the same meaning in both (8) and (10). Thus, if "is bad" in (8) is to function as a force indicator, then so it must in (10). So, if we represent the form of (8) as

(F8) B!(gambling)

using Blackburn's Boo-Hooray notation, then we must equally represent the form of "gambling is bad" on its occurrence in (10) as involving the force indicator "B!()". Treating the second occurrence of "is bad" in (10) in the same way, we then get something like the following as the form of (10):

If[B!(gambling), B!(inviting others to gamble)]

Now we face the problem of unendorsed contexts. All sides will agree that (10) is not properly usable for expressing disapproval of gambling: its antecedent is unendorsed. Nevertheless, the current analysis, forced by Geach's argument, attributes to the occurrence of "gambling is bad" in (10) a meaning that makes it usable precisely for expressing that. So if the expressivist wants to maintain that "is bad" serves as a force indicator, he must take care that on his analysis this force indicator gets somehow "defused", or put out of operation, when embedded in unendorsed contexts. How can he do that?

I can, for example, defuse the abusive phrase "You moron!" by putting it (as I just did) in quotation marks, thus not abusing you, the reader. It is part of the meaning of quotation marks that whatever appears between them loses many aspects of its normal meaning, including its abusive force in this case. Another example of a "defuser" is "that ...". By prefixing a sentence with "that ...", one can put that sentence's illocutionary force out of operation —this is why this word is often used to identify the content of, or

the proposition expressed by, a sentence, as distinct from its illocutionary force.

In order to avoid the problem of unendorsed contexts, the expressivist therefore needs to attribute a defusing function to some features of those contexts embedding into which makes phrases unendorsed. In the present case, the expressivist could construe the compounding device “if . . . , then —” as accomplishing the task of defusing “B!(gambling)”. Alternatively, he could separate the compounding from the defusing function and introduce into his formalisations an extra sign, say “/.../”, whose function it is to defuse anything occurring in place of the dots. This “slash notation” has in fact been used by Blackburn in his attempt to solve the unendorsed contexts problem in his (1984, p. 194). Blackburn helpfully glosses the function of slash expressions as that of *denoting* the attitude a speaker normally commits himself to when he utters the sentence within the slashes separately. For example, “/B!(gambling)/” denotes the attitude of moral disapproval of gambling. But what is the role of such denoting expressions in the context of a sentence such as (10)? Obviously, (10)’s consequent also contains a defused occurrence of the force indicator “is bad”. Thus we get something formally like

If[/B!(gambling)/, /B!(inviting others to gamble)/].

How is the context “If[. . . , —]” to be understood? There are two distinct semantic functions we still need to assign to it. First, the two denoting expressions “/B!(gambling)/” and “/B!(inviting others to gamble)/” need to be compounded, and secondly the whole of (10) obviously has some illocutionary force. In the formalisation, we can either keep these functions separate or assign them both to the context “If[. . . , —]”. Blackburn separates them. On

the one hand, he introduces a two-place nominal connective “;”, which takes slash expressions as arguments and yields another compound expression denoting a combination of moral attitudes. For instance,

/B!(gambling)/; /B!(inviting others to gamble)/

denotes the combination of disapproval of gambling with disapproval of inviting others to gamble. More precisely, it denotes an *attitudinal disposition*: someone who has that disposition would disapprove of inviting others to gamble, were he to disapprove of gambling itself. On the other hand, Blackburn introduces another force indicator “H!()” (for “Hooray”), which functions syntactically like “B!()”, and can be used to express moral approval of whatever the expression it is applied to denotes. If we apply “H!()” to the above compound, we get Blackburn’s full formalisation of (10):

(F10) H!(/B!(gambling)/; /B!(inviting others to gamble)/).

So (10) is viewed as a sentence expressive of moral approval of a certain attitudinal disposition, namely approval of that disposition one has if one tends to disapprove of inviting others to gamble, should one disapprove of gambling itself.

This account already meets the first requirement imposed by Geach’s objection (see end of last section): (F8) and (F10) display how endorsed and unendorsed occurrences of (8) coincide in meaning. It also begins to meet the second requirement, that of an explanation for the validity of the Geach argument. For the account explains why someone who has the attitude expressible by (10) and that expressible by (8), but fails to hold that inviting others to gamble is bad, is committing a mistake of inconsistency of some sort. As Blackburn says, such a person’s attitudes “clash” in the sense that his evaluative attitudes

“cannot fulfil the practical purposes for which we evaluate things” (1984, p. 195). For Blackburn, this inconsistency amounts to *logical* inconsistency. In support of Blackburn, one could add that, as holding clashing attitudes defeats the purpose of having such attitudes, it is irrational to do so, on an instrumental view of rationality.¹⁸

This account of the meaning of moral sentences, of the connective “;” and the two force indicators “B!()” and “H!()” will also have to explain the *formal* validity of arguments such as Geach’s. That is, it ought to show that the argument from (8) and (10) to “Inviting others to gamble is bad.” is an instance of a valid argument *form*. But this requirement is easily met: (8)’s meaning is part of (10)’s meaning, and this is what a formal account of validity will need to require in order for Geach’s argument not to equivocate. Blackburn can claim that Geach’s argument is an instance of the following valid argument form of Moral Modus Ponens:

¹⁸ Wright (1987, p. 33 and note 19) has objected that a “clash of attitudes” à la Blackburn need not constitute *logical* inconsistency. Wright seems to make two points. First, he says that not doing something of which one approves may constitute some form of failure, perhaps a moral failure, but not a logical one. But this is simply to beg the question: the expressivist, since he denies the truth-evaluability of moral premisses in valid arguments, claims that there is logical validity and inconsistency beyond those areas where the traditional conception of validity and consistency (in terms of truth) applies. The expressivist can moreover cite independent cases of logical validity, where the traditional conception fails, e.g. arguments with imperative premisses and conclusions. The second point Wright makes is that on Blackburn’s construal of valid moral modus ponens arguments, there is no corresponding tautology (consisting in a conditional formed by the conjunction of the premisses as antecedent and the conclusion as consequent) which commands assent (on pains of irrationality) independently of acceptance of the premisses. This is not true, for Blackburn could easily formulate corresponding tautologies, dissent from which constitutes irrationality. Compare also Hale’s discussion in his 1993.

$$(MMP) \quad \frac{x}{\frac{H!(/x/;/y/)}{y}}$$

where “ x ” and “ y ” are schematic for complete moral sentences, i.e. sentences formed by applying one of the indicators “ $H!()$ ” or “ $B!()$ ” to an expression denoting an action-type. It can hardly be denied that this is sufficient to render the Geach argument formally valid —at least relative to Blackburn’s formal language which includes the constants “ $B!()$ ”, “ $H!()$ ”, “ $/$ ”, and “ $;$ ”. But any notion of formal validity is, I believe, relative, so this should not be a problem.¹⁹

Another issue is the semantic explanation an expressivist like Blackburn can offer as to why certain argument forms rather than others are valid. On the standard truth-conditional account, this could be explained nicely. Validity is defined in terms of the impossibility of the conclusion’s not being true if the premisses are true. Since the connectives, such as “if . . . , then —”, were interpreted as truth functions, it could then be shown why arguments of certain forms are valid. The expressivist cannot use the standard definition of validity in terms of truth, for he denies that the premisses and conclusions of valid arguments are always truth evaluable, as for example those of the Geach argument are not. Blackburn thus needed to appeal to a different notion of validity, characterised in terms of the “clashing of attitudes”, which is presumably best understood as a failure of some kind of instrumental rationality.

¹⁹ See Evans 1976 on the relativity of formal validity to choice of logical constants. Evans’ attempt at developing a non-relative notion of a logical constant leads to a highly unfamiliar new notion.

Blackburn's account of the validity of moral modus ponens, however, makes specific reference to the situation in moral discourse. Thus it is not immediately clear how his strategy could be extended to other expressivisms. The specificity of the explanation of the validity of (MMP), and the fact that its schematic letters range over complete moral sentences, also make it hard to see how (MMP) can be viewed as a kind of modus ponens.

We have seen now how, roughly, an expressivist about moral sentences can construct a semantics that complies with the requirements imposed by the unendorsed contexts problem. We have also seen that there are different ways of proceeding. It was, for instance, only a peculiarity of Blackburn's account that the overall illocutionary force indicator of (10) was also one of the moral force indicators "B!()" and "H!()". It was also, for example, a matter of choice, whether the defusing function was to be separated from the compounding device "if . . . , then —". Moreover, there are questions I didn't even address, e.g. the questions whether there are further embeddings, how they work, whether embeddings can be iterated, etc.

What I have said about the force indicator approach to *moral* sentences cannot easily be generalised for force indicator approaches in general. However, I believe that the space of options is similarly structured for all expressivists who want to treat the problematic words as force indicators. Analogous issues will arise for any expressivist who opts for the force indicator approach. It seems, then, that the two requirements posed by Geach's objection can be met on a force indicator approach. However, as we'll see in §4, there is a general difficulty with incorporating such an expressivist semantics for moral (aesthetic, probabilistic, etc.) sentences into a general semantics for all sentences of a natural language.

3.2. *The content indicator approach*

What if an expressivist takes the other route, that of maintaining the conventional classification into force- and content indicators? The proposal, on this route, is to treat all those sentence features as content indicators that standardly count as content indicators, and to treat those features as force indicators that standardly are so treated. A fortiori, the problematic expressions, such as “probably”, “is tasty”, etc. will be treated as content indicators. At first, it seems that this will create much more trouble than the force indicator approach, since it requires a new notion of content as well as a novel kind of illocutionary force. In (8), for example, the phrase “gambling is bad” will then express some content, let us say the content that gambling is bad. This content must be of a new sort, for it is, according to the expressivist’s conviction, not truth-evaluable, i.e. has no truth condition. On the other hand, (8)’s word order, its capitalisation, full stop and perhaps indicative mood indicate some illocutionary force. But which force? For a sentence to have a certain illocutionary force is for it to have a certain communicative function in relation to some content. For example, it is the function of assertoric sentences to permit utterers to assert (or to present themselves as believing) the relevant content. What, according to the expressivist, could that communicative function be in the case of (8)? Since the contents operated upon are of a novel sort, the force needed in the case of (8) will also have to be a novelty.

However, once we know what sorts of content and force we are talking about, we no longer have an unendorsed contexts problem. Since the content indicator approach shares the force-content structure of standard semantics, the force of a sentence is not part of what gets embedded, when that sentence occurs embedded. For this reason, there

is no problem with the fact that, in the embedded context, the sentence no longer has the same force.²⁰

What would an expressivist account of the meanings of our samples (7)–(9) look like on the content indicator approach? (7) will have the content that haggis is tasty, (8) that gambling is bad, (9) that Joan is probably asleep. Each will have some illocutionary force, indicated implicitly in their word order, punctuation, capitalisation. This illocutionary force will in each case, presumably, correspond to some communicative act of acceptance, since all of (7)–(9) are declarative. For example, uttering (7), one can present oneself as, in some sense, accepting that haggis is tasty. This view is supported by the fact that each of the samples has counterparts with different, non-accepting forces, but intuitively the same content: e.g. “Is haggis tasty?” is such a counterpart of (7). But what exactly are these contents and what exactly do these novel illocutionary forces of acceptance involve?

On a standard truth conditional account, the function of (7), for example, might be stated as follows: (7) can be properly used by a speaker to assert, i.e. present himself as believing, that haggis is tasty. The standard account would thus make use of a certain psychology of belief and desire. This psychology, however, presupposes that beliefs are to be characterised in relation to certain theoretical entities: truth conditional contents. If the expressivist on the content indicator approach could deploy a similar

²⁰ The content indicator approach makes expressivism look quite unlike the familiar forms of expressivism. The reason I explore it under the heading of expressivism is threefold: first, it shares the essential expressivist contention that the contents of certain sentences are not truth evaluable. Secondly, the global considerations of the next section will drive the force indicator approach towards something structurally very similar to the content indicator approach. Thirdly, global considerations favour the content indicator approach over the force indicator approach.

belief-psychology that didn't presuppose that belief contents, such as the content that haggis is tasty, have truth conditions, then he could pursue the old strategy: specify, for each sentence, that it can be properly used by speakers to present themselves as ϕ -ing a certain content that is expressed by the complex of that sentence's content indicators (where ϕ -ing is a belief-like attitude which relates thinkers to contents of a not necessarily truth-apt variety).

Let us call the requisite belief-like attitude "opining" (having an opinion). A person can opine that p for any content that p . Someone sincerely uttering (7), for instance will be said to express his opinion that haggis is tasty. How can this notion of opining and that of a (not necessarily truth evaluable) content be elucidated? As the expressivist cannot characterise these contents in terms of truth conditions, he should use some kind of conceptual role characterisation. Let me give a brief sketch of such an account.

First, an opinion is something one can have or not have. Having or not having an opinion will make a difference for the possessor's dispositions to act. Obviously, having the opinion that haggis is tasty will give rise to different behavioural dispositions from those arising from an opinion that haggis tastes disgusting. Secondly, there are reasoning processes, in which opinions, and possibly other cognitive states, play a role. Opinions can be the input as well as the output of a reasoning process. For example, my opinion about Cumberland sausages might be among the input of a reasoning process that results in my decision not to buy any. This opinion about Cumberland sausages, again, might have been the result of a reasoning process that started from my awareness of certain repeated experiences with Cumberland sausages. Thirdly, opinions can be characterised and differentiated in relation to *contents of opinion*. Contents of opinion are theoretical entities that can be compounded, using certain operations of compo-

sition, to yield new, compound contents of opinion. According to whether and how such contents of opinion are compounded, they stand in logical relations. (There will be logical relations, analogous to those of the propositional calculus, that arise from the composition of simpler contents into compound contents. Other logical relations will arise from the way in which contents are built up at the sub-sentential level —these are analogous to the logical relations described by the predicate calculus, and perhaps by the logics of particular words.) These logical relations among contents of opinion give rise to norms of rationality as to how reasoning processes involving opinions are to proceed, and what combinations of opinions one ought not to have. Moreover, contents of opinion can be considered, rejected, supposed and accepted. To accept a content of opinion is to have the corresponding opinion.

Contents of opinion are invoked in the theory, because they provide a way of systematically describing opinions. They provide, as it were, a scale one can use for measuring opinions.²¹ Now, in so far as we want to construct an expressivist account of the meaning of sentences about taste, we need to ask how each content indicator in such a sentence contributes to determining that sentence's content. But since contents are primarily invoked as units of measurement for opinions, we can ask directly, how the content indicators of a sentence about taste determine the opinion one can present oneself as having by uttering that sentence. Let's look at our sample (7). It is the sentential phrase "haggis is tasty" that determines (7)'s content. This phrase decomposes into the grammatical subject "haggis" and the grammatical predicate "is tasty". Now, the expressivist cannot treat "is tasty" as a genuine predicate. At least

²¹ Compare Matthews 1994, who explores this analogy in some detail.

not, if to be a genuine predicate is to identify a property which things can be described as having by affirmatively applying the predicate (and if things' possession of properties is an objective, factual matter). On the other hand, the phrase "is tasty" is *grammatically* a predicate: it is constructed in a typical way from an adjective and a copula, its complements are noun-phrases, which apparently serve to identify an object of reference; and if so complemented, it yields a sentential phrase, i.e. something that can, if further complemented by a force indicator, be used to perform a speech act. Let us therefore cautiously call "is tasty" a *quasi-predicate*.²² (7)'s subject "haggis", by contrast, seems to present no problem at all. It can be treated just as it would be treated in conventional semantics, namely as identifying, or referring to, an object, namely in this case the Scottish dish haggis.²³

We are now in a position to adumbrate an expressivist semantics of sentences about matters of taste, or at least of those that share (7)'s simple subject-predicate structure. If a sentence s has the form " $| Fa$ ", where " $|$ " indicates an illocutionary force of acceptance, " F " is an aesthetic quasi-predicate, and " a " is a denoting expression, then s can be properly used by speakers to present themselves as having that kind of opinion about the thing denoted by " a ", that is associated with the quasi-predicate " F ". If a

²² To be clear, a quasi-predicate "is tasty" is something quite different from the force indicator "is tasty" in §3.1. Unlike the force indicator, it can be applied to a noun-phrase without thereby yielding a complete sentence. The result is merely a sentential phrase, which needs further complementation to be usable as a complete sentence.

²³ There is an issue here, as to whether (7) ought to be treated as making reference to a dish —probably a type of food, i.e. an abstract object, or whether it should be viewed as implicitly universally quantified— along the lines of: (x) if x is an instance of the type haggis, then x is tasty. Issues of this sort aren't a special problem of expressivist semantics.

sentence r has the form “ $?Fa$ ”, where “?” indicates some interrogative sort of force, then r can be used to present oneself as wishing to make up one’s mind whether or not to adopt an opinion with the same content. A word on my phrase “that kind of opinion that is associated with the quasi-predicate”: such kinds of opinion differ from one another in their conceptual role: they differ in the kind of “evidence”, or motivation, that would lead one to adopt them towards something, and they also differ from one another in the kinds of action they tend to lead their possessors to take. For example, the quasi-predicate “is beautiful” is associated with one kind of opinion. It takes a certain perceptual or intellectual response to something for someone to adopt that kind of opinion about that object. Having adopted such an opinion of an object, i.e. judging it to be beautiful, will make a difference for one’s actions. The quasi-predicate “is loathsome” is obviously associated with a different kind of aesthetic opinion.

In the next step, the expressivist about matters of taste will have to introduce the compositional devices that can be used to construct compound sentential phrases about matters of taste from simple ones, such as this one: “either haggis isn’t tasty, or labskaus tastes divine”. For instance, he might introduce a disjunctive connective with the same inferential properties as the truth functional disjunctive connective. Of course, he could not introduce it *as* a truth functional connective, since its complements will not have truth values. But he could nevertheless endow it with the same logical properties as any truth functional connective by laying down appropriate inference rules. In this way, he could try to make just those arguments (involving premisses about matters of taste) come out formally valid that already seem so pretheoretically. The compound sentential phrases that result from applying the new compositional

devices will presumably also be appropriate for combination with the same illocutionary force indicators that combined with the simple ones. If iteration of the compounding operations is to be made possible, this is the best way of ensuring it.

This sketch of an expressivist semantics for sentences about matters of taste should be fairly typical of what any expressivist on the content indicator approach needs to do. The remaining problem for such expressivists will be to show that their semantics can explain why certain inferences are logically valid. Again, they will have to use a notion of validity different from the standard one that defines validity in terms of truth preservation.

4. *The grammatical uniformity of declarative sentences*

4.1. *Hale's problem of "mixed" sentences*

If an expressivist about a class of sentences X is able to give an account of the meaning of X -sentences, of their communicative function within a limited X -discourse, then that has some merit, no doubt. Focus on X -sentences alone, however, may not suffice to secure the success of the account. For the discourse in question may comprise expressions that are also used, with the same meaning, outside that discourse, i.e. in sentences that are not in X . Whenever there are such expressions shared across the border of X , the success of the local account of X -sentences can depend on how well the local account of the shared expressions can be applied outside the borders of X . High time for an example: suppose I have an account of the meaning of moral sentences. This account will have to include something about the word "gambling", because this word can occur in moral sentences, such as our old friend "Gambling is bad". This word, however, is what I have just

called a “shared” expression. For it is an expression which is not only used within moral discourse, as a constituent of moral sentences, but also in other sentences, such as, for example “Gambling is popular” or “Gambling is the pillar of Las Vegas’s economy”. Now since the word appears not to change its meaning according to whether it occurs in moral or non-moral sentences, an overall theory of meaning of the language in question ought to allow for this sameness of meaning across the boundaries of moral discourse. If the local account attributes to “gambling” the function of referring to an action-type, then it ought to be possible to explain extra-moral occurrences of the word by the same function.

Now, while “gambling” doesn’t appear to present any difficulty in this respect, there are other “shared” expressions which do create a problem. We have seen that an expressivist about X pursuing a force indicator approach is forced, by the unendorsed contexts problem, to give a *special* account of unendorsed contexts. He is forced to do so, because the standard account involves, in our example, treating “if” as a truth-functional connective.²⁴ This is not open to the expressivist, because for him, the elements combined by “if” aren’t truth-evaluable. On Blackburn’s (1984) account of “if” within moral discourse, it turned out to be a two-place nominal operator, something that combines two expressions each denoting a moral attitude, and yields an expression which also denotes such an attitude, though of a complex sort. The same goes for other connectives on Blackburn’s account.²⁵

²⁴ The same can be said about other connectives that are standardly treated truth functionally, i.e. Geach’s objection can be equally made for, say, disjunctive embeddings.

²⁵ Compare Hale’s suggestion for a moral nominal conjunctive “;”, made in his 1986.

The special treatment of shared compositional devices such as “if”, “not” or “and” does create problems for expressivists like Blackburn (1984).²⁶ In effect, Blackburn is proposing a complete semantic split between moral and non-moral language. While the standard truth conditional account with truth functional compositional devices applies to non-moral sentences, the iterated force indicator approach with nominal connectives applies to moral discourse. Moral and non-moral discourse are treated as semantically fundamentally different. On the surface, however, moral and non-moral sentences share many of their characteristics: there are moral and non-moral declarative, interrogative, imperative sentences. Composition by “if”, “not”, “or” and other compositional devices seems to function exactly the same way in moral and non-moral discourse. To propose a separate semantics for moral sentences is to ignore this grammatical uniformity of declarative sentences across the board. Thus, Blackburn’s semantic split is unattractive: it renders heterogeneous what seems homogenous.

Unattractive does not mean false —often the truth is unattractive— nor does it mean impossible. Perhaps the reasons for being a moral expressivist are serious enough to justify even an unattractive semantic account. However, while a semantic split might be justifiable in principle, it leads to more difficulties than is at first apparent. The reason is that it is not always possible to cleanly separate an *X*-discourse from other discourses. A good example is the following example of a “mixed” sentence, put forward by Bob Hale:²⁷

²⁶ Blackburn’s view has developed and —I think— radically changed. In his 1988, he seems to me to have switched to the content indicator approach.

²⁷ In his 1986, a critical discussion of Blackburn 1984.

(1) If Ed stole the money, he ought to be punished.

Blackburn's semantic split account does not provide for cases like (1). For the consequent of (1) belongs to moral discourse, while its antecedent does not. Thus, neither Blackburn's semantics of "if" in moral contexts, nor his standard semantics of "if" in non-moral contexts can be applied to (1). It can't be the special moral "if" of the form "H!(... ; —)", because that operates only on expressions denoting moral attitudes, and (1)'s antecedent cannot be so construed. It cannot be an ordinary truth functional "if", because that attaches only to sentential phrases with truth conditions, and according to the expressivist, (1)'s consequent is not truth evaluable. In other words, had the standard account of "if" been applicable to moral sentences as viewed by the expressivist, then he wouldn't have had to introduce a special moral "if" in the first place. Conversely, had the expressivist's account of *moral* conditionals been applicable to conditionals in general, then there would have been no need for a semantic split either, for the expressivist's account of conditionals would then have qualified as a general account of conditionals. Since there are countless "mixed" sentences that are compounds from moral and non-moral sentences, the semantic split theorist would therefore have to introduce yet a third sense of "if" and other connectives, for mixed sentences, if he is to maintain the semantic split. Perhaps mixed sentences can again be compounded with mixed, moral or non-moral sentences. Will the expressivist carry on introducing new senses of connectives for each possible combination? I think that he ought to look for a unified interpretation of the compositional devices in at least the mixed contexts. But once he has such an interpretation, it could also apply to purely moral and purely non-moral sentences, and make for a superior alternative to the semantic split account. This shows

that even if the proposed semantic split account can at all do justice to our actual linguistic practice by covering all mixed sentences with a unified account, then it is still inferior to an alternative, more unified overall account which does not introduce a semantic split. If no unified account of all mixed contexts is available, then this also discredits the semantic split account, for it then becomes too complex. Thus, Blackburn's semantic split cannot be effected in the presence of compositional devices that "mix" across the moral/non-moral border and iterate.

As no semantic split is viable, there is only one possibility for rescuing Blackburn's expressivism: generalise his expressivist semantics of moral sentences to cover non-moral sentences as well. Hale's example shows that Blackburn cannot remain merely a *classical* expressivist, who claims that moral sentences are an exception, while all other sentences have the meanings the standard account says they have. Rather, Blackburn is forced to adopt a *radical* expressivism, i.e. the view that the standard truth conditional account misrepresents not only moral sentences, but *all* sentences.

I shall shortly discuss the prospects for such a generalisation. But before that, I want to generalise the argument against Blackburn's semantic split to hold for all expressivisms of a certain kind. A generalisation of the point will be an important result, for it will show that expressivisms of the sort so far discussed cannot take the *classical* form, the form of proposing an alternative semantics for the problematic sentences *only*, while maintaining the standard account of all other sentences. Instead, any expressivism would have to take a *radical* form and propose the alternative account for all sentences.

The difficulties for the semantic split arose from the presence of a certain kind of compositional device, which I shall call a "globaliser". A two- or more-place compositional

device is a globaliser relative to a class of sentences X , just if it can be used to compound sentences from in- and outside X and, moreover, can be iterated and embedded into other sentences in the usual ways.

Now suppose we want to be expressivists about sentences that are problematic in some way, for example evaluative or probabilistic ones. Suppose also that there is a globaliser d relative to these problematic sentences. Then it will not be immediately clear whether we count sentences that are d -compounds of problematic *and* unproblematic sentences as problematic or as unproblematic. But suppose that it is clear which d -simple sentences (sentences that are not d -compounds) are problematic and which aren't. So we can start by defining two classes of sentences: first, the class of d -simple sentences that are problematic together with all the d -compounds from problematic d -simples. Call this class " X ". Secondly, call the class of those d -simples that are not in X together with all the d -compounds from those d -simples " $\text{not-}X$ ". Now, because d is a globaliser, there will be sentences that are neither in X nor in $\text{not-}X$ —call these "mixed sentences".

Now, a semantic split account S of the globaliser d would be an account that attributes different meanings to d depending on whether it occurs in sentences in X or $\text{not-}X$. Say it attributes M_X to d in X -sentences and $M_{\text{not-}X}$ to d in $\text{not-}X$ -sentences. Such a semantic split account faces the following trilemma:

Either,

(i) S attributes M_X to mixed occurrences of d . In this case, it is possible for d to attach to $\text{not-}X$ -sentences and still be interpreted by attributing M_X to it. Thus we could have attributed M_X to *all* occurrences of d in the first place, in which case a uniform treatment of d

as having M_X would have been available and preferable to S .

Or

(ii) S attributes some further meaning M_M to *all* mixed occurrences of d . In this case, there is a meaning M_M for d that permits d to be attached to both X - and not- X -sentences (and mixed sentences). Thus M_M should have been the uniform meaning of d in the first place, which would have made for a better account than S .

Or

(iii) S attributes *varying* meanings to mixed occurrences of d , according to the exact “mixture” (e.g. sentence from X , combined with sentence not from X , etc.). In this case, S is an impractically complicated account of d , because for any type of mixture, there will be other, more complicated types of mixture. There would have to be indefinitely many different interpretations of d for the indefinitely many different mixtures.²⁸

The trilemma shows that, generally, a semantic account of a globaliser d of a class of problematic sentences cannot be split along the borders of that class. For doing so will either result in a far too complicated account that splits the meaning of d along many more borders, or, if a further and further splitting can be avoided, a better, more uniform account is available. Thus, any such account must treat d uniformly across the borders of X . For example, Blackburn must give a uniform account of “if”, if “if” is a

²⁸ Strictly speaking, the trilemma is not yet exhaustive. There might be solutions intermediate between (ii) and (iii), where d receives a constant interpretation M_M in all mixtures beyond a certain order of complexity. Such a solution would be liable to a difficulty analogous to that arising in (ii). For as d can be attached to any kind of sentence when interpreted by M_M , M_M should have been the uniform meaning of d in the first place.

globaliser of the class of moral sentences. He cannot split the semantics of “if” along the boundaries of moral discourse. The same goes for most expressivists about other classes of sentences. If, say, the probabilistic expressivist wants to give a separate account of “or” in probabilistic contexts, then he can coherently do so only if “or” is not a globaliser of the class of probabilistic sentences.

This result has immediate consequences for any expressivist about a class X of sentences of which there are globalisers. His account of X -sentences will only be acceptable, if he can assimilate the overall treatment of any globalisers of X to the special treatment he has given them within X . For it is already clear that he cannot assimilate the other way, i.e. assimilate the special X -treatment of the globalisers to their truth functional treatment outside X . Thus the only remaining possibility is to assimilate the overall treatment of the globalisers to the expressivist treatment within X .

4.2. *Resolving Hale’s problem*

Can an expressivist on the force indicator route assimilate the treatment of all globalisers to his own, expressivist local treatment of the globalisers? Let us take Blackburn (1984) as example again. Blackburn’s account of “if” in moral contexts is highly unorthodox, for he treats it as a nominal functor, yielding an expression denoting a complex moral attitude from two expressions denoting simpler moral attitudes. How could this account be generalised and extended to cover all conditionals? In the first place, Blackburn would have to treat all potential antecedents and consequents as denoting expressions, and then he would have to explain what sorts of thing they denote, and what sort of more complex thing is denoted by conditional denoting expressions. Probably he would need to introduce as many

force indicators as there are predicates, each appropriate for the expression of some particular attitude. He might claim that the sentence

- (11) If the book has over 200 pages, then it is longer than *Miramar*.

has the following form:

- (F11) $X!(/Y!(\text{the book})/;/Z!(\text{the book})/)$.

It is not clear to me how exactly Blackburn's account of the moral conditional is best extended to cover all conditionals, e.g. what sorts of force indicators " $X!(\dots)$ ", " $Y!(\dots)$ " and " $Z!(\dots)$ " would be. But perhaps it can be done. It is, however, clear that no-one aiming at a limitation of damage should pursue this any further, since Blackburn's treatment of moral "if"s in *Spreading the Word* is tailored to fit only moral conditionals, especially as far as the iterative aspects of the proposal are concerned.

Nevertheless, let me discuss one suggestion for an extension of Blackburn's expressivist semantics (which is inspired by a suggestion of Bob Hale's (1986)). The suggestion is this: For any x which is denoted by the expression to which " $Y!()$ " or " $Z!()$ " get attached respectively, " $Y!()$ " could be a force indicator expressive of the attitude of believing that x has over 200 pages, and " $Z!()$ " a force indicator expressive of the attitude of believing that x is longer than *Miramar*. For example, " $Z!(\text{the book})$ " would be a sentence by which one can express the attitude of believing that the book is longer than *Miramar*. Each non-moral predicate could be treated as a force indicator expressive of an epistemic attitude in this way. Thus, "is round" would be expressive of the attitude of believing that something is round, "is square" of the attitude of believing that something is square, and so on for all non-moral predicates. Then " $/Y!(\text{the book})/$ " would denote the attitude of

believing that the book has over 200 pages (following the rule that slash-expressions denote the attitude standardly expressible by the sentence within the slashes). We could then write:

/Y!(the book)/;/Z!(the book)/

and thereby denote a certain complex attitude, following the rule that “*A*; *C*” denotes the complex dispositional attitude of tending to have the attitude denoted by “*C*”, should one have the attitude denoted by “*A*”. The dominant operator “X!()” could then be some force indicator expressive of epistemic approval. We would then arrive at the following proposal for (11):

(F’11) X!(/Y!(the book)/;/Z!(the book)/).

The same procedure would also allow us to formalise Hale’s problematic mixed sentence (10): “If Ed stole the money, he ought to be punished”. For simplicity, let us assume that “ought”-sentences can be translated into equivalent “is good”-sentences in such a way that “he ought to be punished” can be read as “punishing him is good”. Then (10) could be formalised as follows:

(F’10) H!(/SM!(Ed)/;/H!(punishing Ed)/)

where “SM!()” is of course the appropriate epistemic force indicator.

Up to this point, we are distinguishing epistemic from moral approval and moral from non-moral predicates. If we abstract from these differences, we get a uniform expressivist semantics: introduce a general declarative force indicator indicating general approval, i.e. either epistemic or moral approval: “D!()”.²⁹ Then, (10) and (11) appear, finally as having the same form:

²⁹ We could go on to introduce general question- and command-indicating force indicators “Q!()” and “C!()” as well.

- (F''11) D!(/Y!(the book)/;/Z!(the book)/)
 (F''10) D!(/SM!(Ed)/; /H!(punishing Ed)/)

For both have the form “D!(/p;/q/)”, where “p” and “q” are placeholders for complete sentences, fit for performing a speech act. More specifically, both have the form “D!(/Φ!(α)/;/Ξ!(β)/)”, where “Φ!()” and “Ξ!()” are placeholders for force indicators, and “α” and “β” are placeholders for denoting expressions.

The account sketched shows how a force indicator expressivist like Blackburn (1984) could assimilate his overall semantics to match his special expressivist local semantics of the problematic discourse. In this way, even an expressivist on the force indicator route could be a radical expressivist, as he ought to in the presence of globalisers (if the result of 4.1. is correct). I shall demonstrate now that this radical force indicator account is structurally equivalent to radical content indicator accounts.

Compare what the form of (10) and (11) would be on a standard, truth conditional account: each of the two would be viewed as having assertoric force, here symbolised by “⊢”, operating on a conditional content constructed from two simple contents by the conditional connective “→”:

⊢ that $p \rightarrow$ that q .

Here “p” and “q” are again placeholders for complete sentences. A structural similarity with “D!(/p;/q/)” is already obvious. But now consider how the standard account would break down the subsentential phrases within (10) and (11):

(C11) ⊢ >200P(the book) → LM(the book)

(C10) ⊢ SM(Ed) → G(punishing Ed)

Thus on the standard account (10) and (11) would both have the form “⊢ $F(a) \rightarrow G(b)$ ”, where “ $F()$ ” and “ $G()$ ”

are placeholders for predicates, and “*a*” and “*b*” placeholders for denoting expressions.

It becomes clear now that the defused force indicators “ $/\Phi!()/$ ” of the generalised force indicator account are just like the predicates “ $F()$ ” of the conventional account. This is not surprising, if we recall that the development of the details of the force indicator approach was a response to the difficulty posed by Geach’s objection to expressivism (see §2.2.). Geach pointed out that typical expressivist speech act analyses of “non-descriptive” adjectives such as “good” didn’t match certain unasserted, embedded occurrences of these adjectives. His diagnosis, in “Ascriptivism” (1960), is that the expressivist confuses predication with assertion, i.e. that he fails to distinguish the constant function of *predication* that predicates have on all their occurrences from the function they have only on asserted occurrences: that of *asserting* something of something. Assertion is related to predication in that one can assert something of something else by assertorically predicating the former of the latter.

The expressivist’s remedy was the introduction of the “defusing” slashes, which remove a sentence’s illocutionary force by turning it into a designation of the attitude expressible by the sentence. I have now generalised the expressivist’s account to cover all predicates, reinterpreting them as force indicators. Thus it was to be expected that *defused* force indicators are very similar to predicates.

Now consider that the expressivist content indicator approach was the attempt to maintain the same force- and content indicator classification as conventional semantics, but to reinterpret the notions of content and force involved. Thus, the content indicator approach will also yield something like (C10) and (C11) as formal representations of (10) and (11), under a reinterpretation of “ \vdash ” and “ \rightarrow ” that does not require them to operate on truth evaluable

contents only, and under a reinterpretation of predicates as quasi-predicates (see §3.2.). Therefore a content indicator approach analysis of (10) and (11) will also be structurally equivalent to the generalised force indicator approach.

Let me take stock. Hale's objection from "mixed" compounds showed that a moral expressivist cannot give a separate semantics of moral sentences, while sticking to standard semantics for non-moral sentences. My generalisation of Hale's point makes clear that the same holds for expressivists about any class X of sentences that admits composition with globalisers. Any such expressivist must offer a general, unified expressivist semantics, i.e. become a radical expressivist. As my suggestion for a plausible such unified theory on the force indicator approach leads us to an account which is structurally equivalent to a unified expressivist account on the content indicator approach, a reasonable conclusion is that any expressivist affected by the globaliser problem ought to pursue a unified content indicator expressivism in the first place, in order to save himself the trouble of introducing force indicators and slashes globally. According to my suggestion in §3.2., the content indicator approach amounts to a unified conceptual role semantics.

5. *Concluding remarks*

One might be tempted to conclude from my argument in §4.1. that *any* expressivism must take the form of radical expressivism, i.e. that expressivism about *no* class of sentences X can take the classical semantic split form. That would be too rash. My conclusion was restricted to those expressivisms which are affected by globalisers. Any expressivism unaffected by globalisers, i.e. any expressivism about a class of sentences without globalisers, will escape the conclusion.

Now, it is easy to see that most expressivisms *will* be affected. Typically, expressivisms are about classes of sentences that are identified by a topic —a topic that renders them non-truth-evaluable for some epistemological or metaphysical reason. Thus moral expressivism is about moral sentences, sentences that predicate (apparent) properties such as moral goodness or badness, or sentences whose content is that something ought or ought not to be done. Probabilistic expressivism is about sentences that ascribe probabilities, or perhaps about those sentences that contain the phrase “it is probable” or the word “probably” in a crucial way (where “crucial” is meant to exclude occurrences within propositional attitude constructions and quotation marks).

The reason why any such expressivism *will* be affected by globalisers is simply that the property by which sentences are classified to belong to the problematic class is *syntactically irrelevant* in the sense that that property does not place any limits on how sentences in the class can be compounded and embedded. The presence of predicates like “is good” or adverbial constructions like “probably” does not affect the syntactic status of a sentential phrase according to which it may or may not be compounded in certain ways. The predicates “is good” and “is popular”, when combined with a noun phrase such as “gambling” will yield sentential phrases that are embeddable in exactly the same ways, for example within a “that . . .” construction or as part of a disjunction. As long as the problematic sentences are classified by such a syntactically irrelevant property, there will be globalisers.

It is not surprising that most expressivisms are about sentences that are identified in a syntactically irrelevant way. For most expressivisms are metaphysically or epistemologically motivated, and natural language grammar is notoriously insensitive to metaphysico-epistemological dis-

tinctions.³⁰ This is where the trouble started in the first place.

In order to demonstrate that the escape-hole I leave for expressivisms not affected by globalisers is not just *pro forma*, let me finally mention a form of expressivism that might well not be so affected. I think expressivism about conditionals, as defended by Dorothy Edgington (1986, 1995) is interesting in this respect. First, Edgington's expressivism *could* not take the form of radical expressivism, as this is precluded by her reasons for being an expressivist about conditionals. Secondly, expressivism about conditionals is the only expressivism I know, which might escape the globaliser argument, because it is about sentences that are identified in a syntactically relevant way.

The class of conditional sentences comprises those sentences that are formed from a subordinate clause introduced by "if" and a main clause (sometimes introduced by "then" when it comes after the "if"-clause).³¹ These sentences do indeed seem to form a syntactic category of their own, separate from the class of non-conditional declaratives. Edgington argues with some plausibility that conditionals do not admit of the same embeddings as non-conditional declaratives.³² (By contrast, it would seem hopeless to argue that, say, moral declaratives do not admit of the same syntactic operations as non-moral declaratives.) However, she does not discuss all plausible candidates for globalisers: she omits discussion of "and", of "or",³³ of

³⁰ Hence the appeal of a programme like Crispin Wright's in his 1987 and 1992.

³¹ In so-called counterfactual conditionals, "if" can be omitted when the word order is changed in a certain way.

³² See §7.1. of her 1995, and her commentary to chapter 6 of Woods 1997.

³³ She discusses disjunctions with only conditional disjuncts, but ignores disjunctions with both conditional and non-conditional disjuncts.

the possible iteration of these and other connectives, and of quantification. Whether expressivism about conditionals can escape the argument of §4.1. therefore remains an open question, to be discussed in another paper.

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RESUMEN

Para los propósitos de este artículo, debe entenderse que “expresivista respecto a una clase de enunciados X” incluye cualquier teórico que niegue que los enunciados en X (o sus contenidos) pueden ser verdaderos o falsos y por lo tanto ofrece una alternativa para estos enunciados: la semántica no veritativa condicional. Primero discuto cómo pueden responder los expresivistas a la bien conocida objeción de Frege-Geach, señalando la diferencia entre enfoque indicador de la fuerza (p.e. Blackburn) y el enfoque indicador del contenido. Luego examino una dificultad que surge para los expresivistas en el enfoque indicador de la fuerza debido a la manera en que responden al problema de Frege-Geach. Esta dificultad, que señaló por primera vez Bob Hale, surge de la uniformidad sintáctica de todos los enunciados declarativos, incluyendo aquellos respecto a los cuales las personas has sido expresivistas. Mediante la generalización de la idea de Hale muestro que cualquier expresivismo con respecto a una clase de enunciados con cierta propiedad sintáctica es insostenible. Es insostenible por lo menos en la forma clásica, en el que el expresivista sostiene una semántica veritativa condicional para enunciados no problemáticos y una semántica expresivista separada para enunciados problemáticos. La única salida para estos expresivistas consiste en generalizar su semántica sin excepciones y convertirse por ello en expresivistas radicales. Señalo por último que puede haber excepciones para este resultado, y considero brevemente el expresivismo de Edgington respecto a los enunciados condicionales como una de esas posibles excepciones.

[Traducción: Héctor Islas]