

The Case of the Disappearing Semicolon: Expressive-Assertivism and the Embedding Problem

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ABSTRACT: Expressive-Assertivism, a metaethical theory championed by Daniel Boisvert, is sometimes considered to be a particularly promising form of hybrid expressivism. One of the main virtues of Expressive-Assertivism is that it seems to offer a simple solution to the Frege-Geach problem. I argue, in contrast, that Expressive-Assertivism faces much the same challenges as pure expressivism.

1. Introduction

Traditional metaethical cognitivism has it that moral judgments express beliefs (and nothing but beliefs); non-cognitivism has it that moral judgments express desire-like states (and only desire-like states). Couldn't it be that the traditional debate between cognitivists and non-cognitivists is based on a false presumption? Proponents of a recent research programme in metaethics answer "yes" to that question. According to *hybrid* or *ecumenical* theories, a thinker who makes a moral judgment thereby expresses a belief as well as a desire.

Perhaps the main attraction of hybrid theories is that they seem to offer a simple or even "cheap" (see Ridge 2006: 309) solution to a problem that is commonly regarded as the biggest challenge to traditional non-cognitivism. Consider the following moral *modus ponens* argument:

- (1) Tormenting the cat is bad.
- (2) If tormenting the cat is bad, then getting your little brother to torment the cat is bad.
- (3) Therefore, getting your little brother to torment the cat is bad.

Given the (alleged) motivational upshot of moral judgments, a non-cognitivist rendering of (1) as "Boo for tormenting the cat" (or the like) may seem initially plausible. (2), however, poses a problem for non-cognitivists since a "boo-hooray" style of analysis cannot directly account for embedded occurrences of moral judgments. By uttering the antecedent of (2), which is identical

to (1), a speaker does not appear to express a negative attitude towards tormenting cats. Thus, it seems as though the non-cognitivist is committed to the claim that (1) and the antecedent of (2) do not have the same meaning; consequently, the apparently valid argument (1)-(3) would involve a fallacy of equivocation.

This problem, commonly known as the Frege-Geach challenge or embedding problem (see Ross 1939: 33-34; Geach 1960), has plagued traditional non-cognitivism for quite a few decades, and in this respect, hybrid theories seem to have a decisive advantage over pure expressivism. If moral judgments express desire-like states *and* truth-evaluable beliefs, the beliefs in themselves might be sufficient to ensure that moral judgments have all the logical properties we want and expect them to have. In what follows, I will show that things are not that simple. More specifically, I will argue that, as far as the embedding problem is concerned, Daniel Boisvert's hybrid theory, called "Expressive-Assertivism" (henceforth: "EXPRASS"), faces much the same challenges as pure expressivism. If, as some have claimed (see Schroeder 2009: 299), EXPRASS is a particularly promising form of hybridism, then hybrid expressivism in general might not fare better than pure expressivism.

2. Speech Acts and Moral Reasoning

According to Boisvert, making a moral judgment amounts to performing two speech acts at once. By uttering a sentence such as "Tormenting the cat is bad", a speaker *asserts* that tormenting the cat has some (non speaker-relative) property *F* and, simultaneously, *expresses* his general dislike of all things that are *F*. Thus, the above mentioned moral *modus ponens* argument should be rendered as follows (Boisvert 2008: 172):

- (EA) (1a) Tormenting the cat is *F*; boo for things that are *F*!
- (2a) If tormenting the cat is *F*, then getting your little brother to torment the cat is *F*; boo for things that are *F*!
- (3a) Therefore, getting your little brother to torment the cat is *F*; boo for things that are *F*!

At first glance, this analysis seems to do the trick: since the left side of (1a), (2a) and (3a) is, in each case, an ordinary truth-evaluable statement, "Expressive-Assertivism can help itself to the standard explanation of validity in terms of the preservation of truth" (Boisvert 2008: 201), and so the Frege-Geach problem does not even seem to arise for EXPRASS.

At second glance, however, Boisvert's analysis gives rise to a worry about moral reasoning. Suppose a moral thinker is convinced that EXPRASS is the correct theory of moral discourse and thus abandons ordinary moral talk in favour of Boisvert's analysis. (EA), after all, is supposed to be just a more explicit version of an ordinary moral argument. Now, the logical form of (EA) is as follows:

- (EAI) (1b) Γ ; Ω !
 (2b) If Γ , then Δ ; Ω !
 (3b) Therefore, Δ ; Ω !

Then the question is: how can a thinker get from the premises to the conclusion? Though (EA) contains all the materials necessary to deduce the conclusion, the rule of *modus ponens* cannot be directly applied to the premises (1a) and (2a). So, in a first step, we have to "extract" the left side of (1a) and (2a) by using a rule which I will provisionally call "-elimination".

- (EAI) 1 Tormenting the cat is F; boo for things that are F! [Assumption]
 2 If tormenting the cat is F, then getting your little brother to torment the cat is F; boo for things that are F! [Assumption]
 3 Tormenting the cat is F [1 ;-elimination]
 4 If tormenting the cat is F, then getting your little brother to torment the cat is F [2 ;-elimination]
 5 Getting your little brother to torment the cat is F [3,4 MPP]

5, however, is just a mundane truth-evaluable statement and not a genuine moral judgment, which, according to Boisvert, would have to consist of an assertive and an expressive part. So, once again, we would have to extract something, this time the right side of 1 (or 2) and

"recombine" it with 5.¹ The only plausible candidate for a rule by means of which the different parts can be recombined would be the counterpart of ";"-elimination", i.e. ";"-introduction":

6 Boo for things that are F! [1 (or 2) ;"-elimination]

7 Getting your little brother to torment the cat is F; boo for things that are F!
[5,6 ;"-introduction]

This rendering of (EA) in the shape of a Lemmon-style deduction gives rise to the following worry. In order to make the semicolon disappear (and reappear), we need an introduction and an elimination rule for the semicolon. Under the names of ";"-elimination" and ";"-introduction", these two rules may appear quite mysterious, but, in a certain sense, they are not mysterious at all: structurally, ;"-elimination works just like conjunction elimination, and ;"-introduction seems to be nothing but a kind of conjunction introduction. Thus, "Tormenting the cat is F; boo for things that are F!" would mean the same as "Tormenting the cat is F & Boo for things that are F!" (Here it might be objected that the semicolon does not *need* to be read as some kind of conjunction. I shall discuss this issue shortly.)

There is, however, also a clear difference between ";" and "&": while "&" connects things like "statements" or "propositions", Boisvert's semicolon appears to connect whole speech acts. Dialectically, this may not appear to be a severe problem, since Boisvert offers, in effect, a speech act theoretic analysis of moral utterances, and some speech act theorists contend that there are not only *propositional* but also *illocutionary* connectives.²

However, since Boisvert explicitly offers his theory as a solution to the Frege-Geach problem, the assumption that there are illocutionary connectives *is* dialectically problematic.

¹Initially, it might seem odd to treat the expressive component of moral judgments in such a way. It is, however, only odd if one identifies *expressing* with *spontaneously avowing* (though, of course, avowing is a form of expressing something). If expressing in general meant that a mental state is "forced from us" (see Wittgenstein, PI, § 138), there would be no reason to suppose that an expressive statement that occurs in one line of a deduction can be used again at a later stage of the argument. Thus, "Boo for things that are F" should not be seen as an avowal such as "ouch!", but as an expressive speech act comparable to congratulations or apologies.

²Searle and Vanderveken (1985: 2) distinguish (elementary) illocutionary acts of the form F(P) and (elementary) "sentences" of the form f(p). Since the distinction between mood and force does not seem to be relevant for what follows, I shall use the term 'illocutionary connective' such that, for example, the sentence ~f(p) *and* the act ~F(P) contain a connective of that kind.

Why? First of all, the Frege-Geach challenge is based on an idea Geach has dubbed the "Frege point" (Geach 1965: 449), and that point, in turn, is nothing else but Frege's distinction between *Kraft* (force) and *Sinn* (sense). Now a central aspect of that very distinction is the idea that, as Dummett (1981: 328) has put it, "a sign for force cannot occur within the scope of a sentential operator".³ Boisvert, in contrast, seems to be committed to the claim that sentential operators can be used to combine two illocutionary acts into a complex speech act.

There is, of course, nothing wrong with trying to solve the Frege-Geach problem by rejecting the distinction between content and force (for that line of thought, see Dummett 1981: 327-48; Hom and Schwartz 2013). If, however, Boisvert's hybrid solution to the embedding problem presupposes the existence of illocutionary connectives, it becomes doubtful whether his hybrid approach has any significant advantage over *pure* expressivism. If the sentence "Tormenting the cat is bad" is to be rendered as "Tormenting the cat is F; boo for things that are F!" and if the latter string of symbols is, in effect, a conjunction of speech acts, then *pure* expressivists might try to analyse a moral argument such as (1)-(3) as follows:

- (1c) Boo (tormenting the cat)
- (2c) If [Boo (tormenting the cat)], then [Boo (getting your little brother to torment the cat)]
- (3c) Boo (getting your little brother to torment the cat)

Though, structurally, (3c) *seems* to follow from (1c) and (2c) by the rule of detachment, the whole analysis has an awkward feel to it. Do we really understand the sense of conditionals with expressive antecedents and consequents? If yes, then Boisvert's hybrid theory does not seem to be an improvement over pure expressivism. If no, then why should we assume that a *conjunction* of two speech acts is more innocuous than an *implication*?

In order to give a satisfactory answer to that question, EXPRESS would have to be supplemented by something closely akin to a "logic of attitudes" (for that term, see Hale 1993);

³In Frege's two-dimensional *Begriffsschrift* this idea is reflected in the fact that the only sign for force Frege actually uses, i.e. the vertical "Urteilsstrich", always occurs at the top left of any formula.

Boisvert owes us an illocutionary logic, i.e. a logic that deals with logical relations not between pure propositions, but between illocutionary acts with a certain propositional content.⁴ In order to show that EXPRASS is in fact preferable to pure expressivism, Boisvert, of course, does not have to offer a fully-fledged theory of that kind; the theory, however, must at least have the resources to defend the claim that

(4) [Tormenting the cat is F], and [Boo (things that are F)!]

is well-formed, meaningful and such that logical rules can in fact be applied to it, while

(5) If [Boo (tormenting the cat)], then [Boo (getting your little brother to torment the cat)]

is not well-formed, not meaningful or such that logical rules cannot be applied to it.

My argument in this section has been based on two implicit assumptions which seem to me highly plausible, but which others might be skeptical about. The *first* assumption is, to put it in common metalogical terms, that a genuine "logic of morality" has to comprise not only a "model theory", but also some sort of "proof theory". Now, I am well aware of the fact that proof-theoretical considerations do not play an important role in contemporary metaethics (with the exception of a few philosophers who try to explain the meaning of ethical concepts in terms of their inferential role; see, e.g., Wedgwood 2007: 80-107), so let me briefly explain why. The idea is, roughly, that "moral proof theory" is just another name for a theory that successfully accounts for moral *reasoning*, but devising an adequate semantics or metasemantics for moral sentences does not yet amount to answering how exactly ordinary moral reasoning works. In

⁴This is intended just as a *challenge* to EXPRASS, and I certainly do not wish to claim that this challenge presents an insurmountable obstacle to Boisvert's theory. There are, after all, successful forms of illocutionary logic (albeit ones that will not be directly helpful to EXPRASS). One example is the "logic of rejection" championed by Smiley (1996) and Rumfitt (2000). Smiley and Rumfitt do not only offer a highly sophisticated calculus that *essentially* contains some illocutionary force indicating device (i.e., rejection); they also aim to show that such a calculus is indispensable if we are to fully understand the very concept of negation.

moral reasoning, we proceed from moral thoughts to other moral thoughts, and in making such transitions we do not or do not need to appeal to the semantic properties *of* our thoughts. Thus, any theory of moral discourse needs to be able to show how to render pieces of moral reasoning in some kind of proof calculus. What I have been trying to show here is specifically that EXPRASS-style renderings of moral arguments cannot easily be represented within a natural deduction system. However, it seems obvious that the problems highlighted in this section will remain even if some other method of logic, such as a sequent calculus or a Hilbert-style calculus, is employed. (It is hardly worth mentioning that cognitivism does not face such a challenge; cognitivists can avail themselves of any old proof calculus.)

The second assumption is that the semicolon in Boisvert's analyses should be regarded as an illocutionary connective. Though Boisvert subscribes to the claim that logical connectives can connect sentences in different *moods*, he nowhere appeals to what *he* would call *illocutionary* connectives.⁵ Moreover, in his presentation of EXPRASS he just contends that by uttering a moral sentence a speaker performs an assertive and an expressive illocutionary act (Boisvert 2008: 171; similarly, Boisvert 2014: 42), which is different from claiming that the two speech acts have to be united into a *complex* illocutionary act. Thus, alternatively, the semicolon might be read as a kind of full stop. "Tormenting the cat is F; boo for things that are F!" would then mean that a speaker performs two distinct and independent speech acts either in succession or, as it were, simultaneously. Accordingly, our paradigmatic moral argument would have to be rendered thus:

- (EIII) (1) Tormenting the cat is F. [Assumption]
 (2) Boo for things that are F! [?]
 (3) If tormenting the cat is F, then getting your little brother to torment the cat is F. [Assumption]
 (4) Boo for things that are F! [?]
 (5) Therefore, getting your little brother to torment the cat is F. [1,3 MPP]
 (6) Boo for things that are F! [?]

⁵Boisvert (2008: 191) gives the example "Donating to charity is right and don't forget it". In my terminology (see fn. 2) that sentence does contain an "illocutionary connective", but I do not want to dispute over words here.

The relation between (1), (3) and (5) is clear; (5) is just an ordinary proposition entailed by (1) and (3). But what is the function of the remaining three sentences? Are (2) and (4) assumptions of some kind? Is (6) some kind of conclusion? And why does the very same sentence or speech act occur three times? Could we drop the two occurrences that seem superfluous? Intuitively, we cannot. Given that (EAIII) is supposed to be an analysis of an ordinary moral argument one sentence of which corresponds to two sentences or speech acts in (EAIII), (2) must somehow be seen as an "attachement" to (1). In the same way, (4) must be attached to (3) and (6) to (5). However, claiming that, say, (1) and (2) are just two separate speech acts seems to imply that there is no "attachment" whatsoever. Thus, it seems as though an analysis in the style of (EAIII) does not successfully explain how a speaker can assert (?) the single and unified thought that tormenting the cat is bad just by performing two distinct and independent speech acts. The proponent of EXPRASS cannot just stipulate that the "meaning" of an assertive speech act with the propositional content that tormenting the cat is F and the "meaning" of an expressive speech act with a seemingly non-propositional content composes into the meaning (no scare-quotes here!) of the declarative sentence "Tormenting the cat is bad".

Moreover, since the conclusion of an ordinary moral argument corresponds to two illocutionary acts in (EAIII), we would not only have to say that somehow the entailment relation can be a relation between speech acts (a claim proponents of illocutionary logic may find appealing); we would also have to say that *sequences* of independent speech acts can stand in an entailment relation, which would be rather mysterious.

To sum up, the "full stop" reading *as well as* the "illocutionary connective" reading of the semicolon raises a number of significant worries, but the latter reading clearly seems preferable.

3. Moral Psychology

The underlying problem of Boisvert's theory can be illuminated yet from a different angle. Up to

now, I have been presenting EXPRASS as a theory about the speech acts a speaker performs when he is making a moral judgment. There is, though, another way of presenting Boisvert's approach – a way that seems to be even more congenial to the general spirit of what is now often called 'expressivism'. According to Mark Schroeder (2008: 3), the leading idea behind *expressivism* (as opposed to traditional *noncognitivism*) can be characterised as follows:

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.

Thus, from an expressivist point of view, the really interesting question is not: "What are the speech acts one performs when making a moral judgment?" Rather, we should ask a more fundamental question: "What are the mental states a thinker expresses by making a moral judgment?"

Initially, one might think that an answer to the former question would give us all we need in order to answer the latter: if, by making a moral judgment, one performs one expressive illocutionary act and one assertive illocutionary act, then a moral thought will comprise a desire-like state and a belief-like state. All this seems to be obvious, and Boisvert clearly accepts an account of that kind:

[A]ccording to Expressive-Assertivism, moral thoughts, which are articulated by moral utterances, are complex psychological states consisting of a representational state and a conative state. (Boisvert 2008: 189; similarly Boisvert 2014: 42)

Notice, though, that Boisvert here does not only claim that two distinct mental states are expressed whenever a thinker makes a moral judgment; rather, a moral thought, is a *complex* psychological state that "consists" of two mental states of different kinds. As far as I see, Boisvert does not care to explain why he thinks moral thoughts to be logically complex, but it seems a reasonable demand: the assumption that there is a unified (though complex) mental state

which is expressed whenever a thinker makes a moral judgment seems to be needed in order to account for ascriptions of moral thoughts. If locutions such as "A thinks that tormenting the cat is bad" are to be taken at face value, then the embedded that-clause must refer to one of the thinker's actual thoughts and not to an arbitrarily chosen set of mental states the thinker actually has.

Here, the analogy of pejoratives, to which Boisvert (2008) and other hybrid expressivists frequently appeal, may help to see the problem: suppose a thinker has a strong negative attitude towards Germans in general (the psychological counterpart to "Boo for things that are German") as well as the belief that Kant is a German. Even if it is taken for granted that EXPRESS constitutes an adequate analysis of slurs (more on that below), the mere fact that the thinker is in these two mental states does not yet suffice to ascribe to him the thought that Kant is, say, a *kraut* (or the like). For instance, the two mental states could be located in different "fragments" of his mind, thereby preventing him from even forming the thought that Kant is a kraut.⁶ Thinking that Kant is a kraut might be *partly* constituted by both a belief and a kind of desire, but the thought clearly involves more than these two mental states, considered separately.

Thus, Boisvert is well advised to insist on the unity of moral thoughts. One may wonder, however, why Boisvert's explicit commitment to there being logically complex moral *thoughts* is not paralleled by an equally clear commitment to the existence of logically complex *speech acts*. Consider a locution such as "A *said* that tormenting the cat is bad". According to standard accounts of indirect speech, such a sentence is true only if A uttered some sentence (such as "Tormenting the cat is bad" or, in German, "Die Katze zu quälen ist falsch") that expresses the *proposition* that tormenting the cat is bad. Propositions, however, are unified entities. Now if "Tormenting the cat is F; Boo for things that are F!" is given a "full stop" reading, it will be difficult to account for that unity, since a mere sequence of speech acts does not necessarily express a proposition. On the "illocutionary connective" reading, things look more promising

⁶For a classic presentation of the idea of "fragmentation", see Lewis 1982.

since the conjunction of different speech acts does provide some kind of unity. Moreover, one might appeal to an unorthodox theory of propositions according to which propositions are *not* devoid of illocutionary force (for such a proposal, see Hanks 2011) such that "Tormenting the cat is F & Boo for things that are F!" might be regarded as a genuine proposition.

If moral thoughts are complex psychological states, then how, exactly, are the two mental states united? Let "RS(*p*)" stand for a representational state with the propositional content *p* and "CS(*c*)" for a conative state with the (possibly non-propositional) content *c*. Then a first shot towards an answer to our question would be that the unity that is to be explained is supplied, again, by a kind of conjunction. If the *speech act* performed by uttering "Tormenting the cat is bad" consists of an assertive speech act (ASA) and an expressive speech act (ESA) and if these two illocutionary acts are unified by an illocutionary conjunction as in (A)

(A) ASA(*p*) & ESA(*c*),

one could advance an analogous thesis with respect to mental states. "Tormenting the cat is bad" would then express a *mental state* of the form

(α) RS(*p*) & CS(*c*).

While an (A)-style analysis of speech acts could be defended by pointing out that there are well-formed sentences (such as "If he comes, stay with me!") in which speech acts of different kinds seem to be connected by logical operators (see Dummett 1981: 327-348; Searle and Vanderveken 1985: 3-7), a conception according to which there are mental states of the form (α) is rather mysterious. What does it even mean to be in mental state of representing *and* conating, in contrast to simply being in a representational state and being in a conative state?

There is, moreover, a second problem with this proposal. Claiming that moral judgments

express mental states of the form (α), does not yet answer the question of what *kind* of mental state (α) *as a whole* is. Is the conjunction of a conative and a representational state a belief-like state, a desire-like state or something else? Similarly, an analysis in the style of (A) does not tell us what *kind* of speech act a speaker performs when he utters a complex speech act of the form (A). Is it an assertion, an expressive illocutionary act or some other kind of speech act?

There seem to be four possible options for answering these questions. Schematically, we could represent them as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (β 1) RS[RS(p) & CS(c)] | (B1) ASA[ASA(p) & ESA(c)] |
| (β 2) CS[RS(p) & CS(c)] | (B2) ESA[ASA(p) & ESA(c)] |
| (β 3) RS+CS[RS(p) & CS(c)] | (B3) ASA+ESA[ASA(p) & ESA(c)] |
| (β 4) ?[RS(p) & CS(c)] | (B4) ?[ASA(p) & ESA(c)] |

Here, "RS+CS" refers to a mental state that is representational *and* conative (intuitively, something like a "besire"), and, analogously, "ASA+ESA" stands for a kind of illocutionary act that is assertive as well as expressive, while "?" stands for a mental state or a speech act of yet a different kind.

Clearly, a lot could be said about the respective virtues and vices of all these proposals, but, fortunately, I do not have to say anything about these issues, since we have all we need in order to show that EXPRASS faces a simple dilemma: if a moral judgment expresses a complex mental state that consists of a representational state and a conative state, then proponents of EXPRASS must either claim that the two states are unified in a purely conjunctive way or that they are parts of a high-order mental state. (The first horn of the dilemma corresponds to an (α)-style of analysis, the second horn to a (β)-style of analysis.) Accepting the first horn would mean that the proponent of EXPRASS has to supply what could be called a *simple* illocutionary logic or a *simple* logic of attitudes: a theory would be needed which explains the logical behaviour not of propositional contents but of propositional attitudes or illocutionary acts.

Accepting the second horn would mean that the proponent of EXPRASS owes us a

complex illocutionary logic or a *complex* logic of attitudes, for then we would have to deal additionally with higher-order attitudes. Since, as is widely held, expressivist theories that try to solve the Frege-Geach problem by higher-order attitudes are "plagued with fatal problems" (Schroeder 2008: 9), the semantic theory underlying hybrid approaches should best be non-committal about such attitudes. However, no matter which horn of the dilemma the proponent of EXPRASS accepts, he will be committed to some kind of illocutionary logic or to some kind of logic of attitudes, and thus EXPRASS faces a challenge similar to that faced by pure expressivism.

4. Moral Semantics

In section 2 of this paper I claimed that the "full stop" as well as the conjunctive reading of the semicolon in Boisvert's analysis gives rise to a significant worry about moral reasoning. This *logical* worry is paralleled by a worry about the *semantics* of moral talk. In moral reasoning we employ concepts such as *good*, *right* or *ought*, and every metaethical theory should have the resources to explain how a thinker *grasps* a moral concept such as *bad* or how a speaker knows the meaning of the predicate "is bad". What would an expressive-assertivist explanation look like? The general shape of the answer EXPRASS has to give seems clear enough: We know the meaning of the sentence "Tormenting the cat is bad" since we know the meaning of "Tormenting the cat is F" and the meaning of "Boo for things that are F!" But how, exactly, does the meaning of the two latter sentences *compose* into the meaning of the former sentence? And what role do the constituent concepts play in determining the semantic content of the thoughts they are parts of? Should we also say that we know the meaning of the predicate "is bad" since we know the meaning of "is F" and the meaning of "Boo for things that are F!"?

Boisvert is clearly aware that EXPRASS might be vulnerable to such a line of attack. He himself discusses a similar problem under the heading "The Objection from Incomplete Semantics" and points out that this objection is, in effect, just (an aspect of) the Frege-Geach challenge (Boisvert 2008: 186-8). The objection discussed by Boisvert runs like this:

[A]ny metaethical theory that does not tell us how we can understand the meanings of complex ethical sentences is incomplete, and since many Expressivist theories do not tell us how we can understand the meanings of complex ethical sentences, many Expressivist theories are, therefore, incomplete. [...] This lesson is also at the heart of Dreier's "'Bob is Hiyo!' Objection." [...] Dreier's objection stings any theory that contains a positive, expressivist component, including any dual-use theory like Expressive-Assertivism, since it is very unclear how an appeal to a Tarski-style truth theory can help explain the 'expressive meaning' of a complex sentence on the basis of understanding the expressive meanings of its component parts and syntactic combination.

Boisvert's reply to this objection is twofold. His *first* line of defence is, in effect, a kind of "companions in guilt" argument which, in turn, is based on the claim that moral terms such as "bad" work semantically exactly like pejorative terms such as "kraut". Since sentences such as "Friedrich is a kraut" seem to retain their expressive function when they are embedded, there is, according to Boisvert, "a whole range of complex sentences" (Boisvert 2008: 187) whose semantics *must be* like the semantics Boisvert proposes for moral terms, and thus the burden to uncover the compositional semantic theory that is needed in order to explain the semantic behaviour of "kraut" or "bad" "falls on everyone, not just Expressive-Assertivism" (Boisvert 2008: 187).

This reply is not really satisfactory, since it ain't necessarily so. Claiming that "moral predicates work in all important ways like emotionally charged predicates" (Boisvert 2008: 187), will vindicate *EXPRASS* only if it is taken for granted that emotionally charged predicates work in the same way that moral predicates work *according to EXPRASS*. There are, however, not many authors who claim that some kind of hybrid expressivism will yield a satisfactory explanation of the linguistic behaviour of pejoratives. (Actually, there seems to be only one philosopher who advances such a claim and who does *not* try defend some version of hybridism by appealing to pejoratives as an analogy; see Saka 2007: 140-143).

To illustrate, consider a recent theory of pejoratives advanced by Luvell Anderson and

Ernie Lepore.⁷ According to Anderson and Lepore, a pejorative term's "linguistic role is exhausted in picking out the same group as a neutral counter-part" (Anderson and Lepore 2013: 39), the only difference being that pejoratives are "prohibited words". While Boisvert (2008: 172) explains the fact that embedded occurrences of pejoratives ("Is Friedrich a kraut?") are no less offensive than simple assertions ("Friedrich is a kraut") by claiming that an expressive illocutionary act is performed *whenever* a pejorative occurs in a non-intensional context, Anderson and Lepore offer a much simpler explanation of the projection behaviour of pejoratives: pejoratives are generally offensive since prohibited words are prohibited even if they occur deeply embedded into a complex sentence.

I do not want to defend or subscribe to such a kind of theory, but Anderson's and Lepore's "deflationism" about pejoratives serves well as an example of how to construe the meaning of pejoratives without thereby supporting EXPRASS. Since deflationism claims that the meaning of a pejorative term is the same as the meaning of its neutral counterpart and that pejoratives do not, in general, have an expressive function, the mere fact that natural languages contain pejorative terms is, in itself, of no avail to Boisvert, and consequently EXPRASS would have some "special obligation" (Boisvert 2008: 187) to fulfill.⁸

Boisvert's *second* line of defence runs like this. Since EXPRASS concedes that moral sentences have robust truth-conditions, EXPRASS can adopt an ordinary theory of meaning to explain the *truth-conditional meanings* of (complex) moral sentences. Thus, the only genuine challenge to EXPRASS would be "to provide a compositional semantic account of the *expressive meanings* of complex ethical sentences." (Boisvert 2008: 187, emphasis added). In a next step, Boisvert claims that this assumption should be rejected, since the expressive meanings of moral

⁷More specifically, Anderson and Lepore offer a theory of *slurs*. Though, arguably, the set of slurs is a proper subset of the set of pejoratives, the distinction between slurs and pejoratives does not matter for our purposes, since the "pejoratives" which, according to Boisvert, work just like moral predicates, are in fact slurs such as "kraut" or "wop" (see Boisvert 2008: 183).

⁸Moreover, some philosophers have argued that hybrid expressivists will not benefit from appealing specifically to the model of slurs. According to Schroeder (2009: 307), the conventional implicature triggered by "but" is a better analogy. Hay (2011) claims that general pejoratives such as "jerk" could serve as a more appropriate model.

sentences are *not* compositional:

... a complete semantic theory must finitely specify all those things one would have to know in order to understand the expressive meaning. All one has to know in order to understand the expressive meaning of a sentence is that some specific conative attitude is expressed, whenever an ethical predicate is used in an extensional context, along with an account of what the specific attitude is. No compositional theory for expressive meaning is necessary in order to know this. (Boisvert 2008: 187)

This defence is in line with a claim Boisvert (2008: 171) calls "Generality Principle". According to that principle *every* occurrence of "bad" in a non-intensional context, whether embedded or unembedded, carries expressive force. Thus, the mere fact that a sentence contains a moral predicate such as "bad" would be sufficient to predict that the sentence has an expressive meaning ("Boo for things that are F!"), provided that "bad" does not occur in an intensional context.

Is this move successful? The answer must be "no". First of all, Boisvert says that a conative attitude is expressed *whenever* a moral predicate is used in an extensional context. This claim, however, seems to be much too strong: on the one hand, there are *non*-extensional contexts in which "bad" apparently has an expressive function (if it is granted that EXPRESS is true). Modally strengthened moral claims such as

(6) Necessarily, lying is bad

would be a simple example. On the other hand, there are extensional contexts in which a speaker may use the moral predicate "bad" without thereby expressing a negative attitude. When a moral nihilist says

(7) Tormenting the cat is not bad (since there is nothing bad in the world),

his utterance clearly does not involve expressing any conative attitude.⁹ Thus, contrary to what Boisvert claims, the expressive meanings of moral sentences *are* compositional; in order to understand sentences such as (6) or (7) we need to know more about the meaning of "bad" than what Boisvert offers as an explanation. //XXX “institutions that treat chinese people as chinks are racist” → “institutions that treat chinese people as chinese people are racist; boo for chinese people//”

But there is an even more serious problem. Recall that the Frege-Geach problem has to do with how expressivism can explain that a sentence such as "Tormenting the cat is bad" can have *exactly* the same meaning whether it occurs embedded or unembedded. As mentioned earlier, Boisvert's analysis (EA) *seems* to do the trick. On a closer look, however, (EA) *cannot* account for this fact. If "Tormenting the cat is bad" means the same as "Tormenting the cat is F; boo for things that are F!", then, in order to avoid the charge of ambiguity, the antecedent of the major premise should be "Tormenting the cat is F; boo for things that are F!" as well (and not just "Tormenting the cat is F", as in Boisvert's analysis). Thus the whole argument would have to be rendered as follows:

- (EAIII) (1d) Tormenting the cat is F; boo for things that are F!
 (2d) If [Tormenting the cat is F; boo for things that are F!], then [getting your little brother to torment the cat is F; boo for things that are F!]
 (3d) Getting your little brother to torment the cat is F; boo for things that are F!¹⁰

We have already seen that Boisvert's rendering of the major premise ("If tormenting the cat is F, then getting your little brother to torment the cat is F; boo for things that are F!") seems to

⁹Of course, it could be claimed that (7), as uttered by a moral nihilist, rather should be seen as a metalinguistic thesis according to which the *word* "bad" does not refer to a real property.

¹⁰In his 2014 paper, Boisvert offers a defence of his original rendering; see Boisvert 2014: 43-45. There he claims that the "sincerity conditions" of a sentence such as "If insulting others is wrong, I won't insult others" contribute to that sentence *as a whole* and not just to its antecedent, and compares this account of moral terms to the linguistic behaviour of appositives or pure expressives (such as "damn" in "If I have to wash the damn dishes, I'll be late to the party"). But absent a fully-fledged *theory*, this defence is, again, just a "companions in guilt" argument. Moreover, the extant theories of such constructions, such as Potts' (2005) conventional implicature theory, do not seem to support Boisvert's claims. For discussion, see Schroeder 2009: 306-7.

involve a commitment to the existence of illocutionary conjunctions; so the viability of EXPRASS depends on a coherent and elaborated illocutionary logic which still has to be devised.

Additionally, by means of (EA) one cannot really account for the fact that in a moral *modus ponens* argument the minor premise and the antecedent of the major premise have precisely the same meaning; (EA) only shows how they could have the same *descriptive* meaning.

(EAIII), in contrast, has the virtue of presenting us with a straight solution to that problem of ambiguity. In a different respect, however, (EAIII) is even more problematic than Boisvert's original analysis. The assumption that there are illocutionary conjunctions (and illocutionary connectives in general) might be defended by pointing out that we do say things like "If he comes, stay with me!". But it will be difficult to offer a single example of an ordinary sentence that has the same logical complexity as (2d). It is even unclear how (2d) could be rendered in a natural language: sentences like "If tormenting the cat is F and boo for things that are F, then ..." seem to be just ungrammatical.

At this point, a proponent of EXPRASS might be tempted to make a bold move: instead of construing EXPRASS as a *hermeneutical* claim, i.e. as a claim about the actual meaning of "bad" in ordinary language, one might construe EXPRASS as a *revolutionary* thesis, i.e. as a thesis about moral language as it ought to be.¹¹ A natural language counterpart to (2d), so the reply goes, may be ungrammatical, but so much the worse for actual moral language.

Unluckily, even this bold move will not work as a solution to the Frege-Geach problem. Though, syntactically, (EAIII) looks like a normal *modus ponens* argument, it is doubtful whether it really is such an argument since, according to all standard accounts of logical entailment, a deductive argument preserves *cognitive properties* such as truth (or, less orthodoxly, assertibility). But neither of the premises *as a whole* has such a cognitive property

¹¹Such a move is foreshadowed in Gibbard's expressivist theory in his "Thinking How to Live" (2003: 13): "We need language ... with all the power and flexibility of language that is clearly descriptive – but with its tie to what to do built in. We need a predicate that conveys 'to-be-doneness'. ... If such language does not exist, we have to invent it." The distinction between hermeneutical and revolutionary approaches to a given subject matter goes back to Burgess (1983).

(though, of course, (1d) and (2d) contain a "part" which can be true or false). Thus, in order to rebut the Frege-Geach challenge, (EAIII) would have to be supplemented by a fairly unorthodox account of logic.

Perhaps the underlying problem for EXPRASS can be seen more clearly by momentarily putting aside all logical worries. According to EXPRASS, (1) and (1a) must have the same meaning:

(1) Tormenting the cat is bad.

(1a) [α] Tormenting the cat is F; [β] boo for things that are F!

Now, what, exactly, is the meaning of (1) or (1a)? We may take it for granted that the meaning of [α], i.e. the left side of (1a), can be explained in ordinary truth-conditional terms. What about the meaning of [β]? As is well known, there is no generally accepted way of providing a semantics for non-declaratives. But suppose, for the sake of argument, there were such an account. For instance, following a suggestion by de Sousa (1979: 46), one might call the semantic value of an expressive sentence "appropriateness"; the sense of such a sentence would then consist in its "appropriateness-conditions". Along this line, one might specify the meaning of *complex* expressive sentences by treating logical connectives not only as truth-functional, but also as "appropriateness-functional": "Boo for things that are F & Boo for things that are G" would be appropriate iff both expressive sentences are appropriate. (In a paper jointly written with Kirk Ludwig (2006) as well as in a more recent paper (2014), Boisvert clearly subscribes to such a kind of theory.)

Note, first of all, that such a theory, if successful, would seem to provide *pure* expressivism with the resources to solve the Frege-Geach problem in a straightforward way. I suggested above that pure expressivists might try to analyse moral *modus ponens* arguments as follows:

- (1c) Boo (tormenting the cat)
- (2c) If [Boo (tormenting the cat)], then [Boo (getting your little brother to torment the cat)]
- (3c) Boo (getting your little brother to torment the cat)

Though, *syntactically*, this sequence of "sentences" looks like a normal *modus ponens* argument, the premises do not seem to entail (3c) since none of the "sentences" is true. But suppose now that logical validity can also be defined in terms of the preservation of appropriateness (or something else of that kind). We could then say that a conditional is appropriate iff the appropriateness of the antecedent is sufficient for the appropriateness of the consequent. Thus, despite the fact that, as far as "surface grammar" is concerned, (2c) looks a little odd, (2c) would be appropriate, and the appropriateness of (1c) and (2c) seems to be preserved from the premises to the conclusion.¹²

The viability of EXPRASS depends on the assumption that a successful semantics for non-declaratives such as [β] can be devised, and such a kind of semantics could be used by pure expressivists in order to show that there are entailment relations between expressives. Thus, EXPRASS does not seem to have a decisive advantage over pure expressivism. One might even argue that EXPRASS has a significant disadvantage. Even if we take it for granted that the meaning of [α] consists of [α]'s truth-conditions and that the meaning of [β] could be specified by [β]'s "appropriateness-conditions" (or the like), we do not yet have a clue as to what the meaning of (1a) as a whole is. (1a), after all, does not seem to be either true or "appropriate". So, how exactly does the meaning of [α] and [β] compose into the meaning of (1a)? (Clearly, that's a question pure expressivists do not have to answer.)

A more or less obvious remedy for this worry would be to claim that truth and appropriateness are species of a more general kind such as "success" or "satisfaction". One could then say that a sentence is successful if it is either appropriate or true; correspondingly, "Tormenting the cat is F; boo for things that are F!" will be successful iff "Tormenting the cat is

¹²This is in line with how Boisvert and Ludwig (2006: 887) specify the "aptness conditions" of exclamatives and optatives.

F" is true and "Boo for things that are F!" is appropriate. So far, so good. But how are we to define entailment along this line? In a paper jointly written by Boisvert and Kirk Ludwig, the following proposal is offered:

(LCF) A sentence s is a logical consequence of another s' , relative to a context, provided that every interpretation on which s' is fulfilled is one on which s is fulfilled. (Boisvert and Ludwig 2006: 882; similarly, Boisvert 2014: 37)

Clearly, this proposal *can* be used to show that, in (EAIII), the conclusion is in fact a "logical consequence" of the premises. Thus, EXPRASS, in the shape of (EAIII), seems to offer a viable solution to the Frege-Geach problem.

There are, however, two severe problems that are generated by the fulfillment approach in general and by (LCF) in particular (and to which pure expressivism is clearly *not* vulnerable). The *first* problem is that the fulfillment approach seems to imply that *arbitrary* combinations of declarative and non-declarative sentences are meaningful, even though some combinations might be simply ungrammatical. For instance, it is widely assumed that imperatives cannot be embedded into the antecedent of conditionals. According to the fulfillment approach, however, we would have to say that a string of symbols such as

(8) If [Go to the largest grocer in Oxford!], then [2+2=5]

is in fact fulfilled (and thus has a semantic value) if the request in the antecedent has not been obeyed, since the consequent *cannot* be true.¹³

Boisvert and Ludwig note explicitly that a successful account of non-declaratives should be able to explain why, for example, "imperatives are never used in the antecedents of conditionals" (Boisvert and Ludwig 2006: 869); their explanation being that sentences such as

¹³Given, of course, that the meaning of imperatives can be specified by their "obedience conditions", but that is just what Boisvert and Ludwig (2008: 876-880) claim.

(8) are "useless for any practical purpose, despite our being able to assign to them a coherent semantics" (Boisvert and Ludwig 2006: 880).

In a more recent paper, Boisvert rejects this purely pragmatic explanation. He there claims that *pure* expressivists who adopt a success-conditional semantics (SCS) bear the burden of explaining why moral nondeclaratives such as imperatives or expressives cannot be embedded into the antecedent of a conditional.¹⁴ In contrast, Boisvert contends, EXPRASS "can plausibly claim that such contexts require sentences that describe, and all declaratives, including moral declaratives, describe" (Boisvert 2014: 48). This reply seems fairly *ad hoc*: a semantic theory that is based on a highly general semantic value such as "success", "fulfillment" (or the like) is *prima facie* committed to the claim that nondeclaratives can be embedded in the same way as declaratives. Of course, an adherent of SCS might devise a more sophisticated semantics which gives a theoretically motivated explanation of the (alleged) fact that certain nondeclaratives cannot be embedded. However, what Boisvert says in defence of his theory just amounts to the assertion of something that would have to be shown.

The *second* problem is even more serious: SCS overproduces cases of logical validity or inconsistency. I shall defer discussion of that issue to the next section.¹⁵

5. Boisvert's (Temporarily) Last Word on Hybrid Expressivism

I have been arguing that Boisvert's EXPRASS faces much the same challenge as traditional or pure expressivism in that it is dependent on a successful semantics for nondeclaratives and, arguably, also on an illocutionary logic. One way of partly meeting this challenge would be the success-conditional semantics (SCS) that Boisvert embraces in a paper jointly written with Kirk

¹⁴Boisvert (2014: 42) admits that there *are* conditionals that take imperatives as an antecedent ("Go home only if you are tired"). But then why should expressivists explain why this *cannot* be the case? It should also be noted that the embeddability of imperatives differs cross-linguistically. In some languages (such as Spanish) imperatives cannot even be negated, while in others imperatives can be embedded into relative clauses (as in Ancient Greek) or form part of indirect speech (as in Mandarin and Korean). For discussion, see Portner (2007).

¹⁵Since I do not know whether Boisvert thinks of his 2014 paper as a defence of his original theory or rather as *partly* new approach, I have decided to discuss most of the pertinent points of his most recent treatment of hybrid expressivism in a separate section.

Ludwig. In a much more recent paper, Boisvert explicitly subscribes to such a theory and tries to show that *pure* expressivism cannot adopt SCS without "raising additional difficulties" (Boisvert 2014: 25). More specifically, Boisvert claims that pure expressivism, supplemented with SCS, will still not be able "to avoid the full force of the Frege-Geach problem" (Boisvert 2014: 25) while his preferred brand of hybrid expressivism can. Since I have been trying to show that, given SCS, hybrid theories are not preferable to pure expressivism, I shall have a final look at Boisvert's recent arguments in favour of "going hybrid". (For what follows, recall that I am exclusively concerned with the Frege-Geach challenge here. So I will not discuss, say, the ontological or epistemological virtues and vices of (hybrid) expressivism or cognitivism.)

The starting point of Boisvert's discussion of the prospects of combining *pure* expressivism with SCS is an example by James Dreier. Consider the following piece of (partly practical) reasoning:

- (9) Everyone raised in the suburbs disapproves of lying.
- (10) I was raised in the suburbs.
- (11) (Therefore) I disapprove of lying.
- (12) (Therefore) Lying is wrong.¹⁶

To handle the transition from (9) and (10) to (11) we need nothing more than ordinary predicate logic. In order to "show" that (12) "follows" from (11), SCS is needed: if (11) is true (and therefore successful), then the speaker must actually disapprove of lying. If, in turn, the speaker has that attitude and if the semantic value of a moral sentence such as (12) is *sincerity* as a specific kind of success, then the transition from (11) to (12) is "success preserving" and thus valid according to the SCS account of logical validity. (Recall (LCF) from the last section.) But intuitively, (11) does not entail (12). Thus, according to Boisvert (2014: 39), pure expressivism's adoption of SCS "entails the validity of intuitively invalid arguments".

Now I do not wish to deny that this is a serious problem. That problem, however, does

¹⁶See Boisvert 2014: 40. I have slightly altered the example.

not show that pure expressivism supplemented with SCS is a more problematic view than hybrid expressivism supplemented with SCS; rather, as I will show in what follows, the oddness of that "inference" just means that there is a flaw in the SCS approach in general. Roughly, the idea is that a semantic theory which assigns some analogue of truth as a semantic value to nondeclaratives or to non-assertive illocutionary acts works reasonably well as long as we are dealing just with one mood or one kind of speech act. For instance, we might say that the imperative "Open the window!" entails "Open something!" since *obeying* the first order is sufficient for obeying the second. Similarly, one could claim that the two expressives "Booh for murder" and "Hooray for murder" are inconsistent since *sincerely* uttering the former sentence precludes the respective speaker from sincerely uttering the latter (and *vice versa*).

The SCS approach goes one step further and, if I am right, one step too far. According to SCS, logical terms such as "entailment" or "inconsistency" cannot only be defined by reference to *specific* concepts such as *truth* (for declaratives), *sincerity* (for expressives) or *obedience* (for imperatives); rather, the proposal is to define logical concepts by reference to some more generic term such as "success" (Boisvert 2014) or "fulfillment" (Boisvert and Ludwig 2006). The problem with SCS can be easily demonstrated by constructing cases in which, intuitively, there is no logical relation whatsoever between two sentences in different moods, but in which the "success" of one sentence is sufficient for or incompatible with the success of the other. In such cases, SCS does not meet a requirement Boisvert calls "Logical Preservation" (LP) and which requires a semantic theory for a language to "respect the intuitive logical relations among which the sentences of that language stand" (Boisvert 2014: 27).

As a start, consider the following sentences:

(13) Thank you!

(14) I am grateful.

(15) Richard, go to the grocer!

(16) Richard will go to the grocer

(13) and (14) clearly have the same success conditions: (13) is successful (sincere) iff (14) is successful (true). Similarly, (15) is successful (obeyed) iff (16) is successful (true). Thus, (13) and (14) as well as (15) and (16) are logically equivalent according to SCS.¹⁷ This is not a particularly appealing result since, intuitively, no logical relation whatsoever holds between these sentences. Moreover, moral semantics and ordinary moral reasoning again seem to come apart. If (13) actually entails (14), then the following piece of discourse should be meaningful:

(17) Thank you! Therefore, I am grateful.

(17), however, is, to say the least, a particularly odd utterance. Worse still: if a kind of deduction theorem holds for the logic that underlies EXPRASS, then the sentence "If Thank you!, then I am grateful" will also be meaningful. But now recall that Boisvert charges *pure* expressivism with the burden of explaining why expressives such as (13) cannot be embedded into the antecedent of a conditional. But clearly, this is not a specific problem for *pure* expressivism; rather, it seems as though this burden has to be born by every adherent of SCS.

Boisvert is clearly aware that SCS *in general* "appears to overproduce cases of logical inconsistency" (Boisvert 2014: 35) and, one might add, of logical validity. Here is one of his examples. The two sentences

(18) Don't insult her.

(19) You will insult her.

¹⁷Surprisingly, in Boisvert and Ludwig (2006: 882), this point is presented not as a bug but as a feature of their theory: "[The fulfillment approach] also makes perfectly good sense of the idea that an imperative can have as a consequence a declarative". Note that in most imperative logics "You will go to the grocer" does *not* follow from "Go to the grocer!" (or vice versa), and that's how it should be.

are, as Boisvert acknowledges, inconsistent according to SCS. Since, intuitively, (18) and (19) are not inconsistent, SCS does not meet the "Logical Preservation" requirement and thus SCS – the meaning theory accepted by Boisvert – would be materially inadequate by his own standards.

How does Boisvert tackle this problem? An obvious way out would be to claim that, appearances notwithstanding, (18) and (19) are not only inconsistent according to SCS, but also according to our "best" intuitions. For instance, one might try to defend the inconsistency thesis by pointing out that (18) and (19) are, in some sense, incoherent: if you know that the person you are talking to will insult somebody else (no matter what happens), then uttering (19) will be entirely pointless. Unluckily, this is not a solution: that an utterance is pointless relative to some other utterance appears to be a purely pragmatic phenomenon and thus does not yet show that the uttered sentences are in fact inconsistent. Moreover, as Boisvert himself makes clear, there are scenarios in which successively uttering (18) and (19) would be perfectly intelligible.¹⁸

Since the pragmatic incoherence of (18) and (19) appears to be the only *intuitive* reason for thinking that these two sentences are inconsistent, (18) and (19) are, intuitively, not inconsistent. Thus, the fact that (18) and (19) are inconsistent *according to* SCS implies that SCS does not meet Boisvert's "Logical Preservation" requirement; the alleged inconsistency of (18) and (19) seems to be a theoretical artifact generated by SCS. But if SCS in general overproduces cases of inconsistency (and validity), the mere fact that *pure* expressivism combined with SCS gets into (logical) troubles does not suffice to show that *hybrid* expressivism supplemented with SCS fares any better.

At this point of the dialectic it is worth noting that pure expressivists only get into trouble if they subscribe to SCS in its full form since it is SCS specifically that implies that (16) follows from (15) and that (18) and (19) are inconsistent. Pure expressivists, however, could employ a more modest semantic theory that defines logical terms by reference to just one kind of semantic

¹⁸Boisvert (2014: 36) offers the following gloss: "I acknowledge that you will insult her no matter what I say, but I feel obliged ... to so direct you anyway: do not insult her"

value. Since there is no established term for such a theory, I shall use the term "analogue of truth semantics" or, in short, "ATS". ATS, which is as old as the first proposals for devising a semantics and logic of imperatives (see, e.g., Hofstadter and McKinsey 1939), has the resources to cope at least with many aspects of what is known as the Frege-Geach challenge. For instance, in order to explain how moral *modus ponens* arguments work, some version of ATS is sufficient.¹⁹ ATS can also account for a version of the Frege-Geach problem that is known as the "negation problem". According to that problem, common versions of expressivism do not have even have the theoretical resources to explain how moral sentences can be negated.

Consider the following sentences (see Schroeder 2008: 45):

- (w) Jon thinks that murdering is wrong.
- (n1) Jon does not think that murdering is wrong.
- (n2) Jon thinks that murdering is not wrong.
- (n3) Jon thinks that not murdering is wrong.

According to standard presentations of the negation problem, the expressivist cannot successfully account for the meaning of (n2), which says intuitively that Jon thinks murdering to be permissible. If expressivism amounts to the claim that (w) means the same as (w*) "Jon disapproves of murdering", then (n3) could be rendered by "Jon disapproves of not murdering" and (n1) by "Jon does not disapprove of murdering", but there are, as Schroeder (2008: 45) explains, "simply not enough places to insert a negation" into (w*) in order to account for the meaning of (n2).

Obviously, the negation problem is not a fatal blow to expressivism since expressivists could simply appeal to an attitude other than disapproval (e.g., something like "indifference"). ATS, however, offers a simpler and more unified theory, since ATS-style semantic theories are *not* committed to the thesis that the meaning of some sentence *S* needs to be directly explained in terms of the mental state a speaker expresses by uttering *S*. Instead of claiming that the

¹⁹I shall not go into the details here since my succeeding discussion of the "negation problem" is easily transferable to the *modus ponens* case.

fundamental semantic concept is the *expression* relation between speakers and their mental states, such that the difference between normative and non-normative judgments would have to be accounted for by different types of mental states (desire-like states in the first case, beliefs in the second)²⁰, ATS is based on the idea that the key concept of semantics is *having a semantic value*, such that the difference between normative and non-normative sentences is to be explained by different kinds of semantic values (*obedience* and the like in the first case, *truth* in the second). Thus, the metasemantics of ATS is Fregean rather than Lockean, and that means that non-cognitivists employing ATS can simply mimic the semantic apparatus of truth-conditional theories of meaning. If, to take a simplified example, the sentence "Murdering is wrong" is interpreted along the lines of prescriptivism, then the meaning of that sentence might be given by the obedience-conditions of the direct command "Don't murder anybody!". Consequently, "It is not the case that murdering is wrong" would direct an addressee not to obey the command, and in order not to obey the command the addressee *may* murder somebody – but he does not have to do so. The fact, then, that "Murdering is not wrong" expresses a kind of permission can be captured by ATS without invoking some special attitude of "indifference" or "tolerance".

Needless to say, this dialectic strategy of supplementing pure non-cognitivism by ATS has its limitations. For instance, if "iffy oughts" are given a narrow-scope interpretation ("if p , you ought to ϕ "), then ATS will not be sufficient to handle such cases and a refined version of SCS might be a more plausible theory. However, my aim in this paper is not to defend pure expressivism by combining it with ATS. Rather, I have been arguing that Boisvert's preferred brand of hybrid expressivism is incomplete as a solution to the embedding problem unless supplemented by a semantics like SCS. Since SCS, as it stands, generates logical relations where there are none, Boisvert's EXPRESS does not successfully meet the Frege-Geach challenge. Moreover, if some more sophisticated version of SCS were devised, then pure expressivists could avail themselves of that semantic theory, and absent such a theory, pure expressivists can

²⁰For that approach, which involves a commitment to some form of ideationalism, see Schroeder 2008: 3-6.

employ ATS as a meaning theory that meets at least some aspects of the Frege-Geach problem and that does not overgenerate logical relations.

6. Conclusion

To sum up: the fulfillment theory offered by Boisvert does not amount to a satisfactory semantics for mixed-mood sentences (or "mixed-force speech acts"). But in the absence of such a theory, EXPRASS is subject to an objection from incomplete semantics in that it does not offer an answer to a simple question:

(Q1) What is the semantic value and the sense of a moral sentence that consists of a truth-evaluable part and an expressive part?

It is easy to see that (Q1), discussed in the last section, is just a semantic analogue of two problems I have discussed in earlier sections. The first problem had to do with the "composition" of speech acts:

(Q2) How is it possible that when a speaker performs one expressive illocutionary act and one assertive illocutionary act, he thereby performs a single (seemingly assertive) speech act with the (seemingly propositional) content that something is bad?

The second problem had to do with the "composition" of mental states:

(Q3) How is it possible that when a thinker is in a conative state and in a representational state, he thereby entertains a single (seemingly representational) thought with the content that something is bad?

I do not, of course, wish to claim that EXPRASS *cannot* supply an answer to these three questions. My point is, rather, that, absent an answer to (Q1)-(Q3), EXPRASS is a radically incomplete theory of moral discourse and moral thinking. Thus, Boisvert's initially plausible idea that uttering a moral sentence amounts to performing two different illocutionary acts at once raises more questions than it answers. In order to answer the Frege-Geach challenge, it is not sufficient to just claim that moral sentences "contain" a descriptive, truth-evaluable element; additionally, we would need a convincing answer to the questions raised above. However, as I have tried to show, a satisfying answer to these three questions does not seem to be possible without devising a theory closely akin to a logic of attitudes or to an illocutionary logic. Since, in order to solve the Frege-Geach problem, *pure* expressivists have to devise a theory of just that kind, it remains doubtful whether Boisvert's hybrid approach has any significant advantage over pure expressivism. Moreover, since EXPRASS has to devise a semantics for "mixed sentences" (while pure expressivism does not), one might even argue that EXPRASS has a significant *disadvantage*.

Does all this tell us anything about the prospects for hybrid or ecumenical expressivism in general? Though I suspect that the problems I have been discussing here concern other forms of hybrid expressivism as well²¹, I will not try defend that hunch since a defence would require a fairly detailed discussion of other brands of hybridism. Instead, let me briefly offer an argument based on previous research: after having performed a painstaking investigation into the virtues and vices of numerous ecumenical theories, Mark Schroeder (2009: 299) arrives at the conclusion that EXPRASS is the "most promising" version of that approach.²² I do not wish to rehearse Schroeder's arguments for his claim here; so suffice it to say that, if he is right, then, if I

²¹More exactly, I think that similar problems will plague most forms of what might be called *semantic* hybridism, as opposed to the purely *pragmatic* versions that have been defended by Finlay (2004), Kalderon (2005) and Bar-On and Chrisman (2009). Claiming, as Finlay does, that the practicality of moral judgments is due to *conversational* implicature does not give rise to any of the problems I have been discussing here.

²²More precisely, Schroeder claims that promising forms of "hybridism" must be just like Boisvert's theory in several respects (EXPRASS being the only theory of that kind Schroeder discusses). Arguably, Hurka's (1982) proposal for answering the Frege-Geach challenge should occupy the same "square" as Boisvert in Schroeder's overview of different forms of hybrid expressivism.

am right, the prospects for hybrid expressivism do not look much better than the prospects for pure expressivism.

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