Expressivism and Innocent Mistakes*

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Allan Gibbard maintains that his plan-based expressivism allows for a particular type of innocent mistake: I can agree that your plan to Φ makes sense (say, because it was based on advice from someone you trust), while nonetheless insisting that it is incorrect (e.g., because you chose a bad advisor). However, Steve Daskal has recently argued that there are significant limitations in Gibbard's account of how we can be mistaken about the normative judgment we make. This essay refines Gibbard's account in order to show—contra Daskal—that expressivists can deliver a surprisingly robust form of normativity objectivity.

I can judge your plan to vacation at the shore to be innocently mistaken for a variety of reasons. First, I can judge it to be innocently mistaken on epistemic grounds. Perhaps this is because I know that your plan is based on your false but warranted belief that last year's hurricane damage has been cleaned up. Alternatively, I can think your vacation plan is mistaken, not because of some deficiency in your epistemic situation but rather because I think you have confused tastes about what is enjoyable. Your preferences to the contrary, Daytona Beach during spring break is no place for a middle-aged academic like you. Part of what makes innocent mistakes like these normatively interesting is that they allow for a form of partial endorsement: while I deem your vacation plan to be mistaken, I can nonetheless acknowledge that there is a sense in which it makes sense—it is an unfortunate product of your false beliefs or your odd preferences. But understanding innocent mistakes also draws out the richness and complexity of our normative lives, thereby helping us understand what a plausible account of normative objectivity must be able to explain.

Against this backdrop, Steve Daskal has developed an important pair of objections to Allan Gibbard's recent expressivist account of normative objectivity.[1] Daskal argues that Gibbard's expressivism is unable to accommodate two types of non-epistemic innocent mistakes. The first kind of innocent mistake—what Daskal calls "pure planning innocent mistakes" (PPIMs)—are, roughly, those that result from the choice of a poor planning strategy. The second kind—what he calls "innocent mistakes of mental constitution" (IMMCs)—result not so much from deficiencies in our planning strategies but rather deficiencies in our underlying preferences. As Daskal sees it, Gibbard's expressivism forces him to understand planning in a very particular way, but given these self-imposed constraints, Gibbard is left without the resources that he needs to make sense of either PPIMs or IMMCs.

These objections to Gibbard's expressivist proposal are interesting for two reasons. First, rather than a vague complaint about Gibbard's inability to provide a plausible account of normative objectivity, they identify specific deficiencies in Gibbard's proposal. Second, they also provide an internal critique of Gibbard's expressivism. That is, they maintain that Gibbard's account of normative objectivity fails on its own terms. So unlike other objections to expressivist objectivity, Daskal's arguments seem to avoid the common charge that they beg the question against the expressivist.[2] However, in what follows, I argue that both of Daskal's criticisms fall short. Gibbard's expressivism does allow for PPIMs, and it can explain why IMMCs count as mistakes. I conclude by pointing to some implications that my argument has for our thinking about both the viability of the expressivist project and normative objectivity more generally.

I. GIBBARD'S ACCOUNT OF PPIMs AND DASKAL'S FIRST OBJECTION

A. *Gibbard on Innocent Mistakes*

At a gloss, Gibbard's expressivist proposal in *Thinking How to Live* takes planning to be best understood in terms of a noncognitive mental state. To plan to X, or in Gibbard's words, to judge X-ing 'the thing to do' is to endorse X-ing—to see it as choiceworthy. His account of innocent mistakes builds from this foundation. But in order to understand it, we need

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1. Steve Daskal, "Plan-Based Expressivism and Innocent Mistakes," *Ethics* 119 (2009): 310–35. Daskal focuses on the expressivist proposal of Allan Gibbard's *Thinking How to Live* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

2. For a discussion of the claim that (most) challenges to expressivist accounts beg the question, see Mark Timmons, *Morality without Foundations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), chap. 3.

to take a closer look at two features of his general account of planning.[3] First, Gibbard endorses a conception of planning that is liberal in its scope. Not only can I plan for actual situations (e.g., what to teach in class tomorrow) and contingent ones (e.g., what to do if I win the lotto) but I can also plan for the hypothetical situation of being in someone else's shoes. For instance, I can plan for the situation of being you as you contemplate what to do on vacation. Second, for a given planning situation, Gibbard's account allows us to ask a rich set of planning questions. In particular, I can think about both what I plan to do in Φ and what I plan to plan to do in Φ. In the former, I directly take up the question of what to do in Φ. In the latter, I am concerned with the (higher-order) question of how to address the (first-order) question of what to do in Φ. When I consider this higher-order question, I develop (or draw on) my plans for how to plan—I think through issues like whether and when I should trust my ability to plan for Φ and what to do if I come to doubt this ability. For instance, I might conclude that I should directly take up the question of what to do in Φ only when I am not nervous; I might also conclude that, when nervous, I should follow the advice of someone I trust (e.g., an idealized version of myself or my spiritual guru). Moreover, in coming to a conclusion about these higher-order planning questions, I indirectly come to a conclusion to the first-order question about what to plan to do in Φ: if the higher-order plan I settle on tells me to approach the first-order question in a particular way, then by taking this approach, I will come a conclusion about what to do in Φ.

These features of Gibbard's account, when combined with the psychological fact that different people can have different preferences about what to do and how to plan, allow him to make sense of a distinctive form of innocent mistake—pure planning innocent mistakes. To draw this out, consider how I could approach planning for the hypothetical situation V: being you contemplating what to do on vacation. When I directly ask 'what to plan to do in V?', say I come to the conclusion,

(1)   If in V, go to the mountains.

But now suppose that either I come to doubt the legitimacy of (1) or, though confident in (1), I want to give further thought to my answer.[4] Since these doubts and curiosities raise questions about how to plan to plan, they move me from the first-order question 'what to plan to do in V?' to the higher-order question 'what to plan to plan to do in V?'. Now, in considering this new question, suppose that I reason like this: I think

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3. What follows is based on Gibbard's discussion in *Thinking How to Live*, 48–53, 231–32, 240–43.

4. As will become apparent in Sec. II, the difference between these two options matters.

about whom you would trust and conclude that you would trust the idealized version of yourself, You+. I then think about how You+ would plan and conclude:

(2)   If in V, go to the shore.

The result is that my thinking about what to plan to do, and my thinking about what to plan to plan to do, have led to different conclusions about what to do. When this happens—when I come to different conclusions about what to do—Gibbard maintains that we have a PPIM. Gibbard's ability to accommodate innocent mistakes of this sort is significant because it allows him to capture the richness and complexity of our normative assessments. It allows him to explain, for instance, how I can grant that your plan to go to the shore was well-formed (because it was based on advice from someone you trust—You+) while maintaining that it was incorrect nonetheless (because You+ is a bad advisor).

B. Daskal's First Objection

Daskal maintains that PPIMs are not actually possible within Gibbard's framework. His argument for this starts from the observation that Gibbard's account of PPIMs requires it to be possible to approach hypothetical planning from two different perspectives—for example, the perspective that leads to (1) and the perspective that leads to (2). But Daskal denies that planning in this way would ever make sense. To see why, let's return to situation V. Daskal notes that it is perfectly plausible to see reasoning like that which led to (2) going differently. For instance, rather than asking whom *you* would trust, I can ask whom *I* would trust. Moreover, I can pick a different advisor (Me+) and come to a different conclusion:

(2*)   If in V, go to the mountains.

But now we have two distinct routes to an answer to the higher-order question 'what to plan to plan to do in V?'. Moreover, these routes lead to conflicting conclusions. So which should we to go with—the reasoning that leads to (2) or the reasoning that leads to (2*)?

But once we acknowledge this question, Daskal thinks we learn that PPIMs are not really possible. Here he gives two arguments. First, he argues that because the first-order question 'what to plan to do in V?' and the higher-order question 'what to plan to plan to do in V?' are so similar, the reasons that support using a particular strategy (or advisor) for answering one question should carry over with equal force to support doing the same for the other question. So, for example, whatever reason I have for going with You+ for the higher-order question would seem to lead me to also go with You+ for the first-order question. And whatever reason I have for going with Me+ for the higher-order question would

seem to lead me to also go with Me+ for the first-order question.[5] The second argument builds from Gibbard's account of what planning is. To plan to X is to endorse or commit to X-ing. But if this is what planning is, then PPIMs seem incoherent. After all, in my planning for V, my higher-order reasoning commits me to planning to go to the shore, and my first-order reasoning commits me to planning to go to the mountains. Not only are these plans incompatible but, since we are dealing with an innocent mistake, neither is supposed to repudiate the other. But how can this be?[6]

Together, we can see these arguments as presenting Gibbard with a threefold challenge. First, he must explain how it is possible to use different strategies (or advisors) to come to incompatible decisions about what to do and what to plan to do. Second, he needs to explain why it makes sense to see these diverging plans as involving an innocent mistake. Finally, we need an explanation of how it is that both of these decisions nonetheless carry the endorsement that is characteristic of genuine plans.

II. HOW TO MAKE A PURE PLANNING INNOCENT MISTAKE

To see why Daskal is wrong to think that Gibbard's proposal does not allow for PPIMs, we need to note an important feature of Gibbard's account of planning, one that Daskal appears to overlook. According to Gibbard, we can plan under two kinds of circumstances: (*a*) cases where we are confident about our "powers of direct judgment" and (*b*) cases where we have doubts about these powers.[7] Now while it is true that PPIMs are not possible in cases where we have doubts, they are possible in cases where we are confident. But because Daskal considers only cases of the former sort, he fails to see that PPIMs are possible within Gibbard's system.

To draw this out, let's start by considering a case where I doubt my powers of direct judgment. Suppose I doubt my ability to plan for V in the following sense: I recognize that I need to think about vacationing from your perspective, but I have lost confidence in my ability to do this. In this situation, my doubts about my powers of direct judgment lead me to seek guidance from my plans for how to plan. As we have seen (Sec. I), these plans not only tell me when to distrust my powers of direct judgment but they also tell me whom to trust when this happens. So suppose my plan for planning tells me to trust You+ when I come to doubt my powers of direct judgment. If I use the perspective of You+ when

5. Daskal, "Plan-Based Expressivism," 318.
6. Ibid., 321–24.
7. Gibbard, *Thinking How to Live*, 242–43.

considering what to plan to plan to do in V, then—as Daskal notes—coherence demands that I use similar reasoning when considering what to plan to do in V. Similarly, suppose my plan for planning tells me to trust Me+ when I come to doubt my powers of direct judgment. If I use this perspective when considering what to plan to plan to do in V, then, likewise, coherence demands that I endorse similar reasoning when considering what to plan to do in V. Here Daskal is right: my conclusions to the planning questions cannot come apart—so PPIMs are not possible.

But things are different when we look at a case where I am confident about my powers of direct judgment.[8] For starters, even if I am confident in my answer to the first-order question 'what to plan to do in V?', I can still consider the higher-order question 'what to plan to plan to do in V?'. But, importantly, unlike the case of planning with doubts, I can consider this higher-order question from a different perspective. This is because when I take up this higher-order question, I am operating on the contrary-to-fact assumption that I have come to doubt my ability to plan. Though I am confident in my plans and my plans for planning, I can "bracket" my conclusions and "abstract away from" my reasoning with regard to the first-order question.[9] This bracketing and abstracting allows me to take up the higher-order question as an *independent* piece of planning. It allows me to think through that question at a different level, and from a different perspective—say, the perspective of You+. But this means that I can coherently come to a conclusion (if in V, go to the shore) that is different than the one I am confident in (if in V, go to the mountains).

With these observations in hand, we can return to Daskal's threefold challenge in order to see how PPIMs are possible within Gibbard's system. First, cases where I bracket my conclusion to a first-order question in order to consider, at a different level and from a different perspective, the associated higher-order question are cases where I can coherently come to divergent conclusions about what to do. Second, because my conclusion to the higher-order question is based on the contrary-to-fact assumption that I doubt my powers of direct reasoning, it is ultimately trumped by the (initial but temporarily bracketed) conclusion that I came to when directly considering the first-order question. So it makes sense to say that the conclusion of my contrary-to-fact planning is (innocently) mistaken.[10] Finally, because I take up the first-order and higher-order questions as independent pieces of planning, in both cases my answers carry the endorsement that is characteristic of genuine plans.

8. What follows draws from ibid.
9. Ibid., 243.
10. There are interesting questions about when (if ever) one should allow one's thinking about higher-order questions to affect one's confidence about one's powers of direct judgment. But even if we allow that one's thinking about higher-order questions can (or

This last step might seem suspect. One might argue that because my planning with regard to the higher-order question is based on the contrary-to-fact assumption that I have come to doubt my powers of direct reasoning, my plan has a conditional structure:

> (3)   Were I to doubt my powers of direct reasoning, then go to the shore if in V.[11]

One might then argue that a plan with a conditional structure of this sort cannot carry the endorsement that is distinctive of planning. But this objection fails. To see why, notice that the conditional structure that we have here is no different than what we find—and have no problem accepting—in the case of the contingency plans discussed above (Sec. I). Contingency plans, recall, are plans that we make because we are unsure about the future or because we want to prepare for certain contingencies—for example, what to do were I to win the lotto. So they result in conditional plans, plans like this:

> (4)   Were I to win the lotto, then head to Vegas.

But this means the two plans—(3) and (4)—have the same general conditional structure: were I to Φ, then Ψ. Moreover, given that we are comfortable that (4) carries the endorsement that is distinctive of plans, we should be comfortable that (3) does too.

With this objection set aside, we can see that the three parts of Daskal's challenge can be met. But this means that PPIMs are possible within Gibbard's system.

III. MAKING SENSE OF INNOCENT MISTAKES OF MENTAL CONSTITUTION

Even if we have succeeded in defusing Daskal's first objection, there is still the charge that Gibbard's system cannot explain why IMMCs count as mistakes. As we have just seen, PPIMs are possible because we are able to plan for a situation like V from different perspectives. IMMCs represent a distinct challenge because they suggest that there are planning situations where a similar sort of flexibility in perspective is not possible. To see this, let's consider Daskal's example.

Daskal considers the hypothetical planning situation M: being Mortis, a psychopath who prefers to murder and who trusts the planning ad-

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sometimes should) influence one's thinking about first-order questions, there is no reason to think this will always be the case. So there is no reason to think that PPIMs are not possible.

11. Granted, the conditional plan in (3) is somewhat awkward. But notice that this awkwardness goes away when we restate (3) using Gibbard's 'is the thing to do' language: (3*) Were I to doubt my powers of direct reasoning, then going to the shore is the thing to do if in V.

vice only of the idealized murder-happy version of himself, Mortis+.[12] He then asks us to consider the first-order question 'what to plan to do in M?'. As we have seen, when we take up this question, we step into Mortis's shoes and plan for the situation of being him. Here we conclude if Mortis in M, murder. As Daskal explains, "it would be unreasonable to deny this, given that Mortis's mental constitution is such that he has no possible access to a perspective from which he could recognize what is wrong with murdering."[13] But these facts about Mortis's mental constitution also make it the case that when we take up the higher-order question 'what to plan to plan to do in M?', we have no flexibility when choosing an advisor—we must choose Mortis+.[14] The result, says Daskal, is trouble. For starters, it reveals that on Gibbard's account we are forced to conclude that, if Mortis in M, murdering is both the thing to do and the thing to plan to do. But this in turn entails that there is no way for Gibbard to say what is obvious—namely, that given the unfortunate way that Mortis is wired up, he is (innocently) mistaken about the appropriateness of murdering. Thus, Gibbard's account of normative objectivity is seriously deficient—it does not have the resources to explain IMMCs as mistakes.[15]

However, while Daskal is right that Mortis's preferences commit us to concluding that, if Mortis in M, murder is both the thing to do and the thing to plan to do, he is wrong that this prevents us from concluding that Mortis is mistaken. This is because Gibbard's account of how we go

12. Daskal, "Plan-Based Expressivism," 325–27.

13. Ibid., 325.

14. It is this lack of flexibility that makes the Mortis case importantly different from the earlier discussion of PPIMs.

15. One might worry that Daskal's objection rests on a confused account of how Gibbard must assess situation M. In particular, one might argue that the first-order question 'what to plan to do in M?' is ambiguous between two options, neither of which delivers what is needed for Daskal's objection to work. On the one hand, this question might be understood as (i) the descriptive counterfactual question 'what would we plan to do if Mortis in M?'. But while "murder!" is a plausible answer here, it is a descriptive claim, not a plan—not an endorsement—of what to do if Mortis in M. So it causes no trouble for Gibbard. On the other hand, the question might be understood as (ii) the hypothetical planning question 'what to plan to do if Mortis in M?'. An answer here would carry the endorsement of a plan. However, it does not seem true that murdering is something that we would plan to do if, hypothetically, we were in Mortis's shoes. So, again, there is no trouble for Gibbard.

If this worry is correct, then Gibbard can quickly dismiss the Daskal objection presented in the text. However, I am not sure whether the worry is correct. In particular, I am not sure that it is true that the answer to (ii) cannot be "murder!" This is because Gibbard says very little to explain how we are to make sense of hypothetical planning for extreme cases like M—cases where, to plan, we step into the shoes of someone like Mortis who not only has monstrous preferences but is incapable of seeing how confused his preferences are. Given my uncertainty, I will proceed (in the text) on the assumption that Daskal's presentation of the Mortis example does not fall to this worry. As we will see, even after granting this, Gibbard can still make an effective reply. Thanks to an anonymous referee for pressing me to address this aspect of Daskal's objection.

about planning makes room for an additional layer of assessment. As we will see, Gibbard's system gives us the ability to assess not just plans but planners. So it allows us to judge that though Mortis's *plans* make sense, *he* is (innocently) mistaken.

To draw this out, we need a better understanding of Gibbard's take on how we plan. According to Gibbard, we are social creatures—we make plans together, and we look to each other for insight and guidance about what to do and whom to trust. Recognizing this is significant because it reveals that our plans for planning must have certain features. First, since planning is something that we do together, we must, in our plans for planning, accept the authority of other individuals with regard to questions about what to do—at least to the extent that we deem those individuals to be trustworthy judges. But, second, the fact that our trust in others is qualified in this way means that our plans for planning must include a (rough) account of what makes someone a trustworthy judge. Gibbard notes that such an account will point to certain "formal" features as indicative of trustworthiness—for example, awareness of the relevant facts or a dispassionate frame of mind. But he also notes that this will not be enough. After all, "formal" constraints alone cannot guarantee that we will get results that mesh with our intuitions about what to do and whom to trust—the ideally coherent Caligula violates no formal constraints.[16] Thus, Gibbard concludes that our plans for planning hold that an individual is trustworthy only to the extent that he both meets our formal constraints and has a (statistically) normal mental constitution.[17]

In light of the above, we see that our plans for planning commit us to reducing—even revoking—another's authority if we come to see that his advice is not trustworthy. While there are a variety of ways that our trust in others can be called into question, this generally happens when their decisions about what to do fail to mesh with the conclusions that we have reached and that we are confident in. If we are confident that (say) murder is wrong, or that a life of contemplation is good, then we should tend to doubt the trustworthiness of those who judge otherwise. Moreover, as Gibbard notes, there are a variety of ways that we can respond to those whose advice we come to doubt. We might just give their advice less weight in our deliberations. But, more significantly, we might also adopt a "parochial stance" toward them—we might carve them out of

16. Allan Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 196–97.

17. Gibbard, *Thinking How to Live*, 234–35. Gibbard's discussion leaves open whether "normal mental constitution" functions to rigidly designate what is normal in this world. While this question raises interesting issues (e.g., if there is no rigid designation, what are we to make of cases where the Caligulas of the world outnumber the non-Caligulas?), I must set discussion of it aside.

our normative lives, giving their judgments no weight in our planning.[18] Though extreme, this is something we might feel we need to do in order to keep from having to grant authority to those whose judgments we deem monstrous. In Gibbard's words, it is something we do "in order to keep our normative moorings."[19]

With this broader understanding of how we go about planning in hand, we can see that Gibbard has the resources to explain IMMCs as mistakes. To draw this out, let's return to our thinking about situation M. In planning for M, we step into Mortis's shoes and operate under the contrary-to-fact assumption that we are Mortis. From this perspective, we conclude that, if Mortis in M, murdering is both the thing to do and the thing to plan to do. But when we set this contrary-to-fact planning aside and think more generally about how to live, we can reflect on the confidence that we have in the wrongness of murder. That we can do this is important, for it allows us to call into question Mortis's trustworthiness as a judge. Moreover, given how monstrous we deem his judgments to be, we see that he is not just an untrustworthy judge of how to live but also someone whom we must carve out of our normative lives. So, though we acknowledge that, if Mortis in M, murder is the thing to do and the thing to plan to do, we are not committed to giving our full endorsement to these plans. Rather, we can give them the *partial* endorsement that is distinctive of attributing an innocent mistake. That is, we can judge that while murdering is both the thing to do and the thing for him to plan to do, if Mortis in M, these judgments are nonetheless mistaken. They are mistaken because they are the upshot of Mortis's deviant, and thus untrustworthy, mental constitution. But this means that Gibbard's system has the resources to explain why someone like Mortis is (innocently) mistaken.

It is worth emphasizing that this account of why IMMCs count as mistakes is one that fits within Gibbard's expressivist proposal. For starters, because our plans for planning presume a distinction between normal and deviant mental constitutions, we can address a situation like M from two different perspectives—our perspective and the perspective of the person whose shoes we are stepping into. It is this feature of Gibbard's account that allows us to assess Mortis from our own perspective even though we are forced to use his preferences when considering what to plan to do and what to plan to plan to do, if Mortis in M. Second, our plans for planning commit us to voiding another's authority if we deem them to have a sufficiently deviant mental constitution. This feature of Gibbard's account allows us to explain why Mortis is innocently mistaken: because Mortis's mental constitution leads him to plan

18. Ibid., 246–48, 252, 280–83; Gibbard, *Wise Choices*, 208.
19. Gibbard, *Wise Choices*, 218; see also 196–97.

in ways we find monstrous, we conclude that he is not a trustworthy judge. Moreover, we can also explain what he is mistaken about: Mortis is mistaken about what to do and whom to trust; his assessments of these matters are so monstrous that they can have no weight in our planning. Granted, these explanations are not ones that Mortis himself would accept. But since we have adopted a parochial stance toward him, we can insist (when in normative discussion among ourselves) that he is mistaken, and we can point to his deviant mental constitution to explain why this is.[20]

IV. A DEEPER ISSUE: HOW TO UNDERSTAND NORMATIVE OBJECTIVITY

One might maintain that the above victory is cold comfort to Gibbard. After all, he must acknowledge that individuals—you and Mortis, for instance—can have incompatible normative perspectives. But it seems that allowing for incompatible normative perspectives just is to grant that there are unacceptable limitations on the forms of error and disagreement that characterize expressivist accounts of normative objectivity. In a slightly different context, Daskal offers a further set of arguments that we can see as pressing this line. If successful, these arguments would allow him to blunt the force of the conclusion from the above account of IMMCs.

In the first argument, Daskal considers the possibility that Gibbard's system allows *us* to say that Mortis is mistaken about murdering. But he then argues that while this might buy Gibbard some objective distance, his reliance on the move to these parochial perspectives commits him to the implausible conclusion that, *for Mortis*, murdering is the thing to do. But Daskal maintains that this is implausible. Intuitively, planning to murder is a mistake even for someone with Mortis's mental constitution.[21] The second argument maintains that, if making sense of innocent mistakes requires maintaining that you and Mortis have incompatible normative perspectives (or mental constitutions), then we get the implausible result that you and Mortis are not actually disagreeing with each other. The content of your judgments makes reference to what to do given your mental constitution, and the content of Mortis's judgments makes reference to what to do given his mental constitution. Thus, you can agree with Mortis that, given his mental constitution, he plans correctly, and Mortis can agree with you that, given your mental constitution,

20. For more on the normative assessments one can make from a parochial stance, see ibid., chap. 11.

21. Daskal, "Plan-Based Expressivism," 328–29.

your planning is correct. So there is nothing that the two of you actually disagree about.[22]

The trouble with these arguments is that they beg the question against Gibbard. For one, Gibbard explicitly acknowledges that his account of normative error and disagreement will be modest in the way that Daskal observes. For instance, he notes that his account of error is perspective dependent: "Unless one has the right kind of mental constitution . . . all the epistemic virtues in the world won't lead to judgments that are correct. There is, moreover, no satisfactory way to specify what makes for the right kind of mental constitution that doesn't, in effect, settle by fiat basic controversies over how to plan."[23] He also notes that his account allows for genuine disagreement only when there is sufficient overlap in the perspective of the disagreeing parties: "The practice of thinking and discussing how to live will be hostage to our having sufficiently congruent reactions to issues that arise. Our reactions may be congruent enough in some areas and not in others. In that case, . . . [a particular question about how to live,] as a topic for agreement and disagreement, may have sufficient point in some areas and not in others."[24] So the "limitations" that Daskal notes are things that Gibbard actually embraces. But this should not be surprising. After all, if normative objectivity is to be explained, at bottom, in terms of the noncognitive mental state of planning, then it should be possible for two individuals to accept perfectly consistent but incompatible plans. That just is what expressivist normative objectivity amounts to. Moreover, an expressivist like Gibbard can provide an independently well-motivated argument for why normative objectivity should be understood in this way. It is a familiar story that draws on, among other things, a methodological commitment to naturalism, an endorsement of an internalist understanding of normative motivation, and skepticism about the possibility of substantive analyses of normative terms and properties. The upshot, then, is that Gibbard can plausibly maintain that the "limitations" in his account are not really limitations. Rather, his expressivism captures the very forms of error and disagreement that we actually find in our normative discourse.

Granted, those with realist intuitions will maintain that Gibbard's account leaves out important dimensions of objectivity. For instance, Daskal might protest that if we accept the thin understanding of error and disagreement that comes with the move to parochialism, we lose

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22. Ibid., 330. Daskal maintains that this result is particularly troubling since one of the central motivations driving Gibbard's move to plan-based expressivism is its ability capture genuine disagreement (329–30). But, as we will see, Daskal's conclusion here is based on a dubious claim about the sort of disagreement that Gibbard must explain.

23. Gibbard, *Thinking How to Live*, 251.

24. Ibid., 281.

the ability to say (for example) that we are right and Mortis is wrong. But, as we have seen (Sec. III), this is not the case. While it is true that taking a parochial stance toward Mortis entails that we cannot, when speaking to him, say that he is wrong and we are right (that would be an unacceptable form of browbeating), we can make these normative assessments when we are in discussion among ourselves.[25] Moreover, the reply that this is still not a sufficiently robust account of error would have force only if it could be presented in a non-question-begging manner—something expressivists and their sympathizers deny is possible.[26]

These observation indicate that the charge that Gibbard's account of normative objectivity leaves something out is not so much an objection as a statement of what is at issue between expressivists and their opponents in these debates. It indicates that the question of whether expressivism can make sense of IMMCs is really a deeper question about what normative objectivity looks like.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER IMPLICATIONS

At the beginning of his essay, Daskal notes that expressivists face two hurdles: they must provide a viable account of objectivity and they need to explain how their revisionary semantics can avoid the Frege-Geach problem. While Daskal thinks Gibbard has succeeded in dealing with the semantic worries, he maintains that his innocent mistake objections show that making sense of objectivity remains a significant problem.[27] Against this backdrop, I close with two observations.

First, showing that Daskal's concerns about objectivity are mistaken does not vindicate the expressivist project—for there is good reason to think that his optimism about expressivists' ability to address their semantic problems is misplaced.[28] Second, expressivists are not the only irrealists

25. Gibbard, *Wise Choices*, 205–8. Also see his "How Much Realism? Evolved Thinkers and Normative Concepts," in *Oxford Studies in Metaethics 6*, ed. R. Shafer-Landau (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 33–51.

26. The literature on this debate is significant. For a representative sample of the realists' worries, see Nicholas Sturgeon, "What Difference Does It Make Whether Moral Realism Is True?" *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 24, supp. (1986): 115–42; Paul Bloomfield, *Moral Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), chap. 1; and Andy Egan, "Quasi-Realism and Fundamental Moral Error," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 85 (2010): 205–19. For replies from irrealists, see, for instance, Timmons, *Morality without Foundations*, chap. 3; Simon Blackburn, "Truth and *A Priori* Possibility," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 87 (2011): 201–13; and Charlie Kurth, "What Do Our Critical Practices Say about the Nature of Morality?" *Philosophical Studies* (forthcoming).

27. Daskal, "Plan-Based Expressivism," 310–11.

28. For concerns with expressivist solutions to the Frege-Geach problem, see Mark Schroeder, *Being For* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). For more general worries

for whom IMMCs are thought to be a problem. The possibility of Mortis-like characters also brings trouble for (for example) Humean constructivists and speaker relativists.[29] But given the similarities between expressivism and these other varieties of irrealism, my argument suggests that these non-expressivist irrealists may have more resources for dealing with such cases than they realize. For instance, Sharon Street acknowledges that it is problematic that a Humean constructivist like herself must allow that the ideally coherent Caligula "is not making a mistake."[30] But the argument here suggests she may be wrong about this. Given that her constructivism has much in common with Gibbard's expressivism, it seems that she can say that—like Mortis—Caligula's mental constitution leaves him innocently mistaken about what to do. If this is correct (and more would need to be said), then Street's account of objectivity proves to be more robust than she realizes. Moreover, it also suggests that the real insight of expressivism lies in what it might tell us about the nature of normative objectivity.

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about the expressivist's ability to provide a plausible alternative account of logic and inference, see Charlie Kurth, "Logic for Morals, Morals from Logic," *Philosophical Studies* 155 (2011): 161–80. It is worth noting that Daskal's optimism about the expressivists' ability to solve their semantic problems may not sit well with some of the arguments that he makes in his essay. In particular, Daskal explores the possibility that an appeal to moral emotions might help Gibbard make sense of IMMCs. But his response ("Plan-Based Expressivism," at 332–33) attributes to Gibbard a difficulty—roughly, that his planning language does not have enough structure to accommodate the various ways in which one judgment can override another—that is strikingly similar to the 'negation problem' Schroeder develops in *Being For.*

29. See, e.g., Sharon Street, "Constructivism about Reasons," in *Oxford Studies in Metaethics 3*, ed. R. Shafer-Landau (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 207–45; and Jamie Dreier, "Internalism and Speaker Relativism," *Ethics* 101 (1990): 6–26.

30. Street, "What Is Constructivism in Ethics and Metaethics?" *Philosophy Compass* 5 (2010): 363–84, 371. While Street does not believe that she can say that Caligula is mistaken, she does believe that her account allows her to express other forms of normative criticism—e.g., that Caligula is despicable. See Street, "Objectivity and Truth: You'd Better Rethink It" (unpublished manuscript, https://files.nyu.edu/ss194/public/sharonstreet/Writing.html [accessed September 13, 2013]), for details.