

Evaluative Discourse and Affective States of Mind

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It is widely held within contemporary metaethics that there is a lack of linguistic support for evaluative expressivism. On the contrary, it seems that the predictions that expressivists make about evaluative discourse are not borne out. An instance of this is the so-called problem of missing Moorean infelicity. Expressivists maintain that evaluative statements express non-cognitive states of mind in a similar manner to how ordinary descriptive language expresses beliefs. Conjoining an ordinary assertion that *p* with the denial of being in the corresponding belief state famously gives rise to Moorean infelicity:

(i) ?? It's raining but I don't believe that it's raining.

If expressivists are right, then conjoining evaluative statements with the denial of being in the relevant non-cognitive state of mind should give rise to similar infelicity. However, as several theorists have pointed out, this does not seem to be the case. Statements like the following are not infelicitous:

(ii) Murder is wrong but I don't disapprove of it.

In this paper, I argue that evaluative statements express the kind of states that are attributed by 'find'-constructions in English and that these states are non-cognitive in nature. This addresses the problem of missing Moorean infelicity and, more generally, goes to show that there are linguistic facts which support expressivism about evaluative discourse.

1. Introduction

Expressivists in metaethics maintain that a primary function of moral language is to express non-cognitive attitudes. The most influential considerations in favour of expressivism come from motivational internalism about moral judgements. Someone who judges that lying is wrong is thereby at least partly motivated not to lie, according to motivational internalists. Internalism is often combined with the Humean Theory of Motivation which states that any pure belief state needs supplementation by a desire to move an agent to act. These two views in combination imply that moral judgments or moral beliefs cannot be (only) ordinary belief states. Expressivists argue that they are desire-like states, with a world-to-mind instead of mind-to-world

direction of fit. Moral statements express such states, instead of ordinary beliefs.

Another type of motivation for expressivism comes from metaphysical concerns:

If someone doubts the prospects for reducing moral properties to natural properties (perhaps under the influence of the open question argument), they need not concede that there are any extra-natural or supernatural properties. One can simply reinterpret even the moral judgments one accepts as predicating no properties at all. Or, as with the more sophisticated versions of non-cognitivism, one can allow them to predicate natural properties and argue that the appearance that they do something other than this is due to the additional expressive component in their meaning. One's naturalism will then not commit one to giving up moral judgments or reducing moral properties to natural properties. (van Roojen 2016)

It is certainly open to doubt that there is a good argument for expressivism here.¹ However, that is not what I wish to discuss in this context. Instead, I would like to call attention to the striking fact that while expressivism is a view concerning the meaning of evaluative and normative language, it has traditionally been motivated by extra-linguistic concerns. The considerations mentioned above do not spring from the nature of moral language itself, but rather from other sources. As Seth Yalcin describes it:

The prototypical expressivist is best construed as driven to her distinctive claims about language by these antecedent non-linguistic commitments. She enters the linguistics room, as it were, already with certain philosophical and psychological axes to grind; and her first order of business is not to give (to offer an account of some hitherto unexplained linguistic data) but to take (to call for some account of normative talk fitting harmoniously with her antecedent philosophical and psychological constraints, in the process seeming to reject otherwise motivated accounts). (Yalcin 2012, p. 134; cf. Schroeder 2008a, pp. 177-178)²

¹ In essence, the worry is whether one's belief that there are no evaluative properties really offers support to a theory about evaluative language and thought.

² It would be overblown to say that there are *no* linguistic arguments that have been offered in favour of non-cognitivism. It is, for instance, natural to think of Moral Twin–Earth scenarios as a kind of linguistic argument which some have taken to favour non-cognitivism (Horgan & Timmons 1992). More accurately, arguing from linguistic considerations has not been the most common way to support non-cognitivism.

Presumably, one of the reasons behind this is that natural language has been regarded as having little to offer in support of the expressivist's hypothesis. Whereas the expressivist argues that evaluative discourse is disjoint with non-evaluative discourse there is, it has been argued, nothing in the actual behaviour of evaluative terms to support this notion. If descriptive and evaluative discourse were disjoint in the way that expressivists claim, one would expect that to be somehow linguistically visible. One would, for instance, expect there to be sentential environments that only allow for one or the other kind of terms. But this is widely regarded not to be the case. As Mark Schroeder puts it, echoing a common view on the matter within metaethics and the philosophy of language:

Every construction in natural languages seems to work equally well no matter whether normative or descriptive language is involved, and to yield complex sentences with the same semantic properties. (Schroeder 2008a, p. 5)

This remark is made in the context of a discussion of the generality of the Frege-Geach problem for expressivists. It reflects the sort of general concern that Yalcin gives voice to in the quotation above. While expressivism is a view about natural language, few arguments from the workings of language have been offered to support it.

The purpose of this paper is to remedy this fact by offering linguistic support for a central tenet of expressivism called the Parity Thesis, that is, the notion that evaluative discourse expresses non-cognitive states of mind in the same way that non-evaluative statements express beliefs.

It is certainly true that evaluative and descriptive terms embed in much the same environments and that the expressivist, arguing for the disunity of evaluative and descriptive language, owes an explanation of this. However, I will argue, against Schroeder, that not all embedded environments are equally friendly to evaluative and descriptive discourse. As will be discussed below, there are attitude ascriptions that, while not restricted to the evaluative in particular, allow for only a rather narrow class of non-evaluative terms. The nature of such attitude ascriptions, I argue, offers support for one of expressivism's central claims about evaluative language.

The view that I will defend targets evaluative discourse, rather than being restricted to moral terms. There is a large and important question concerning what the identifying marks of evaluative terms are. In this context, I will sidestep this issue and instead rely on the assumption that it is intuitively graspable which terms are evaluative, and

which terms are not. Moral terms like ‘right’, ‘good’ and ‘cruel’, taste-predicates like ‘tasty’ and ‘funny’, and at least part of aesthetic discourse, such as ‘beautiful’ and ‘elegant’, are all evaluative on the conception employed in this paper.

2. Expressivism and Moore’s Paradox

Expressivists maintain that evaluative discourse expresses non-cognitive states of mind. A good place to start is with the question of what it is to express a state of mind by a statement. The expression-relation that the expressivist has in mind is often explained by analogy with the relationship between regular assertions and beliefs. Schroeder even takes this analogy to be the defining feature of expressivism:

Expressivists say that the way to understand moral language is to understand that moral sentences are related to noncognitive, desire-like states of mind in the same way that ordinary descriptive sentences are related to ordinary beliefs—they express them. (Schroeder 2008a, p. 3)

Following Schroeder (2008b), I will call this the *Parity Thesis*. The analogy is perhaps not in and of itself very informative, since it is not immediately clear how to think about the relationship between assertion and belief in the first place. Nonetheless, a phenomenon that potentially helps to elucidate it is Moore’s paradox. Statements like:

(1) ?? It is raining and I don’t believe that it is raining

are infelicitous. A common first stab at a diagnosis of this infelicity is that the first conjunct expresses that the speaker believes that *p*, whereas the second conjunct explicitly denies this. One has thus communicated that one believes that *p* and that one does not believe that *p*. John Searle, among others, has accepted this diagnosis of the paradox, and also takes it to be a mark of what it is to express a mental state:

A man who states, explains, asserts, or claims that *p* expresses the belief that *p*; a man who promises, vows, threatens or pledges to do *A* expresses an intention to do *A*; a man who orders, commands, requests *H* to do *A* expresses a desire (want, wish) that *H* do *A*; a man who apologizes for doing *A* expresses a regret at having done *A*; etc. In general, in the performance of any illocutionary act with a propositional content, the speaker expresses some attitude or state[. . .]Notice that this holds even if he is insincere, even if he does not have the belief, desire intention, regret or pleasure he expresses, he nonetheless expresses a belief, desire, intention,

regret, or pleasure in the performance of the speech act. This fact is marked linguistically by the fact that it is linguistically unacceptable (though not self-contradictory) to conjoin the explicit performative verb with the denial of the expressed psychological state. Thus one cannot say: 'I state that p but I don't believe that p', 'I promise that p but I don't intend that p'. (Searle 1979, pp. 3–5)

Taking 'Moorean paradoxes' to be a mark of the expressing-a-mental-attitude-relation helps shed some light on this relation. First, the Moorean sentence is not really contradictory, since both conjuncts can be true. Similarly, the expressivist shouldn't argue that asserting something evaluative while denying that you are in the corresponding non-cognitive state is a semantic contradiction (that would be a form of semantic subjectivism). The fact that both conjuncts can be true together has led many theorists to argue that the infelicity is pragmatic in nature. However, as Paul Grice himself already noted, the expression-relation that holds between assertion and belief is not a form of conversational implicature (Grice 1993/1989, p. 42). One reason for this is that the hallmark of conversational implicature is cancellability. But as the infelicity of Moorean statements like (1) shows, one cannot felicitously deny that one is in the mental state of believing that p while asserting that p.

Might it be a form of presupposition in the sense of P.F. Strawson (1950)? On this notion of presupposing, a sentence is only true if its presuppositions are true. But if the first conjunct of (1) presupposed that the speaker believes that it is raining, then the second conjunct of (1) would have to be false. If, on the other hand, the second conjunct were true, then the first would have to be false, since one of its presuppositions would be false. But as we have already seen, both conjuncts of (1) can be true at the same time. Moreover, a defining feature of the presuppositions of a sentence is that they follow it into (most) unasserted contexts, such as conditional antecedents:

(2) If the present king of France is bald, Europe has a bald monarch.

(2) presupposes that there is a present king of France in the same way that a straightforward assertion of the antecedent does. But conditional antecedents don't express their corresponding belief state:

(3) If it is raining, I'm misinformed.

(3) does not indicate that the speaker believes that it is raining. Accordingly, the mental state(s) expressed by a sentence when it is asserted cannot be assimilated into the presuppositions of that

sentence.³ The same point applies to conventional implicature. This goes to show that even though there is relatively widespread agreement that Moore's paradox is pragmatic in nature, it does not yield to these standard pragmatic tools.

With these points in mind, I will follow Searle (and others) in taking the mental state(s) expressed by a sentence when used to be its *assertion condition*, indicating that expressing the attitude is a condition for felicitous assertion of the sentence in question. Note that this is compatible with the speaker as a matter of fact not being in the mental state. As Searle notes in the quoted passage, one can felicitously assert that it is raining without actually believing that it is raining. What one cannot do is to assert that it is raining without simultaneously representing oneself as believing that it is raining, and in that sense express that belief.

Accordingly, what we should be looking for, on behalf of the expressivist, is a kind of non-cognitive state of mind that is such that it is infelicitous to make an evaluative assertion while denying that one is in that state of mind. This would indicate that being in that kind of state is an assertion condition for evaluative statements, and that evaluative statements express such states of mind.

A serious problem for this idea is the presumed lack of Moorean infelicity for evaluative discourse and non-cognitive attitudes. In contrast to (1), the following statements are not infelicitous:

- (4) Murder is wrong, but I don't disapprove of it.
- (5) Murder is wrong, but I'm not against it.
- (6) Murder is wrong, but I'm in favour of doing it.⁴
- (7) Eating meat is cruel, but I like doing it and I don't feel bad about it.
- (8) Eating meat is wrong, but I plan/intend to do it anyway.⁵

³ There is a particular class of evaluative terms, slurs, for which it has been argued that they express negative attitudes and that this feature projects (Schlenker 2007). The current discussion is not meant to cover slurs.

⁴ Examples (4) through (7) are borrowed from Woods (2014).

⁵ Someone might think that some or all of (4)-(8) actually are bad. Of course, they are all things that would be rather strange to utter out of the blue. But consider the contrast with the very salient incoherence of:

(i) ?? Murder is wrong, but I don't believe that it is wrong.

In (4) to (8) the denials target the kind of attitudes that expressivists of various kinds have proposed to be those that are expressed by evaluative discourse. Several theorists have noticed that the lack of infelicity here is a problem for expressivism and the analogy between moral discourse and how assertions express beliefs (Atlas 2005, pp. 225–230; Fletcher 2014; Woods 2014). Jack Woods puts the point perspicuously:

(C1) Moral assertions express non-cognitive mental states in exactly the same way that non-moral assertions express beliefs.

(C2) When an assertion expresses that the utterer is in a mental state *p*, then (contrastively) conjoining this assertion with the denial of being in *p* yields a certain kind of infelicitous utterance.

(C3) Moral assertions conjoined with the denial of being in the mental state expressed by such utterances by expressivist lights aren't infelicitous in this way. (Woods 2014, p. 6)

Similarly, Alexander Miller (2013) points out that the expressivist faces a problem analogous to that of the open question argument:

For any 'common-or-garden' non-cognitive sentiment of disapproval it is always an open question whether an act of expressing that sentiment amounts to the making of a moral judgement. That is to say, it is always a significant question whether the person expressing the sentiment is making a moral judgement, or an aesthetic judgement, or a prudential judgement, or whatever. One can ask this sort of question without betraying conceptual confusion. (Miller 2013, p. 46)

I take this general point made by Woods, Miller and others to relate back to the lack of linguistic support for expressivism that was discussed in the introduction. As a thesis about the meaning of natural language locutions, expressivism makes certain predictions about,

Also, it might be relevant to consider some more fleshed out examples of the same kind as those mentioned above:

(ii) Yes, in light of the climate crisis it's wrong to fly from Germany to Thailand every year. But I don't disapprove of you doing it. You enjoy the beach so much!

(iii) Yes of course its cruel to eat meat, but I really like doing it, so I am not against it.

(ii) and (iii) are perhaps even clearer examples of sentences that should be infelicitous on standard expressivist views, but are not. Though perhaps morally regrettable, the speaker would not exhibit linguistic incoherency in uttering them.

among other things, what kind of statements should sound linguistically odd. These predictions are, it seems, not borne out.⁶

In the following, I argue that things are not as grim as they look for the expressivist. There is a class of non-cognitive states such that it is infelicitous to deny that one is in that kind of state when one makes an evaluative assertion. This, I argue, is best explained by the hypothesis that these kinds of states constitute assertion conditions for the statements in question, and that they are therefore expressed by such a statement. If successful, this argument vindicates a central tenet of expressivism, namely the Parity Thesis. More generally, it goes to show that there are linguistic data concerning evaluative discourse that expressivism is well-suited to accommodate.

3. 'Find'

There is a class of attitude verbs, sometimes called 'subjective attitude verbs' (for instance, in [Sæbø 2009](#)), that are less tolerant than 'believes' regarding what predicates can be felicitously embedded under them. A paradigmatic example of this class in English is 'to find'. Consider the following contrast:

- (9) Holmes finds Saltimbocca tasty.
- (10) Holmes finds Saltimbocca horrible.

Both sound good, whereas:

- (11) ?? Holmes finds Saltimbocca vegetarian.

⁶ On a historical note, it is interesting that Moore's paradox appeared in writing for the first time in a discussion with the non-cognitivist C.L. Stevenson on a topic not far removed from the current one. Moore wrote:

I think Mr. Stevenson's actual view is that sometimes, when a man asserts that it was right of Brutus to stab Caesar, the sense of his words is (roughly) much the same as if he had said 'I approve of Brutus' action: do approve of it too!' the former clause giving the cognitive meaning, the latter the emotive. But why should he not say instead, that the sense of the man's words is merely 'Do approve of Brutus' stabbing of Caesar?'—an imperative, which has absolutely no cognitive meaning, in the sense I have tried to explain? If this were so, the man might perfectly well be implying that he approved of Brutus' action, though he would not be saying so, and would be asserting nothing whatever, that might be true or false, except, perhaps, that Brutus did stab Caesar. There seems to me nothing mysterious about this sense of 'imply,' in which if you assert that you went to the pictures last Tuesday, you imply, though you don't assert, that you believe or know that you did; and in which, if you assert that Brutus' action was right, you imply, but don't assert, that you approve of Brutus' action. ([Moore 1942](#), p. 542; [Atlas 2005](#), p. 225)

(12) ?? Holmes finds the dish to be made of pasta.

are infelicitous (Kennedy 2013). This raises the question: What is it about predicates such as ‘tasty’ and ‘horrible’ that allows them to embed under ‘find’, unlike ‘vegetarian’ and ‘made of pasta’? It might be tempting to think that while ‘tasty’ and ‘horrible’ are vague predicates, ‘vegetarian’ and ‘made of pasta’ are not, and that this is what explains the differences in acceptability with ‘find’. Chris Kennedy (2013) argues against this hypothesis. He notes that some predicates exhibit two different readings, one objective and one ‘experiential’:

(13) This piece of cake is heavy/light/dense.

These statements can be read either as ascribing a ‘qualitative aspect’ to the cake, such as how it tastes, or as relating to a non-experiential property. When embedded under ‘find’, only the former reading of the predicate is available:

(14) Holmes finds this piece of cake heavy/light/dense.

(15) Holmes finds this frosting thick.

This indicates that vagueness is not what is relevant for felicitous embedding under ‘find’. If vagueness were the relevant thing, both readings should be available. One might want to protest against Kennedy’s argument that there seem, in fact, to be several readings of (14) and (15) available. In addition to the taste-related one, (14) can be read as relating to the subject’s experience of the cake’s weight. However, whatever our final verdict on the nature of ‘find’ ascriptions, I think it is pretty clear that neither of these readings can simply be explained as instances of vagueness. Furthermore, as Kennedy notes, adding something that blocks the ‘experiential’ reading of the predicate makes the statement infelicitous, even though it retains a certain degree of vagueness:

(16) ?? Holmes finds this frosting about 2 cm thick.

Kennedy also points to the fact that there is a stark contrast in acceptability between evaluative adjectives and most other gradable adjectives when embedded under ‘find’ in their comparative form:

(17) ?? Holmes finds Carla richer/taller/heavier/older than David.

(18) Holmes finds the tripe tastier than the haggis.

Following Kennedy and others, I take it that such data indicate that ‘find’ states are somehow ‘subjective’ and ‘experiential’ in nature. This

aligns with, I think, most people's pre-theoretical view on the matter.⁷ The question is how to account for this subjectivity.

The literature on 'find' has principally focused on the semantic requirements for embedding under it (Bouchard 2012; Bylinina 2017; Coppock 2018; Fleisher 2013; Kennedy 2013; Kennedy & Willer 2016). In the following, I will not focus on the semantic question (but see §7 for some comments on the issue). Instead, I want to raise the issue of the nature of the ascribed attitudes, and to what category of mental states they belong. To see how this question relates to our general topic, remember that the problem identified by Woods and others is that combining an evaluative assertion with the denial of being in a specific non-cognitive state does not give rise to infelicity. Importantly, 'find' states are such that it is infelicitous to make an evaluative assertion while denying being in the corresponding state:

(19) ?? It is wrong to eat meat but I don't find it wrong.

(20) ?? Eating meat is cruel but I don't find it cruel.

(21) ?? He is selfish but I don't find him selfish.

This is just as expected if 'find' states are a type of belief, or more generally a kind of cognitive state. However, I will argue that this is not the case. 'Find' states, I argue, are non-cognitive, specifically affective, attitudes. Since they are non-cognitive, and attributions of them exhibit Moorean infelicity when combined with evaluative assertions, they vindicate the Parity Thesis and offer linguistic support for the expressivist's hypothesis.⁸

4. What kind of mental states?

What is it to find something, for instance, tasty, cruel or salty? What must the world be like for a statement along the lines of:

(22) Holmes finds Saltimbocca tasty.

⁷ To be sure, there are usages of 'to find' which do not seem at all subjective, such as when one talks about a scientific research team having found a correlation in their study, or the court having found the defendant guilty of the crime. But intuitively, this is just a different meaning of the word. This is supported by the fact that even such things as objective length embed under 'find' in such occurrences, which we have seen is not the case with the relevant instances of 'find'.

⁸ Below, I also offer an additional argument, based specifically on aesthetic and taste discourse, for the conclusion that evaluative discourse expresses 'find' states.

to be true? A gloss sometimes given in the literature is that ‘find’ ascribes a ‘subjective experience’ to the subject of the sentence (for instance [Kennedy 2013](#), p. 269). I have myself adverted to something along those lines in calling the states in question ‘experiential’. While not wrong, this gloss certainly does not exhaust the topic. Consider the straight stick that looks bent when it is placed in water. An observer would, in this case, have the subjective experience of a bent stick. We could report the observer’s state of mind by saying something along the lines of:

- (23) The stick looks bent to Holmes.
- (24) The stick seems bent to Holmes.
- (25) The stick appears bent to Holmes.

However, it does not seem correct that:

- (26) ?? Holmes finds the stick bent.

Moreover, ‘looks’, ‘seems’ and ‘appears’ all are compatible with asserting something that is incompatible with their complement when not embedded. Thus, observing the stick being placed into the water, Holmes can state:

- (27) The stick looks bent, but it is straight.
- (28) The stick seems bent, but it is straight.
- (29) The stick appears bent, but it is straight.

This diverges from how ‘find’-ascriptions work:

- (30) ?? I find Saltimbocca tasty, but it is in fact not tasty.
- (31) ?? I find him cruel, but he is in fact not cruel.

These considerations show that ‘find’ works differently from ‘looks’, ‘seems’ and ‘appears’. The glossing of ‘find’ states as being subjective experiences does not capture this difference. We need something more fine-grained.

On the theory that I will argue for, the content of ‘find’ states are not propositions, but rather objects, as is the case with states such as liking and appreciating (in their object-oriented sense). The predicates embedded under ‘find’ in attributions of ‘find’ states, like ‘tasty’ in (22), are thus not part of the content of Holmes’ attitude. Instead, they serve an adverbial role of individuating the attitude in question.

Finding Saltimbocca tasty is, as it were, *a way of finding it*. Incidentally, this corresponds to the way we speak. The question to which such a ‘find’ attribution is a proper answer is not *what*, but *how* Holmes finds the dish.

More specifically, it will be argued that the states attributed with evaluative vocabulary embedded under ‘find’ belong to the class of mental states of which other members are states like appreciating, loving, hating and detesting (someone or something). For the lack of a better term, I will call this class of mental states ‘affective attitudes’ since they all seem to belong to the affective part of our sensible faculty. This is partly a stipulated use of ‘affective attitude’. One might think that affective states are necessarily occurrent, in which case neither of the states mentioned above belong to this class.⁹ Like beliefs, the states which I call affective are standing states, something which is evinced by the fact that it makes sense to attribute to a sleeping person, for instance, the attitude of liking their mother. The same goes for ‘find’ states.

Our argument will be an inference to the best explanation. Below, I distinguish three features which are shared by the class of affective mental states and then argue that the fact that evaluative ‘find’ states share these features is best explained by the fact that they are non-cognitive and specifically affective in the relevant sense. The proposed theory provides a *unified* explanation of these features.

First off, affective states are such that when they are ‘actualized’, they are connected to occurrent states with distinctive phenomenologies. Somebody who loves her family will feel a certain way when thinking about them, where ‘feel’ denotes an occurrent, non-cognitive state. Similarly, someone who appreciates the taste of liquorice will have a not easily described positive experience while eating it. I would like to sidestep the issue of exactly what the connection between the standing attitude and the occurrent state is in this context. Perhaps the occurrent state is a part of the standing state, perhaps it is distinct from it but somehow triggered by it. What matters for the present context is that there is such a connection to an occurrent experience in the attitudes in which we are interested. Closely related to this is the fact that there is a valence built into the states in question: the examples of affective attitudes which I have offered are all such that they are

⁹ One might also think that states like pain should be included in the class of affective states. But pain does not take intentional objects, and is for this reason not naturally called an attitude.

intuitively positive or negative. Plausibly, this valence derives from the pleasantness or unpleasantness of the experience in question.

That ‘find’ states share this feature is easiest to see in cases with predicates that have both meanings which are embeddable under ‘find’ and meanings which are not. Consider the following examples from Kennedy (2013):

(32) Holmes believes that the flight from Chicago to Hong Kong is longer than the flight from Chicago to Tokyo.

(33) Holmes finds the flight from Chicago to Hong Kong longer than the flight from Chicago to Tokyo.

(32) ascribes to Holmes a belief about the objective durations of the flights. In contrast, when ‘longer’ is embedded under ‘find’, the only reading available is the one that relates to an affective experience of Holmes. It is whether the flight to Hong Kong *feels* longer to Holmes or not that determines whether (33) is true or false. In relation to this, it should also be noticed that (33) can be true even though Holmes knows that the flight from Chicago to Tokyo is, in fact, longer. It makes sense for a flight to *feel* longer than another, even though it is known to be shorter. To arrive at the judgement about the objective length, one consults a reliable clock or timetable. To arrive at the ‘find’-judgement, one employs one’s sensible faculty and determines how one feels about the flight.¹⁰ In the case of taste predicates, the facts are equally clear. To find Saltimbocca tasty is close to or identical with liking its taste. Liking the taste of Saltimbocca is obviously connected to the occurrent state of actually enjoying the taste of it when you eat it (under normal circumstances).

It might seem less clear that the following ‘find’ states have affective dimensions:

(34) I find it difficult to write under pressure.

(35) I find it easy to surf in these conditions.

¹⁰ One might worry that asserting that, for instance, it is cruel to eat meat or that sunsets are beautiful is compatible with not feeling in any specific way at all at the time of assertion. The current theory would explain this as a temporary discord between one’s standing attitude and the occurrent states to which they are connected. It might be that one can judge that eating meat is cruel without at that very moment feeling anything, but this is compatible with at least sometimes having the requisite feeling being a pre-condition for finding it cruel, and therefore, on the current theory, making the evaluative judgement.

But even in cases like (34) and (35) it is clear that the states in question are related to a specific experience of the subject. And again, it is also clear that this state must be distinguished from seemings and appearances. To find it difficult to write under pressure is not the same as it seeming difficult to write under pressure or as writing under pressure to appear in a certain way. In (34) and (35) there also seems to be a strong connection to the occurrent state of a *felt* easiness or difficulty. To have that kind of feeling when one is actually writing under pressure is a necessary condition for finding it difficult. What distinguishes the states attributed by (34) and (35) from our comparison class is rather that they lack intrinsic valence. To find a task easy or difficult is not necessarily to hold a positive or negative attitude towards it. This also seems to go for some other ‘find’ states. This makes Kennedy’s (2013) proposal that being evaluative is necessary and sufficient for a term to embed under ‘find’ implausible. ‘Difficult’ and ‘easy’ are intuitively not evaluative. I conjecture that this is because the sentiments connected to the terms are not intrinsically valenced. Be that as it may, that the states ascribed by (34) and (35) do not carry intrinsic valence does not show that they are not similar to liking, loving, hating, and so on, in the other respects. Secondly, our primary interest here are the states attributed with ‘find’ and intuitively evaluative predicates, like ‘right’, ‘good’, ‘cruel’, and so on. And these states do not lack the relevant valence. If one takes valence to be a necessary condition for a state being affective, that undermines classifying every state attributed with ‘find’ as such. It is, however, not an argument against ‘find’-attributions with embedded evaluative predicates being affective in the relevant sense.

A second distinguishing mark of ‘find’-locutions is that they are not apt for ascriptions of truth and falsity. In this respect, they stand in stark contrast to ascriptions of paradigmatic cognitive states, like beliefs. Consider a case where Holmes believes that the sun is shining. Depending on whether the sun actually is shining or not, we can report on Holmes’ state in the following way:

(36) What Holmes believes is true/false.

Similarly, if Holmes is certain that it is raining, we can report that:

(37) What Holmes is certain of is true/false.

By contrast, consider the case with attitudes that we would intuitively class as non-cognitive, like the affective states listed above. If Holmes likes his friend Watson, we wouldn't report that:

(38) ?? What Holmes likes is true/false.

In this, find-states pattern with affective states, and not with beliefs. Ascribing truth and falsity to, for instance, Holmes' state of finding lying wrong, is infelicitous:

(39) ?? What Holmes finds is true/false.

A natural reaction to this similarity might be that it is due to the relevant ascriptions lacking a full propositional clause as their complement. Since propositions, on a widespread view, are the primary bearers of truth and falsity, it is unsurprising that states which do not take propositions as their objects are not apt for ascriptions of truth and falsity. The above similarity, the objection concludes, thus has little bearing on whether 'find' states are non-cognitive or not, the objection would go.

But this feature of affective states, that they are unapt for truth-ascriptions, is not confined to instances in which they take objects as opposed to propositions as their complements. Consider a case where the complement of Holmes' state of liking is instead a proposition, for instance, the case where he likes *that* the sun is shining. In such a situation, (38) is still infelicitous:

(40) ?? What Holmes likes is true/false.

This holds for all non-cognitive states which has been suggested as being the states expressed by evaluative discourse (listed in (4) through (8) above). In constructions in which these states take propositions as objects, they are still unapt for ascriptions of truth and falsity.¹¹

Importantly, the same thing goes for the states attributed by 'find' and other subjective attitude verbs. Consider a case where Holmes

¹¹ Here is another way to highlight the contrast:

- (iv) Holmes has a true belief;
- (v) Holmes has a true liking;
- (vi) Holmes has a true intention.

In (iv), 'true' is naturally read as describing that the state accurately represents the world. In (v) and (vi), 'true' can only take the meaning it has in expressions like 'a true friend'.

finds *that* fruit in the morning is delicious. In this scenario, (39) is still infelicitous:

(41) ?? What Holmes finds is true/false.

‘Find’ with a finite clause seems to be quite rare in English. However, in languages where the constructions corresponding to the relevant ‘find’ in English naturally take a finite clause, saying that the ascribed states are true or false sounds strange as well. (42) and (43) are direct translations of (39) into French and German respectively, and are also infelicitous:

(42) ?? Ce que trouve Holmes est vrai/faux.

(43) ?? Was Holmes findet ist wahr/falsch.

This is also the case with the Swedish subjective attitude verb ‘*tycka*’, the meaning of which is close to ‘find’ (see [Coppock 2018](#) for discussion of ‘*tycka*’). With ‘*tycka*’ a propositional complement is mandatory, and the state is nonetheless not apt for truth-ascriptions:

(44) ?? Det som Holmes tycker är sant.

It is natural to think that aptness for being ascribed truth or falsity is constitutive of the distinction between cognitive and non-cognitive states. On this view, the reason why we don’t ascribe truth and falsity to states like liking, disliking, and appreciating, or to the states ascribed by subjective attitude verbs, is that they are simply not in the business of representing and misrepresenting what the world is like.

But even if one is hesitant about drawing such far-reaching conclusions about the nature of some mental states on the basis of linguistic facts like those concerning truth-ascriptions, there is a more limited point to be made. Concerning truth-ascriptions, the states ascribed by subjective attitude verbs behave just like non-cognitive states, and unlike cognitive states such as beliefs. The hypothesis that they are non-cognitive states explains this, and in want of an attractive cognitivist explanation, this gives reason to believe in the non-cognitivist hypothesis.

At this point one might be inclined to object that it is strange to use the kind of data exhibited above in the course of an argument that is meant to support expressivism. Modern expressivists, after all, accept that there are such things as evaluative beliefs, that these are truth-apt in some deflationary sense of ‘truth’, but that they are nonetheless

‘covert’ non-cognitive states of some kind (see for instance [Gibbard 2003](#), p. 163). In light of this, it might seem contrary to expressivist purposes to argue for the non-cognitivity of a state expressed by evaluative discourse by pointing to its not being fit for ascriptions of truth and falsity.

§7 of this paper outlines a positive proposal of what the expressivists should say about the relationship between ‘find’ states and the corresponding beliefs, and also discusses the issue of truth-ascriptions in relation to this. In the meantime, let me point out that this issue is not not unique to the current approach. As already noted, other candidates for being the kind of non-cognitive states that are expressed by evaluative discourse give rise to the same issue. If Holmes’ belief that lying is wrong is really, as Blackburn proposes, the state of disapproval of lying, then why is:

(45) What Holmes believes is true

not infelicitous, whereas the corresponding ascription of truth to a state of disapproval is? The same question can be raised in relationship to any other expressivist candidate for being the non-cognitive attitude expressed by evaluative discourse. The current approach is then, at worst, in an equally bad situation as other modern forms of expressivism in this respect. §7 of this paper, by contrast, offers a positive view of the relationship between ‘find’ and ‘believes’ within an expressivist semantic framework.

A third feature, which ‘find’ states share with affective states, is that they exhibit a peculiar kind of experience requirement in certain circumstances. Consider these states as ascribed in an aesthetic or taste-context:

(46) Holmes likes/adores/detestes Saltimbocca.

Such ascriptions require as a precondition for their truth that Holmes has had first-hand experience of Saltimbocca, as evinced by the infelicity of statements like:

(47) ?? Holmes likes/adores/detestes Saltimbocca, but he has never tasted it.

This stands in contrast to how the corresponding seemingly cognitive attitude ascriptions work:

(48) Holmes believes that Saltimbocca is tasty but he has never tasted it.

(49) Holmes is certain that Saltimbocca is tasty but he has never tasted it.

Neither of these attitude ascriptions presuppose that Holmes has had first-hand experience of Saltimbocca. ‘Find’-ascriptions behave just like ascriptions of affective states in this respect. (9) and (10) can’t be true unless Holmes has tasted Saltimbocca. ‘Find’ states are thus similar to the relevant affective states in this regard, and unlike cognitive states.

Notably, it seems that it is only ‘find’-attributions relating to aesthetic and taste matters that require first-hand experience for their truth. Take a moral case. Presumably, one can find extra-marital sex wrong without having had any experience of it. However, this does not undercut our argument for grouping together ‘find’ states with the class of states that I have called affective. Disliking the taste of something requires that one has tasted it; disliking extra-marital sex (for instance, for moral reasons) does not seem to require that one has engaged in or witnessed the act. So appreciating, liking and disliking have an experience requirement in aesthetic and taste contexts, whereas there is no such requirement when the attitudes concern moral matters. They are exactly similar to ‘find’ states in this respect. Whatever the reasons for these peculiarities, they serve to strengthen rather than undermine our argument for ‘find’ states being of a kind with affective states.

In this section, I have argued that the theory according to which ‘find’ states are non-cognitive and belong to the class of affective states provides a unified account of their close relationship to feelings, of why they are not apt for truth and falsity ascriptions, and of their experience requirement in aesthetic and taste contexts. Whereas there might be some prospects for cognitivist theories of ‘find’ states to accommodate each of these features individually, it seems unlikely that all of them could be accounted for.

As a final, more general point on this issue, it seems pretheoretically evident that ‘find’ states are in one sense or another subjective in nature (hence their being called *subjective* attitude verbs in the literature). In addition to providing an explanation of the mentioned features, the proposed theory, on which ‘find’ ascribes affective states, diagnoses what this subjectivity consists in.

5. On some alternative explanations of the data

If what was argued above is correct, ‘find’ states are non-cognitive in nature. Moreover, as we have seen in §3, evaluative statements are

infelicitous when the speaker simultaneously denies that she is in corresponding 'find' states of mind. A straightforward explanation of this is that the Parity Thesis is true and that evaluative discourse accordingly expresses non-cognitive states. However, there are alternative explanations.

As noted above, a number of predicates, such as 'long', provide both 'find'-related and 'find'-unrelated readings: one that relates to actual length or duration, which is not embeddable under 'find', and one which relates to experienced, in the sense of felt, length. In light of the previous argument for the affective nature of those states, I will call the 'find'-related readings of these predicates their 'affective readings'. An important question is whether evaluative predicates only have affective readings, or if they also, like 'long', have non-affective readings. If the latter turned out to be the case, it could be maintained that in the case of ordinary evaluative assertions, like:

(50) It is cruel to eat meat.

it is normally the non-affective reading that is in play. Evaluative assertions like (50) would normally express only regular beliefs.

However, there are reasons to believe that evaluative predicates only have the affective reading. Consider:

(51) I find this flight long even though it is in fact not long.

(52) ?? I find it cruel to eat meat even though it is not cruel.

(53) ?? I find the painting beautiful even though it is in fact not beautiful.

It does not sound as though the speaker self-ascribes a contradictory state with (51). This is because the second occurrence of 'long' is naturally read as picking out the non-affectivity-related sense of 'long' which denotes the objective duration of the flight. Again, a flight that is known to be short can still feel long. In the cases with the evaluative predicates 'cruel' and 'wrong', the corresponding statements sound odd. This seems to indicate that evaluative predicates, in contrast to predicates like 'long', lack a non-affectivity-related meaning. If there were such a second meaning to 'cruel' and 'wrong', it would supposedly show itself in the second conjunct of (52) and (53).¹²

¹² It has been reported to me that some speakers are able to read (52) and (53) as felicitous, when a stress is put on the 'find' or 'I'. I have two things to say about this. First, even with the classical Moore paradox, one can obtain a felicitous reading when stress is put on 'believe'.

For the reader who is unimpressed with this contrast, or who has diverging judgements of felicity, I offer an additional argument against the two-readings hypothesis below.

But first, consider a related worry. The reason offered above for thinking that evaluative judgements express ‘find’ states was the infelicity of (19)-(21), which seems analogous to the infelicity of Moore’s paradox. But perhaps (19)-(21) are simply infelicitous because finding (in the relevant sense) implies believing. In this case, the data which we took as indicating that evaluative assertions express ‘find’ states could be explained away as due to the fact that, if you find something to be cruel, you *also* believe that it is cruel. Some support for this view can be raised by highlighting that:

(54) ?? Holmes finds the sunsets in Zadar are beautiful but he doesn’t believe that they are beautiful.

sounds contradictory. The infelicity of (19) to (21) would, on this line of thought, not be due to the presumed fact that evaluative assertions invariantly express ‘find’ states, but by the fact that ‘finds’ implies ‘believes’.

In §7 of this article, I argue that that the hypothesis that ‘finds’ implies ‘believes’ is in fact not at odds with the current proposal, and I outline an expressivist semantics that has this as a consequence. In the present context, however, the problem is that if ‘finds’ implies ‘believes’, that would offer an alternative explanation of the infelicity of (19) to (21). This would leave open the possibility that one can non-misleadingly make evaluative assertions without being in the corresponding ‘find’ states of mind. What is currently needed is therefore further evidence to the effect that, in making an evaluative assertion, one represents oneself as being in the corresponding ‘find’ state of mind (and not only in the relevant belief state).

Here is a piece of such evidence, derived from aesthetic and taste discourse specifically. Consider an already noted peculiarity of ‘find’ states. For:

Secondly, I think that what one gets in such cases is what in the literature on predicates of personal taste has been called ‘exocentric’ readings of taste-predicates (Lasersohn 2005). These are readings where the evaluative predicate is not taken to relate to the sensibility of the speaker, but rather to that of some other salient individual. Plausibly, when one manages to get a felicitous reading of (52) and (53), it is when the evaluative term in the second conjunct is read as corresponding to something like the general opinion. That this is so, and that the felicitous reading accordingly is not the one corresponding to the two occurrences of ‘long’ in (51), is supported by the fact that it is considerably harder to find.

(55) Holmes finds the novel insightful and moving.

to be true, Holmes must have had first-hand experience of the novel (he must have read parts of it). This contrasts with how belief-attributions with aesthetic terms work:

(56) Holmes believes that the novel is insightful and moving.

Such belief-attributions do not require for their truth that the subject has had first-hand experience. The situation is the same for all aesthetic and taste predicates. On the hypothesis that evaluative aesthetic discourse expresses 'find' states of mind, and not only belief states, such discourse should communicate that the speaker is acquainted with the object(s) in question. If she were not, there would be no way for the speaker to be in the state of mind that she, according to the hypothesis, expresses with her statement. This prediction is borne out. When making a statement like:

(57) It's such a wonderful novel; insightful and moving, with the most beautiful and bewitching language

the speaker seems to represent herself as being acquainted with the novel. Making such a statement while denying having had first-hand experience of the object sounds odd:

(58) ?? It's such a wonderful novel; insightful and moving, with the most beautiful and bewitching language. It's such a shame I've never read it. (Ninan 2014; Robson 2012. Cf. Franzén 2018)

The oddness of (58) is just what we would expect if being in the 'find' state of mind constitutes an assertion condition for such statements. If aesthetic statements like (57) had a reading where they were taken only to express belief states, (58) shouldn't be infelicitous. This argument also supports the above contention that evaluative terms are not ambiguous in the way that 'long' is. If evaluative terms were systematically ambiguous, (58) should presumably force the non-affective reading and be felicitous.

Of course, it is possible that aesthetic and taste predicates differ from other evaluative predicates in that the former but not the latter invariably express 'find' states when used in statements. However, it seems that the argument from aesthetic discourse pushes the burden of proof in the direction of the theorist maintaining that aesthetic and other kinds of evaluative discourse differ from each other in this regard.

6. Relation to other kinds of expressivism

A difference between the view defended here and the current major forms of expressivism is that the former provides a recipe for explaining how different evaluative terms are connected to different affective mental states. The mental states expressed by evaluative discourse are, according to the view developed here, such states as finding it wrong to lie, finding it morally bad to eat meat and finding the language of a book bewitching. For every evaluative predicate, the current theory can name the kind of mental state that it, according to the hypothesis, is connected to by virtue of its meaning. By contrast, the main current forms of expressivism hold that all moral predicates are connected to the *same kind* of non-cognitive state, like nested states of approval and disapproval, (Blackburn 1993), nested states of being for (Schroeder 2008a), or intention-like states of planning (Gibbard 2003). These views are thus incompatible with a natural expressivist explanation of the difference in meaning between (thin) evaluative predicates, namely one that appeals to the differences in the attitudes to which they are connected. On an intuitive expressivist line of thought, predicates like ‘wrong’, ‘good’, ‘bad’ and ‘beautiful’ differ in meaning by virtue of the fact that they serve to express different mental states. It is far from clear that theories like Blackburn’s, Gibbard’s and Schroeder’s can account for this.¹³

However, one might want to protest that there is something lacking in the given account in comparison to other forms of expressivism. In accounting for wrongness-statements in terms of the state of finding something wrong, ‘wrong’ appears in both the analysis and the analysandum of our theory. We don’t get an independent grip on the states that are supposedly expressed by evaluative statements, and so the theory remains incomplete. By contrast, if one, such as Blackburn, argues that wrongness-statements express states of disapproval, such statements have been accounted for in terms of something else. This, it could be alleged, is not the case with the current theory.

¹³ Expressivists typically hold that the meaning of so-called ‘thick terms’ consists of two components: a descriptive element, and an evaluative attitude directed at the descriptive element (Blackburn 1992; Gibbard 1992). But the current problem is not limited to thick terms. ‘Beautiful’ is not normally regarded as being a thick term, and it is nonetheless unclear what the mentioned expressivist approaches should say are expressed by ‘beauty’-statements. Schroeder (2008a, pp. 166-167) recognizes that on his proposed semantics for moral discourse, different normative predicates must differ in meaning by virtue of differing in descriptive content, rather than differing in the attitude that they express.

It's true that our theory is less informative in this particular respect than other forms of expressivism (which, however, as noted, are more difficult to generalize to other evaluative terms). So, what the objection alleges is correct. But it is still wrong to see this as a serious objection. For example, it is still not as if the theory is dialectically idle. Regarding this, it is instructive to compare our theory to some standard forms of cognitivism. Consider Cornell realism, according to which moral terms are similar to natural kind terms in that they rigidly designate some natural property (Brink 1989). Such theories are not required to identify *what* property is designated by 'wrong' by other means than saying that it is the property of wrongness. Various forms of non-naturalism are even clearer examples of theories which don't provide independent criteria for identifying the properties to which they think moral terms refer. The non-naturalist will instead say some general things about moral properties, for instance, that they are non-natural, objectively prescriptive, by themselves reason-giving, and so on. The theory that I have offered here is similar to them in the following respect. Just as Cornell realism and non-naturalism are theories about what kind of properties moral properties are, the theory offered here is a theory about what kind of states the states expressed by evaluative statements are. It is no more incumbent on the one theory than the other to give a full characterization of the properties and states in question. These theories can still be informative in that they address issues that beset naturalism, non-naturalism and expressivism respectively, like the open question argument and the lack of Moorean infelicity.¹⁴

7. 'Finds' and 'believes'

If the argument above is sound, evaluative discourse expresses non-cognitive states of mind in the same way that ordinary discourse expresses beliefs, and so it vindicates the Parity Thesis. But it is less than clear that it sits well with everything that expressivists tend to

¹⁴ With that said, it is, of course, an interesting enterprise to try to give a closer characterization of the states in question. In fact, I think that such accounts already exist, although they aren't phrased in terms of analysing 'find' states. For instance, one can think of Kant's analysis of the sublime in the *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (2009/1790) as an attempted analysis of what it is to find something sublime. Similarly, in their 2014, Gunnar Björnsson and Tristram McPherson offer a non-cognitivist account of paradigmatic wrongness-judgements. This can also be read as an analysis of what it is to find something morally wrong, or at least as an analysis of the corresponding occurrent act.

claim about evaluative thought and discourse. As already noted, evaluative terms not only embed under ‘finds’, but also under ‘believes’, ‘knows’, and other cognitive attitude verbs. *Prima facie*, this indicates that there are representational states involving evaluative concepts in addition to ‘find’ states.

As is well-known, contemporary expressivists typically handle this by arguing that evaluative belief-ascriptions, contrary to appearance, really are ascriptions of non-cognitive states. On this approach, to believe that pain is bad just is to be in the non-cognitive state of mind expressed by:

(59) Pain is bad (cf. [Gibbard 2003](#), p. 183).

On the current approach, this strategy would amount to identifying the state of believing that pain is bad with the state of finding pain bad. But as we have seen, there are good reasons not to identify the two. Evaluative belief states are apt for ascription of truth and falsity, whereas ‘find’ states are not. Additionally, it was noted above that ‘find’ states, similarly to liking, loving, appreciating, and so on, exhibit an experience requirement in aesthetic and taste contexts. Belief-ascriptions concerning matters of aesthetics and taste, on the contrary, seem to suggest that first-hand experience is lacking. These features speak against identifying the states ascribed with ‘find’ with the corresponding beliefs.

In this section, I will offer a somewhat similar suggestion to the one outlined above, which, however, is specifically designed to accommodate these differences between ‘finds’ and ‘believes’. In essence, the proposal is that ‘believes’ ascribes a ‘weak’ state of mind, in the sense that we can believe that *p* is true while leaving open that *p* might be false (for illustration, think of the relationship between being certain and ‘merely believing’). What explains the cognitive features of evaluative belief-ascriptions is that they represent the believer as being uncertain about the non-evaluative features of the object in question. This approach will be couched in an expressivist semantic framework broadly similar to that of [Gibbard \(2003\)](#).

One of Gibbard’s major ideas is that expressivists can avail themselves of the formal machinery of possible worlds semantics to address the Frege-Geach problem. The basic idea is that, just as standard possible worlds semantics treats the content of a sentence as the set of worlds where the sentence is true, an expressivist of Gibbard’s brand can think of contents as sets of pairs of worlds and hyperplans,

where a hyperplan is a formal object which, for every possible world fed into it, gives a verdict on whether an action is permissible or not in any given choice situation in that world. On this line of thought, the content of an 'ought'-sentence like:

(60) Holmes ought to pack.

will be represented as the set of pairs of worlds and hyperplans in which the sentence obtains. Hyperplans contribute a 'non-factual' element to standard possible worlds semantics, in the sense that there is nothing actual to which a hyperplan corresponds.

Our current theory differs from Gibbard's in taking the relevant states to be affective, rather than intentions or plans. Nevertheless, Gibbard's approach can easily be converted to fit the present agenda. Call the non-factual element in this semantics a 'hyper-sensibility' instead of a hyperplan, and let it be a function which, when given a possible world as input, outputs for every object (in the widest sense of the term) a verdict on whether it is tasty/beautiful/cruel/right, and so on, or not. Our current brand of expressivism can then represent the content of sentences like:

(61) The sunsets in Zadar are beautiful.

as being the set of all pairs of worlds and hyper-sensibilities $\langle w, h \rangle$ such that the object referred to by 'the sunsets in Zadar' in w is beautiful according h .¹⁵

As regards 'find'-attributions in this framework, we think of them along the same lines as attitude attributions are standardly treated in possible worlds semantics, going back to Hintikka (1962). In this tradition, belief-attributions concern what possibilities are left open by the agent's state of mind. As applied to our current discussion, this would be what alternatives are left open by the person's doxastic state of mind and her affections. Formally, this is the pairs of worlds and hyper-sensibilities that are compatible with what he takes to be (non-evaluatively) the case, as well as his feeling towards what he thinks is the case. To illustrate this, consider (62):

(62) Holmes finds the sunsets in Zadar beautiful.

¹⁵ As in the case of Gibbard's semantics, the contents of all sentences, including non-evaluative ones, will be world-sensibility pairs but the sensibilities will be idle for the non-evaluative cases.

Now, let F be Holmes' 'find' state of mind. On the current proposal, (62) is true if and only if:

For all $\langle w, h \rangle \in F$: the sunsets in Zadar in w are beautiful according to h .

The basic idea is that to confirm whether Holmes is in the state of finding the sunsets in Zadar beautiful, one has to check at every possible world which is compatible with Holmes' epistemic state of mind (the non-evaluative information he has about the world) whether the sunsets in Zadar as they are in that world trigger the 'beauty-affection' in him (as he is in the actual world). If this is the case throughout these worlds, then Holmes is in the relevant state.

This semantics is analogous to a natural interpretation of what Gibbard offers for 'ought'-belief attributions. (See Yalcin forthcoming for an in-depth discussion.) It is important to see that while this sort of view is generally held to be a pure case of expressivism, whether Holmes is in the non-cognitive state of finding the sunsets in Zadar beautiful will partly depend on his non-evaluative information about the world. This is as it should be. Non-cognitive states like appreciation are based on the non-evaluative features the appreciated object instantiates. Similarly for 'find' states.

This cognitive element in Gibbard's expressivist semantics can be exploited to offer a diagnosis of evaluative belief-attributions like:

(63) Holmes believes that the sunsets in Zadar are beautiful.

As has been noticed by several theorists, 'believes' attributes an epistemically weak state, in that the person to whom it is applied' is in a less than certain state of mind (Hawthorne *et al.* 2016; Rothschild 2019). This invites the hypothesis that believing an evaluative content is the epistemically weaker counterpart to finding it. On this view, someone who believes, but does not find, that the sunsets in Zadar are beautiful, is uncertain in their evaluative judgement.

To account for this, we may take inspiration from the way standard possible worlds semantics captures the fact that knowledge entails belief, by stipulating that the worlds determined by what the agent believes constitute a subset of the worlds representing what the same agent knows.¹⁶

¹⁶ Since everything we know is believed, but normally, not everything we believe is known, more possibilities are left open by our knowledge than by our beliefs. This is why our beliefs-worlds, that is, the worlds in which everything we believe is the case, are a subset of our knowledge-worlds, that is, the worlds in which everything we know is the case.

Think of beliefs as having analogous structure to ‘find’ states. Let B be Holmes’ belief state, that is to say, the set of pairs of worlds and hyper-sensibilities which are compatible with what Holmes believes. Given that, (63) is true if and only if:

For all $\langle w', h' \rangle \in B$: the sunsets in Zadar are beautiful in w' according to h' .

Secondly, id="694" to capture the epistemic weakness of believing, we stipulate that for any agent the set of pairs $\langle w', h' \rangle$ representing that agent’s beliefs, B , is a subset of the set of pairs $\langle w, h \rangle$ representing what the agents finds, that is F . For Holmes to believe-but-not-find that the sunsets in Zadar are beautiful is for there to be some worlds, compatible with Holmes’ information, in which the sunsets in Zadar do not have features which please him in the beauty-way.

Exactly how to characterize the worlds determined by Holmes belief state in such a way as to make it compatible that, even though p is true throughout his belief-worlds, Holmes is still not certain that p , is a non-trivial issue which I do not wish to enter upon here. (See [Rothschild, 2019](#), for some comments on the issue.)

There is some evidence to support a diagnosis along these lines, besides the weakness of ‘believes’. First, on this view, since the set of pairs of worlds and hyper-sensibilities representing Holmes belief state is a subset of the set representing what he finds, ‘finds’ implies ‘believes’. This would in turn, it was noticed, explain the infelicity of (54):

(54) ?? Holmes finds the sunsets in Zadar beautiful, but he doesn’t believe that they are beautiful.

Secondly, it is supported by the contrast between ‘finding’ and ‘believing’ in the aesthetic case. In contrast to the corresponding ‘find’-attribution, (63) suggests that Holmes has not witnessed the sunsets himself. The paradigm context for ascribing this belief to Holmes is one where Holmes has not personally witnessed the sunsets in Zadar, but only, for instance, read about them in a reliable tourist guide. This is in line with the current suggestion, since believing is compatible with not being completely certain.

One might worry that the hypothesis that ‘believes’ is an epistemically weaker counterpart to ‘finds’ does not capture the way in which we above diagnosed ‘find’ states as non-cognitive on the basis of some features not shared by the corresponding beliefs. But there is a clear sense in which evaluative belief-attributions are ‘more cognitive’ on

the proposed view. If one is in the belief-but-not-find state of mind, as in the case of believing but not finding the sunsets in Zadar to be beautiful, one is in a doxastically unsettled state in the sense that more non-evaluative information is needed for an affective verdict to be made. When in the corresponding ‘find’ state of mind, an affective stance is taken, precisely because one has located oneself among the relevant non-evaluative possibilities.

In this line of thought we can also find an explanation of why truth-attributions can be felicitously made to evaluative belief states but not to the corresponding ‘find’ states. An evaluative belief state will, on the current proposal, be such that one can be right or wrong about whether the sunsets in Zadar are beautiful in relation to one’s own affective comportment, since one can be misinformed about the non-evaluative facts. This scenario is not possible with the corresponding ‘find’ states – one is so to speak always right about how one feels about the sunsets in Zadar when one is in the ‘find’ state of mind. In cases where we believe that someone has misrepresented the facts on which they base the evaluation, we do not ascribe the relevant ‘find’ state to them.

Interestingly, this seems to be the case even when someone is completely certain yet mistaken about the non-evaluative features on which they base their evaluation. Consider a case where Holmes is standing in front of *The Birth of Venus*, which he is mistakenly certain is in fact Botticelli’s *Primavera*. Holmes really appreciates the painting. In such a case, (64) is false whereas (65) is true:

(64) Holmes finds the *Primavera* beautiful.

(65) Holmes believes that the *Primavera* is beautiful.

Or consider a non-aesthetic case. Holmes witnesses a daring act, which he is mistakenly certain was performed by Watson. It was in fact Inspector Lestrade who performed the act. In this scenario, Holmes can certainly believe that Watson is brave on the basis of this misconception, but we would not report that:

(66) Holmes found Watson brave.

This indicates that ‘find’-attributions somehow presuppose that the non-evaluative information on which they are based is correct. (See [Bouchard 2012](#) for a similar observation.) To capture this feature, we might add as a stipulation to our semantics for ‘find’ above that the world-sensibility pairs representing one’s ‘find’ state of mind are

always compatible with what the actual world is like and how one would actually feel about the thing. This would predict the impossibility of being misguided by the relevant configuration of the actual world while being in the ‘find’ state of mind.

Whether this stipulation is best captured as a semantic presupposition on ‘find’, or in some other way, I leave to be settled at another occasion. For present purposes it is enough that this goes to show that ‘find’ states, unlike evaluative belief states, exhibit what we may call ‘non-evaluative factivity’. This is why the belief states, but not the ‘find’ states, are apt truth and falsity ascriptions.

I hope that these remarks go to show that even if the details remain to be worked out, there are prospects for a satisfying formal analysis of the content of ‘find’ states which captures their affectivity, their inferential connections to belief-attributions, and the other data points presented here. Further discussions ‘would have to extend this account to other cognitive verbs, like ‘knows’, and their interaction with evaluative terms. What I have provided here is, I hope, a promising start for such an expressivist analysis.

A possible concern about this proposal is that it incorporates a substantial cognitive element in the semantics of evaluative ‘find’- and belief-ascriptions, and that it is therefore not really a kind of expressivism at all. But as already mentioned, this proposal is to a large extent analogous to that of Gibbard (2003), which is generally considered to be a paradigm case of expressivism.

A related concern is that there is nothing *distinctively* expressivist about the suggested way of understanding the content of evaluative sentences and ‘find’-attributions. The same formalism could be employed by a semantic relativist. Noticing this isomorphism between relativism and expressivism, MacFarlane (2014, pp. 167–175) locates the main difference between the two in the fact that expressivists like Gibbard are explicitly committed to a distinct psychologistic theory of the nature of contents. Yalcin (2018; forthcoming) by contrast, argues that expressivists need not be committed to such psychologistic metatheories.

Here is not the proper place to try to untangle these issues. It suffices to notice that MacFarlane’s taste-relativism actually vindicates the Parity Thesis for ‘tasty’-statements, in that these, on his view, express liking of the object’s taste (MacFarlane 2014, pp. 146–147). Since MacFarlane’s theory is also ontologically parsimonious and employs a formalism similar to that of Gibbard’s expressivism, it

seems to a large extent to be a verbal question whether it should count as expressivist or not.

8. Conclusion

There has been a general lack of arguments from the workings of natural language to support expressivism. Instead, evidence from natural language has been taken to speak against expressivism, as in the case of the lack of support for the Parity Thesis. In this article, I have aimed to remedy this, by arguing that the mental states attributed with ‘to find’ in English are non-cognitive in nature, and by providing linguistic evidence to the effect that such states are expressed by evaluative discourse. In addition, I have situated this thesis within a, broadly speaking, Gibbardian semantic framework, and provided a linguistically supported account of the relationship between evaluative ‘find’ and ‘belief’-attributions within this framework. If what I have argued here is correct, expressivism stands on much firmer linguistic ground than is generally believed within contemporary metaethics.¹⁷

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