Permissive metaepistemology

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Forthcoming in *MIND*
Penultimate draft, please cite published version

1 Introduction

On your way home from work you glance up at the sky. It's a bit grey, but nothing too ominous. You form some credence that it's going to rain, perhaps 0.2. On this basis you walk a bit faster, but pass by the cart selling umbrellas outside the subway. There's no need to panic just yet. But then you notice some other people stopping to buy umbrellas. Perhaps they've seen the weather report, hate getting wet, or are spendthrifts. But likely some of them are just like you, only they became slightly more confident that it would rain after a glance at the same grey sky. This troubles you: was it rational of them to adopt a higher credence that it would rain based on the same evidence? Maybe you, too, were rationally required to be more confident.

Permissivists aren't too worried by this thought. Surely the evidence places some constraints on rational belief. Forming credence 0.6 that it's going to rain based on your total evidence would be irrational overconfidence. Forming credence 0.05 that it's going to rain would be irrational underconfidence. But it doesn't follow, permissivists think, that the grey sky determines a unique rational credence in rain for every agent whose total evidence is exhausted by a quick glance upwards.[1] There's only so far that an upwards glance can constrain rational credence.[2] Impermissivists disagree: there's a

[1] This blurs an important distinction, due to Kelly (2013). *Interpersonal permissivists* think that two agents can share evidence E, but rationally differ in their credence in some proposition p. *Intrapersonal permissivists* think that one and the same agent with evidence E can be faced with two or more credences, each of which would now be rational for them to hold towards p.

[2] It's important not to confuse the question of whether rationality is permissive with the debate between steadfast and conciliatory views of disagreement. As is well known, it's possible to think that disagreement turns permissive cases into impermissive ones, perhaps through some form of calibrationism about disagreement. If that's right, then permissivism can combine with conciliatory as well as steadfast views about disagreement.

unique rational credence to have given your evidence. Settling on exactly this rational credence is hard, so we may not want to blame those whose credences differ gently from the rationally required ones. But that doesn't mean their credences are rational.

Impermissivists typically argue that despite the initial plausibility of permissivism, it is subject to decisive objections. The most recent wave of objections has a metaepistemic flavor.[3] It's argued that permissivists cannot account for connections between rationality, planning (Greco and Hedden 2016; Horowitz and Dogramaci 2016) and deference (Greco and Hedden 2016; Levinstein 2017). Impermissivists also worry that permissivists cannot adequately account for the value of rationality (Horowitz 2014, 2018) or of normatively assessing others (Horowitz and Dogramaci 2016). These objections pose a genuine explanatory challenge for permissivists: developing permissivist metaepistemology in a way capable of accounting for these phenomena. This prospect is exciting and promises genuine progress in the discussion by offering permissivists the chance to clarify and deepen their position and its commitments.

In this paper, I tackle the explanatory challenges head-on. In Section 2, I argue that permissivists should accept the explanatory challenges and push back against recent suggestions that the challenges cannot be met. I then illustrate how the challenges could be met by developing two case-studies (Sections 3-4) of permissivist metaepistemic views which fare well against the explanatory challenges. My hope is that careful attention to these views and the arguments for them will clarify the metaepistemic claims at issue in the permissivism debate.

2 Four metaepistemic explanatory challenges

In this section, I canvass four metaepistemic challenges to permissivism. Each is posed as an objection to permissivism, arguing that permissivism cannot adequately account for

[3]By this I mean at least that the objections concentrate on the functions of rational belief and normative assessment and on their role in practices of planning and deference and also that unlike earlier objections by White (2007, 2013), the objections do not primarily focus on particular normative consequences of permissivism.

some metaepistemic phenomenon. In each case, I'll accept the phenomenon and blunt the objection, arguing that there is no especially good reason to think permissivists cannot account for the relevant phenomenon. This leaves the explanatory challenge of showing how permissivists can account for each of the four phenomena, to be tackled in the next two sections.

2.1 *Why be rational?*

Horowitz (2013) poses the *value question* of saying why rational belief is valuable. There must be, Horowitz thinks, some features of rational beliefs that make them worth having and we should be able to say what they are. That's plausible enough. Horowitz also thinks that impermissivists have a stronger answer to the value question than permissivists do. Assuming impermissivism, a rational agent will take the rational credences to maximize expected accuracy. Why? Well, she should measure accuracy using a strictly proper scoring rule, which just means that each rational credence function should expect itself to be more accurate than any other. Hence a rational agent expects that the rational credences, namely her own, are maximally accurate. This fact answers the value question from the perspective of a rational agent: rational credences are valuable because they are maximally accurate. This falls short of a global answer to the value question, which appeals to all agents, but it seems very much better than nothing.

By contrast, permissivists can say at most that rational credences are among the most accurate. They will expect their own credence function to be more accurate pthan other rational credence functions. And if their credences are near the edge of a range of rational credences they may even expect some irrational credences near the edge of the range to be more accurate than some rational credences towards the center of the range, because the irrational credences are closer to their own.[4] Hence the permissivist answer to the value question, again delivered from the perspective of a rational agent, is at most that rational credences are valuable because they are among the most accurate. This is a weaker answer

[4]Similar considerations are pressed by Schultheis (forthcoming).

to the value question than the impermissivist's answer. Advantage, impermissivism.

Permissivists have two plausible replies here. To develop the first, consider a related example.[5] Judith is judging a weather prediction contest. She has in front of her each contestant's anonymized prediction, a probability distribution over tomorrow's weather. Judith is asked which prediction she expects to be most accurate. One of the predictions, p, strongly agrees with her own so she responds

(1) I expect p to be more accurate than any other prediction.[6]

One contestant, Cleo, is known for predicting the weather using a crystal ball. As it happens, p is Cleo's prediction but Judith does not know that. Now imagine Judith utters

(2) I expect Cleo's prediction to be more accurate than any other prediction.

We'd like to admit a reading on which (2) is true: after all, (1) is true and Cleo's prediction is p. We'd also like to admit a reading on which (2) is false, since Judith thinks Cleo's predictions are typically inaccurate and has no reason to suspect that Cleo has done any better this time. Reading expectation *de re* allows substitution of the co-referring terms 'Cleo's prediction' and 'p', giving the equivalence between (1) and (2).[7] Reading expectation *de dicto* blocks substitution and equivalence.

Now suppose Judith is asked by a fan whether she should trust Cleo's prediction. Judith should respond in the negative, since she expects Cleo's prediction to be wildly inaccurate as usual. If that is right, then we see that it is the *de dicto* reading of expectation that is typically relevant to advice-giving and persuasive argument.

Returning to Horowitz's argument, suppose Ratty is a rational agent using a strictly proper scoring rule and assume impermissivism. Let 'p' name Ratty's credence function.

[5]This objection follows Schoenfield (forthcoming). The distinction between *de dicto* and *de re* expected accuracy is developed and motivated elsewhere by Carr (2015) and Schoenfield (2015).

[6]There may be a stronger reading of (1) on which Judith expresses high confidence in the set of worlds in which p is more accurate than each of the other probability distributions. The prompting question of whose prediction Judith expects to be most accurate was meant to block this reading, but if it persists please set this reading aside.

[7]Formally, the *de re* reading treats p as a constant rather than a random variable, giving $E_{Pr}[S(p)] = \Sigma_w Pr(w)S(p,w)$ where Pr and S are Cleo's credences and scoring rule. The *de dicto* reading treats p as a random variable, giving $E_{Pr}[S(p)] = \Sigma_w Pr(w)S(p(w),w)$.

Ratty speaks truly in uttering

(3) I expect p to be more accurate than any other credence function.

The truth of (3) is definitional of strict propriety. But suppose Ratty is asked to explain the value of having rational credences, and responds

(4) I expect the rational credences to be more accurate than any other credence function.

There is a *de re* reading of (4) on which Ratty speaks truly and says no more than (3). But on the *de dicto* reading, if Ratty is rationally modest in the sense of assigning nonzero probability to her own irrationality then she speaks falsely in uttering (4).[8] Reading expectation *de dicto*, Ratty expects p to be more accurate than the rational credences.

Now suppose Ratty is approached by a skeptic and asked why rational credences are valuable. As in Judith's case, Ratty should not respond that she expects the rational credences to be more accurate than any others, since in the relevant *de dicto* sense this is not what she expects at all. Ratty should respond that she expects p to be most accurate and be as puzzled as the permissivist about the value of rationality.

Permissivists have a second reply available. As Horowitz is well aware, her response to the value question threatens circularity. It explains what is valuable about holding rational credences only from the perspective of a rational agent. That, she thinks, is not so bad. But the circularity goes rather deep. Let P be any property at all which picks out a single credence function. We can ask the P-value question of why having credences with property P is valuable, and mimic Horowitz's answer. An agent whose credences have P and who measures accuracy using a strictly proper scoring rule will expect credences with P to be maximally accurate. Hence there is an internal answer, from the perspective of agents whose credences have P, to the P-value question: P-credences are valuable because

[8]Horowitz's original presentation requires Ratty to know she is rational, which blocks the objection if knowledge requires certainty. But even many impermissivists are prepared to deny that rationality requires, or even perhaps permits certainty of one's own rationality. Rational modesty seems to be required, for example, to account for higher-order evidence of one's own past irrationality.

they are maximally accurate. But this doesn't lend any support at all to having credences with arbitrary P. The circularity here is vicious, rather than virtuous. Why should the situation be any different when P is the property of being rational? After all, we're not supposed to assume antecedently that there is anything good about having P.

Even if the value question does not decisively tell against permissivism, it's a pressing question and deserves a straight answer. In what follows, I'll take on the burden of providing at least a partial answer to the value question. My responses to the remaining explanatory challenges will follow a similar pattern.

2.2 *Why evaluate the rationality of others?*

We don't just strive to be epistemically rational ourselves. We also evaluate the rationality of others. This practice should have some purpose, and we should be able to say clearly what that purpose is. Horowitz and Dogramaci (2016) argue that the purpose of epistemic evaluation is to ensure the reliability of testimony. By enforcing standards for rational belief we allow others to function as our epistemic surrogates, dividing the labor of collecting and evaluating evidence among others without fear that they will reason in a different way than ourselves.

Horowitz and Dogramaci worry that permissivists will not be as effective as impermissivists at promoting reliable testimony. I'll argue in Section 3 that this is not the case. Permissivism ensures a healthy plurality of views and approaches which promotes efficient convergence on the truth about matters of interest. The resulting knowledge improves the reliability of testimony, enough so to compensate for the testimonial difficulties induced by permissive epistemic standards.

Sometimes permissivism is pictured as a sort of epistemic free-for-all. Different community members have radically different standards and values, and on this basis they form radically different views. Because these views follow from their epistemic standards they are epistemically rational and beyond criticism. Members of such communities would indeed be unable to rely on the testimony of others to any significant degree. Hence the

demand to ensure the reliability of testimony places some constraints on what a permissivist metaepistemology can look like. The views canvassed in the following sections will not be like this. They will show how permissivism can place significant common constraints on rational belief for all community members. That being done, worries about the reliability of testimony will become less pressing.

2.3 *Rationality and deference*

One function of rational evaluation is to identify attitudes worth adopting and then adopt them. This function is reflected in connections between rationality and deference. The strongest way of linking rationality and deference, due to Greco and Hedden (2016) is incompatible with permissivism. Roughly this principle says

> **Deference to rationality:** On the supposition that c' is a rational credence function for agents with total evidence E, a rational agent with total evidence E adopts $c'(*|E)$.

Deference to rationality tells strongly against permissivism, since if two credence functions were each rational for agents with E to adopt they would then be required to adopt both.

To see how permissivists should respond here, consider an analogous moral principle.

> **Deference to morality:** On the supposition that A is a moral action for agents in situation S, a moral agent in S does A.

Now let S be a situation in which two men are drowning and you have time to save only one. We would not be tempted to argue as follows: 'well, it can't be moral to save the first person, but also moral to save the second person, because then a moral agent would save both and that's impossible.[9] We'd respond by distinguishing morally permitted actions from morally required actions. The unappealing argument assumes

[9]Greco and Hedden are aware that their deference principle threatens to overgeneralize to other normative domains, and seem prepared to bite the bullet if necessary. This is a difficult path to follow.

> **Deference to moral permissibility:** On the supposition that A is morally permissible for agents in situation S, a moral agent in S does A.

whereas the correct principle is

> **Deference to moral requirements:** On the supposition that A is morally required for agents in situation S, a moral agent in S does A.

No contradiction ensues because it is morally permissible, but not required, to save each drowning man. Permissivists should respond in kind. It's incompatible with permissivism to assume

> **Deference to rational permissibility:** On the supposition that c' is a rationally permissible credence function for agents with total evidence E, a rational agent with total evidence E adopts $c'(*|E)$.

That principle overgenerates rational dilemmas by requiring agents to adopt each of several permissible credence functions at the same time. But it's fully consistent with permissivism to assume

> **Deference to rational requirements:** On the supposition that c' is a rationally required credence function for agents with total evidence E, a rational agent with total evidence E adopts $c'(*|E)$.

And more generally, permissivists can require that an agent's credence function be among the rationally permissible credence functions when more than one is available.[10]

[10]This solves the deference challenge posed by Greco and Hedden. What about Levinstein's (2017) challenge that permissivism is inconsistent with certain global deference principles? I'm afraid I have nothing terribly original to say on the matter. As Levinstein anticipates, permissivists can and will remain unconvinced by most global deference norms. Suppose I am certain that my views on the existence of God are rational, but unsure only whether I hold rational views about the proper way to cook lasagna. On Levinstein's view, learning that an atheist holds rational credences on all matters, including the proper cooking of lasagna, should cause me to reverse my views on the existence of God. Permissivists think I should find a consistent local deference norm allowing me to reverse my views on lasagna, but not my views about God. If no such consistent principle exists, then so much the worse for deference.

Nevertheless, there is something to the thought that merely identifying a credence function as rationally permissible will typically cause a rational agent to adopt that credence function. Why carry on searching if you have already found a rational credence to adopt? Since this happens only in typical cases, permissivists can take this thought as a datum without accepting full deference to rational permissibility. I'll seek to explain the datum in what follows.

2.4 *Rationality and planning*

Another function of epistemic rationality is to guide agents' doxastic planning. To endorse a credence as rational for agents with evidence E is connected with planning to adopt that credence, given E. The discussion here is almost completely analogous to our discussion of deference. Permissivists can accept the principle that

> **Planning for rational requirements:** On the supposition that c' is a rationally required credence function for agents with total evidence E, a rational agent plans to adopt c' in the situation of having total evidence E, if she has any plan for this contingency at all.

They can also consistently recognize a connection between planning and rational permission, although they need not do so

> **Planning for rational permissions:** On the supposition that c' is a rationally permissible credence function for agents with total evidence E, a rational agent does not rule out adopting c' in the situation of having total evidence E, if she has any plan for this contingency at all.[11]

Hence permissivists can and should take the connection between rationality and planning quite seriously. In what follows, I'll consider two ways to do permissivist metaepistemology, the second of which puts planning considerations at the fore. I'll argue that each

[11] Most permissivists will not recognize such a norm, since it forces their plans to be less committal than their attitudes. Planning for rational permissions requires an agent's plans to leave open all rationally permissible options, although the agent will have to decide on some particular option if the planned-for situation arises. This does not seem too bad, but it is hardly a rational requirement!

view can be developed to discharge the permissivist's explanatory obligations by being permissivist, vindicating the connections between rationality, planning, and deference, and explaining the value of being rational and of evaluating the rationality of others.

3 First case study: epistemic communism

Epistemic communism (Dogramaci 2012) begins with the belief that epistemic theorizing should be closely tied to the actual practice of epistemic evaluation in society. The communist's method is to infer the function of normative evaluation from epistemic practice. Communists think that epistemically normative vocabulary is a tool by which societies coordinate on a fixed stock of belief-forming rules for promoting the efficient formation of true beliefs about matters of interest via testimony.[12] Normative evaluations function to promote compliance with accepted belief-forming rules, censure noncompliant agents, and identify compliant agents whose testimony can be trusted to conform with rules accepted as reliable means to true belief.

As a plausibility argument for this functional story, communists remind us that epistemically normative vocabulary should serve some function which could not be accomplished using descriptive vocabulary alone. Unlike purely descriptive talk, epistemically normative assessment is in a position to shift agents' beliefs without providing new evidence that the challenged beliefs are unreliable. This ability uniquely equips normative vocabulary to play a coordinative role, since efficient inquiry requires coordinating on a small stock of belief-forming rules while suppressing use of other, equally-reliable rules in order to keep the collection of sanctioned rules manageable. Descriptive claims about the reliability of belief-forming rules would not be able to play this function.

Horowitz and Dogramaci (2016) argue from this functional claim, that epistemically normative vocabulary ensures reliable testimony by coordinating societal belief-forming

[12] Dogramaci follows Harman (1986) in allowing that epistemic evaluation need not promote the formation of true 'junk beliefs' about matters irrelevant to our interests. The relevant notion of interest may be read quite broadly if desired; it can encompass a wide range of practical and intellectual goals.

rules, to the claim that epistemic norms are impermissive. Uniformity of belief-forming rules allows societies to efficiently divide the cognitive labor of collecting evidence and reasoning since agents can be confident that reported beliefs are those they would have arrived at on their own, without asking for evidence or verifying reasoning. This promotes a society of epistemic surrogates who effectively and efficiently arrive at true beliefs on matters of interest and transmit these beliefs via testimony. Without impermissivism, this arrangement would not be possible since agents could not be confident that testimony reported beliefs sanctioned by their own belief-forming rules.

By contrast, permissivists think that in many cases a moderate diversity of belief-forming rules promotes a more efficient division of cognitive labor. For example, in scientific inquiry or public policy discussion there is a relative abundance of available cognitive labor and an overriding interest in maximizing the chance of forming relevant true beliefs. Confronted with rapidly diminishing marginal returns to assigning several researchers with similar belief-forming policies to solve the same problem, societies benefit from competition among a diverse array of methods, theories and approaches (Hong and Page 2004, Kitcher 1990, Weisberg and Muldoon 2009). Competition among researchers with diverse viewpoints ensures that promising programs are not abandoned due to early underperformance or overly influential critics (Kitcher 1990). Competition also produces new considerations bearing on existing views and novel interpretations of those considerations (Landemore 2013, Solomon 2006), and encourages discovery of new theories (de Langhe 2014). The resulting plurality of viewpoints provides a compact representation of researchers' uncertainty (Parker 2006), preventing overconfidence by making salient the range of favored beliefs which can be reasonably doubted. Diversity also improves the community's epistemic risk profile by reducing the risk of long-term stagnation should shared standards prove unreliable (Rueger 1996), and spreads the high risk of false belief associated with exploratory research among a small subset of community members (D'Agostino 2005, Kuhn 1970).

I take the above considerations to suggest that communities often improve their long-

term chance of discovering many interesting truths and lower their long-term risk of discovering few interesting truths by adopting moderately permissive norms. Once these truths are discovered and adequately supported, permissive communities reach consensus on truths of interest while maintaining a healthy diversity of belief-forming practices for future research (Laudan and Laudan 1989). Hence permissive norms improve the long-term reliability of testimony. What about the short-term, where agents with different standards often hold radically different beliefs on matters of interest? Here there is no easy answer, except to stress that in the early stages of research impermissive communities are unlikely to form reliable beliefs through testimony either.[13] If our permissivists are reductionists about testimony and communicate freely, they'll have to bite the bullet and concede to Horowitz and Dogramaci that in the short term, permissivism requires the additional cognitive burden of evaluating testifiers' epistemic standards before deferring. Permissivists may wish to avoid this cost by adopting more insular testimonial practices (Zollman 2010) or by deferring without first evaluating their interlocutors' credentials (Zollman 2015). Or they may just shoulder the additional cognitive labor and call it a fair trade for the long-term truth-directed benefits of membership in a diverse epistemic community.

I hope to have shown that permissive norms can be made compatible with broadly communist sympathies by showing how societies improve the long-term reliability of testimony by promoting a moderate diversity of belief-forming rules.[14] Next, let's see how epistemic communists meet the metaepistemic explanatory challenges from Section 2. Epistemic communism explains the purpose of epistemic evaluation as serving to coor-

[13]Here it is important to distinguish two senses of reliability: beliefs which are accurate, and beliefs on which we can permissibly rely by taking them as our own. Impermissivism guarantees that testimonial beliefs will be reliable in the second sense, but not the first. It is no help to remind us, as Dogramaci (2012, p. 524; Horowitz and Dogramaci 2016, p. 137) does, that anti-skeptical theorizing requires taking our basic belief-forming rules to be reasonably reliable in the first sense. That may well be so, but it says nothing about the reliability of non-basic belief-forming rules in ordinary scientific research or democratic policy deliberation.

[14]There's an interpretive issue here, because some of Dogramaci's language suggests that impermissivism is built into the content of epistemic communism (see i.e. his 2012, p. 524). I don't think there is any need to read epistemic communism in this way, but to be safe I've classified the permissivist's view here as broadly communist.

dinate on a stock of norms for reliable transmission of true beliefs via testimony. Communism explains the value of rational belief as a requirement for unchallenged membership in an epistemic community.[15]

What about connections between rationality and deference? Agents who fail to adopt a credence function rationally required by their evidential situation will be subject to normative censure, since the purpose of normative evaluation is to ensure compliance with the norms they have violated and to mark out such agents as unreliable testifiers. What of the datum that agents will ordinarily defer and adopt some credences merely on learning that they are rationally permissible? One way to account for this datum invokes norms of trust, giving agents default license or even defeasible requirements to defer to others' opinions when they take those opinions to be rationally permissible. Communities might adopt norms of trust to promote convergence of opinion and avoid costly vetting while not requiring deference in cases such as scientific and political disagreement where deference is likely to hamper community projects. Similar remarks should apply to planning, since communities have an interest in coordinating future as well as present belief-formation rules.

Summing up, epistemic communists think that communities adopt epistemic norms in order to promote efficient convergence on true beliefs about matters of interest via testimony. Permissivist views can be developed in broadly communist fashion to meet the explanatory challenges outlined in Section 2.

4 Second case study: plan expressivism

Our second metaepistemic view is a form of plan expressivism. This takes proposed connections between rationality and planning seriously by understanding normative language through its contribution to group planning. I'll shift to full-belief talk for ease

[15]Epistemic communism has nothing to say about the purpose of a distinctive first-personal role for epistemic evaluation in guiding one's own deliberation when the results are unlikely to be shared with others. Dogramaci (2015) responds by denying there is any such role. If you disagree, you probably should not be an epistemic communist.

of exposition, although the account can be extended to credal frameworks.[16] I suspect that many forms of expressivism favor permissivists and take Schoenfield's (forthcoming) broadly expressivist permissivism as a plausibility argument for this claim. But I will only argue for the restricted claim that a leading form of plan expressivism is permissivist.

Begin with a Gibbard-style view on which agents use normative epistemic vocabulary to express acceptance of norms for belief (Gibbard 1990, 2003). We'll follow Gibbard in representing norms by the beliefs they require across possible evidential situations. A fully-specified norm, or *hyperplan*, says for each evidential situation and each proposition of interest whether belief in that proposition is required or forbidden. Arbitrary norms are modeled by the set of hyperplans compatible with them. So for example in saying that the Roman Senate was rational in believing that Caesar would not cross the Rubicon, we endorse norms consistently extendable by some hyperplan requiring belief that Caesar would not cross the Rubicon in the Senate's evidential situation.

We could go further and understand plan expressivism as a semantic theory. For example, we could identify the semantic value of a normative sentence with the set of pairs of factual worlds and hyperplans compatible with it.[17] Traditional semantic versions of expressivism face familiar challenges. These proposals struggle to compositionally account for the behavior of normative vocabulary under embedding. And they are driven entirely by metaphysical scruples rather than linguistic data.

We'll take a different route suggested by Yalcin (2012a, forthcoming). We'll set aside claims that normative utterances perform some particular illocutionary act such as expressing acceptance of norms and also abstract away from semantic details to focus on pragmatics. From a pragmatic perspective, conversations are characterized by a conversational state keeping track of semantically relevant information held in common by interlocutors. Factual assertions are proposals to add the asserted proposition to the conversational state. The semantic values of some natural-language expressions such as conditional statements (Kolodny and MacFarlane 2010) and epistemic modals (Yalcin

[16] See Yalcin (2012a, b) and Rothschild (2012) for details.

[17] This is one reading of Gibbard's initial proposal (1990, Chapter 5).

2007) plausibly depend on the information held in common. For example, if I say that Caesar might have crossed the Rubicon I speak truly so long as it's compatible with information held in common that Caesar crossed the Rubicon.

Plan-expressivists think something similar about plans. Groups make common plans and an important function of normative vocabulary is to shift group plans. Normative assertions are proposals to shift group plans to make them compatible with the asserted content. Yalcin suggests taking the parallel seriously by taking group plans to be held in common alongside factual information as part of the group's conversational state. Group plans become semantically relevant in evaluating normative assertions. For example, if I say that the Senate rationally believed that Caesar would not cross the Rubicon I speak falsely if the Senate's belief is incompatible with group plans for belief in the Senate's evidential situation.

How can this situation be modeled? The factual component of conversational states is typically modeled by the set of factually-specified worlds compatible with the factual information held in common. We'll follow Yalcin in modeling the normative component of conversational states by the set of hyperplans compatible with group plans. Simple factual assertions shift the factually-specified worlds held in common, perhaps by removing those incompatible with the asserted content. Simple normative assertions shift the hyperplans held in common, perhaps by removing those incompatible with the asserted content. We'll leave more complicated expressions for a later date. Call this view Gibbard-Yalcin Dynamic Plan Expressivism (GYDPE). Unlike traditional semantic versions of expressivism, GYDPE avoids compositionality concerns since pragmatic force is not compositional in the way that semantic value is. And unlike traditional theories, GYDPE is driven partly by developments in empirical semantics.[18]

While GYDPE does not involve any particular semantic proposal, it does require information and plans held in common to be semantically relevant. In particular, we'll need a pragmatic-semantic bridge principle cashing out the commitment to treat common plans

[18]See Yalcin (2018) for motivations.

as relevant to the truth of normative utterances. A natural bridge principle is

> **Bridge:** 'Believing that ϕ is rational in evidential situation E' is true just in case the planning component of the conversational state contains some hyperplan requiring belief that ϕ in E.

which just says that beliefs compatible with current plans are rationally permissible. But analogues of the argument below should work for most plausible bridge principles.[19]

Given Bridge it follows that GYDPE is permissivist in societies where the normative component of group plans is compatible with several responses to a current evidential situation. That is because impermissivists make the semantic claim that 'ϕ-ing is rational in E' cannot be true for incompatible doxastic attitudes ϕ in the same evidential situation E, but normatively underdetermined plans for belief lead to just this phenomenon under Bridge. Hence to show that GYDPE is permissivist it will suffice to argue that most current societal plans are normatively underdetermined in this way.

Why should that be so?[20] The basic idea is that group planning is accomplished by a finite sequence of utterances, each of which places restrictions on rational belief while leaving wide swaths of beliefs untouched. Simple descriptive reports that 'Caesar crossed the Rubicon' require belief that Caesar crossed the Rubicon. More explicitly normative language, such as 'don't be as credulous as the Roman Senate' rules out general patterns of belief-forming policies which are similarly credulous. General normative claims such as 'don't believe contradictions' rule out belief in contradictions. Yet these utterances, taken individually or together, do not come close to communicating a unique policy for rational belief in all evidential situations. Some utterances, such as 'believe all and only truths'

[19] In particular, you might think that Bridge is true when 'rational' is replaced with 'rationally permissible' or with other epistemically evaluative vocabulary such as 'justified', 'reasonable' or 'okay'.

[20] It's worth stressing that Gibbard and most of his followers took it to be obvious that individuals and groups are not hyperplanners. This should be more plausible still in a probabilistic, rather than a full-belief framework. Perhaps Bayesians must reject the claim that *individuals* are not hyperplanners, since the commitment to update one's current credences by conditionalization induces a hyperplan. There's room to push back here, but even if we grant that Bayesian individuals are hyperplanners we needn't think that group plans are hyperplans. That's because it's not plausible to model agents as expressing entire credence functions in normative communication. As an example, 'probably ϕ' communicates a constraint on credence functions, namely that they treat ϕ as sufficiently probable. It does not communicate a unique credence, even for ϕ.

would accomplish this. Yet many philosophers do not take this as a correct description of current epistemic norms, and most who do are willing to consider a derivative class of evidential norms for which the question of permissivism arises anew.

We can, of course, simply insist as a matter of formal pragmatics that any conversational state be modeled by a unique hyperplan which best fits previous discourse. But it is very hard to see how normative discourse could communicate so much.[21] More plausible is a model on which initial plans permit a wide range of doxastic variation, and over time normative discourse gradually shrinks the range of permissible hyperplans by imposing local and global constraints on belief. Over time doxastic attitudes on many matters become uniquely constrained, or nearly so, while leaving rational attitudes towards some matters relatively unconstrained. It is precisely because group plans are not fully specified that planning discourse continues to play an important communicative role in society.[22]

How does GYDPE fare against the metaepistemic explanatory challenges? GYDPE explains the purpose of epistemically evaluating others along classic pragmatic lines: evaluations aim to influence group norms held in common and to police violations. GYDPE gives center stage to connections between rationality and planning by viewing normative conversation as a type of group planning. Deference falls out of GYDPE as a matter of adherence to common ground. The datum that agents typically defer to opinions on the mere suggestion that they are permissible is best recovered by broadening our pragmatic lens. Normative assertions shift common plans, but also typically carry the stronger illocutionary force of suggesting or recommending that others adopt opinions and policies similar to the speaker's. That illocutionary force is the pressure towards strong forms

[21] A pared-down example: a group of apple farmers gets together for the first time to discuss next year's apple harvest. A farmer argues forcefully that next year's harvest will be bountiful and is widely applauded. Now current group plans are quite restrictive about what can be rationally believed, under various evidential situations, about next year's apple crop. But what about the cherry crop? Progress on a new road? Particle physics? Maybe group plans induce some restrictions on beliefs about the cherry crop. In the other cases, it's hard to see how many substantive restrictions at all could have been communicated by the farmers.

[22] There is a communicative role for planning discourse in impermissive societies, namely to shift existing group norms. But impermissivists cannot recognize a further communicative role for planning discourse in making plans for previously un-planned or under-planned contingencies. Many permissivists think the latter activity is much more common, and accounts for the central role of normative planning in society.

of deference. Because this illocutionary force is distinct from an utterance's pragmatic effect on normative planning, GYDPE also shows how it is possible to resist deferring to merely permissible opinions while accommodating them as moves in a normative planning conversation.

GYDPE does not directly pronounce on the value of rationality. Defenders of GYDPE must therefore extend GYDPE with their favorite account of the value of rationality. They may take a traditional expressivist approach and account for the value of rationality in terms of its coordinative function. They may even view GYDPE as a model of the coordinative practice envisioned by epistemic communists and take on board the arguments of the previous section. They may think that rationality serves additional non-coordinative functions. For example, societies that accept close connections between rationality and argumentative reasoning may follow Mercier and Sperber (2011, 2017) in taking rational argument to be an efficient means of discovering, communicating and evaluating true opinions and their grounds. Of course, this last claim will need to be given an expressivist gloss but that move is familiar enough to plan-expressivists.

GYDPE is also compatible with surprisingly strong concessions to impermissivists. Suppose you accept, following Pérez Carballo and Santorio (2016), that for normative communication to make sense it must be common-ground that there is a unique norm which all speakers ought to accept. There could be no sense, on this view, to assertoric communication without such a presupposition in place. Permissivists can accept this view for three reasons. First, as Pérez Carballo and Santorio note the unique norm may itself be permissive. There's no incoherence in communicating about permissive matters so long as discussants eventually come to agree that they are permissive. Second, even if rational communication requires presupposing that there exists some unique norm which all speakers ought to accept, it does not require agreement about which norm this is. There would be little point to normative communication if speakers had already coordinated on a norm. Hence impermissivism may function as a regulative ideal to be sought in the limit of inquiry, but not as a correct description of the presuppositions of ordinary normative

conversation. Finally, impermissive presuppositions need extend only so far as the topic of conversation. As Pérez Carballo and Santorio note, the right response to irreconcilable normative disagreement isn't to abandon normative conversation, but at most to abandon assertoric discourse on the topic of disagreement.

In Section 2, I argued that there is no good reason to think that permissivists cannot meet the metaepistemic explanatory challenges posed by impermissivists. Now I have developed two permissivist metaepistemologies, epistemic communism and GYDPE, capable of meeting the explanatory challenges. Where does this leave us? It's not a decisive argument for permissivism unless your metaepistemic views fall into one of these camps. But it's not merely a response to objections either. Just as some metaepistemic views favor permissivism, others should favor impermissivism and others may be relatively neutral between the views. This suggests a natural question for both parties to the debate: which sorts of metaepistemic considerations favor each view? Asking and answering this question should deepen our understanding of the commitments of each view and the considerations in favor of each.[23]

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[23]This paper benefitted greatly from discussion with Noel Dominguez, Ned Hall, Esther Klein, Matt Kopec, and Susanna Rinard, audiences at ANU and Harvard, and two anonymous referees for MIND.

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