

MEANING FOR EXPRESSIVISTS

Nate Charlow
ncharlo@umich.edu

In this essay, I defend and develop Expressivism as a serious, empirically plausible theory of the meaning of normative language. I do *not*, however, defend any extant form of Expressivism. Rather, I identify, and ultimately reject, a latent presupposition (“[Meaning Reductionism](#)”) about the relationship between a theory of meaning and a semantic theory—one routinely made by both Expressivists and their critics (in particular, advocates of Frege-Geach trouble for Expressivism). According to [Meaning Reductionism](#), if things of kind K are fundamental in a theory of meaning for a language, we must explain any fact about the meaning of expressions of that language by appeal to properties of K ’s. I show how [Meaning Reductionism](#) leads to unpalatable consequences when applied to theorizing about the meaning and semantics of imperative clauses. Namely, it seems to generate specious Frege-Geach trouble for *non-propositional* treatments of *imperative* clauses. So I suggest replacing it with a new view of the meaning/semantics interface—one on which theorizing about meaning is theoretically *prior* to semantic theorizing, but which allows semantic explanations a kind of theoretically *autonomous* status. I use this new orientation to develop a non-propositional account of imperatives which avoids Frege-Geach trouble, but which is recognizably Expressivist in motivation and substance. I show how this sort of account can serve as a blueprint for an account of *normative* language. Finally, I argue that, while this account is importantly different from extant Expressivist treatments, it is, nevertheless, a clear-cut form of Expressivism.

1 The Expressivist Core

Expressivism involves a familiar set of methodological and empirical commitments. In this section and the next, I’ll (i) describe them and (ii) show how the kind of Expressivism that dominates philosophical discussion actually is the result of joining these commitments to a further—and, for the expressivist, *optional*—commitment about the relationship between theorizing about meaning and theorizing about semantics: [Meaning Reductionism](#). This suggests a tantalizing prospect: an expressivist theory of meaning which does not presuppose Meaning Reductionism.

1.1 *Meaning as Use*

Expressivism is, in part, a theory about the nature of linguistic meaning. The central Expressivist thesis about meaning is that use is *explanatorily fundamental* in explaining linguistic meaning. In Gibbard’s well-known formulation, we “explain the meaning of a term” by explaining “what states of mind the term is used to express” (Gibbard 2003: 5–6). Putting this in terms of theoretical desiderata:

CONVENTIONAL MEANING AS USE (CMAU)

The subject matter of the correct theory of meaning for a fragment \mathcal{L} is an account of how competent speakers of \mathcal{L} conventionally use

sentences of \mathcal{L} in communication.

This formulation is rather more general than Gibbard's. For Gibbard is not neutral about the sense of 'use' appropriate to theorizing about linguistic meaning: Gibbardian use is a matter of the *state of mind* conventionally expressed by literal utterances of an expression. But other understandings of the notion are certainly available. To give one example, the sense of 'use' appropriate to theorizing about linguistic meaning might be a matter of *discourse role*, so that the subject matter of a correct theory of meaning for sentences of \mathcal{L} is an account of what sort of move in the conversational "language game" (cf. Lewis 1979b) utterances of sentences of \mathcal{L} are conventionally used to make.¹

The Expressivist's posited relation between language and use, I am assuming, must be *conventional* in nature: an expression's use must supervene directly on its *lexical properties*—on the properties that, very roughly, would be recorded in a correct and complete dictionary entry for that expression. Or, what basically amounts to the same thing, its use must be determined by its lexical properties together with "law-like" statements connecting such properties to facts about use). It is not extracted as the conclusion of an inference using general, social-linguistic conventions, together with facts about the context of utterance, as premises (e.g., the sort of Gricean reasoning by which conversational implicatures are usually thought to be generated).² A fact about an expression's interpretation, in a context, must be conventional, in this sense, to have any real claim to be part of the meaning of that expression. Conversely, any fact about an expression's interpretation, in a context, that is conventional, in this sense, has a strong prima facie claim to being part of its meaning, even if that fact is not actually recorded in its lexical entry.

1.2 Practicality

Expressivism is not, of course, just a view about the subject-matter of a theory of linguistic meaning. It is distinguished as a substantive view about the meaning of *moral* (and, more broadly, *normative*) language. Expressivists claim a basic divergence in use (hence in meaning) separating descriptive and normative language.

NORMATIVE MEANING AS PRACTICAL

The conventional use of normative language is (principally) *practical*, while the conventional use of descriptive language is (principally) *representational*.

¹ "Hybrid" versions of Expressivism typically take this latter form. According to Stevenson (1944); Hare (1952)—and to a lesser extent, Copp (2001); Barker (2000); Boisvert (2008)—an account of meaning for a normative fragment is an account of the distinctive, conventionalized illocutionary force of sentences of that fragment. For recent discussion of Hybrid theories, see Schroeder (2009, 2010); Alwood (2010). As the account developed here will illustrate, there is nothing essentially Hybrid about discourse role Expressivism.

² One important contrast between the reasoning by which conventional meanings and conversational implicatures are inferred is that the latter sort of reasoning is *defeasible* (by, e.g., the acquisition of further information about the context of utterance), while the former sort is not. This is not to say that if a sentence ϕ has conventional meaning M , ϕ must, in every context, be interpreted, by the speaker's audience, *as* meaning M . The fact that ϕ means M , together with facts about the context c , is often exploited by a speaker's audience to interpret her as intending to communicate a meaning inconsistent with M via her utterance of ϕ in c . See Asher & Lascarides (2001) for a nice discussion of these themes.

The description of this claim is vague—deliberately so, since Expressivists cash out the practical/representational distinction in different, if broadly related, ways. State of mind Expressivists often draw a distinction in terms of *direction-of-fit*: descriptive and normative language serve, respectively, to express mental states with world-to-mind direction-of-fit and mind-to-world direction-of-fit—e.g., states of accepting a norm (Gibbard 1990) or planning to do something in a given contingency (Gibbard 2003).³ Discourse role Expressivists distinguish between conversational moves that portray the world in a certain way, and which aim mainly at altering the context’s depiction of the world (i.e., assertions in the sense of Stalnaker 1978) and those involving some public display of an attitude with mind-to-world direction-of-fit—an attempt to influence the behavior of the addressee (a directive speech act; see, e.g., Stevenson 1944; Hare 1952), or perhaps a mere indication or implication of the speaker’s possession of such an attitude, constituting no direct attempt, *as such*, at influencing addressee behavior (see, e.g., Barker 2000; Copp 2001; Boisvert 2008).

It helps to be clear about the direction of explanation here. Expressivists needn’t (and typically don’t) claim there is any *meaning-independent* criterion or procedure for categorizing expressions as normative or descriptive, the results of which subsequently determine what sort of use (practical or representational) it is appropriate for an Expressivist theory of meaning to assign those expressions. This sort of claim would be problematic: normative constructions (unlike, e.g., directive or interrogative constructions) do not come “labelled” as such. Normative clauses, in particular, lack a distinctive syntax, mood, or clause-type (on the notion of a clause-type, see Portner 2004; Sadock & Zwicky 1985). Such categorization, in fact, can occur only “post”-interpretation. An expression is categorized according to *how it is actually used* in thought or communication. Unlike the Expressivist’s commitment to *CMAU*, which is *methodological* in nature, the nature of her commitment to the practicality of normative language, properly understood, is *empirical* in nature: whether there is any normative language, in the Expressivist’s sense, depends on whether there is any language whose conventional use is principally practical.

1.3 Non-Propositionalism

Finally, Expressivism is generally recognized as a form of meta-ethical anti-Realism that is distinct from Error Theory. For my purposes, we can crudely characterize meta-ethical Realism as the conjunction of the following two views:

PROPOSITIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE CONTENT

The content, or meaning, of a normative sentence or claim at a context can be faithfully rendered or represented with a *proposition*.

ACCURACY

The content of at least some normative sentences at at least some contexts is true.

³ The distinction is not felicitously drawn in terms of belief/desire psychology. There is a deflationary sense in which the judgments expressed by normative language can be called beliefs (see, e.g., Blackburn 1988, 1998). The natural way of defining an inflationary notion of belief is in terms of direction-of-fit.

Error Theory, as usually understood, agrees with Realism that the content of normative sentences is propositional, but denies that any such contents are accurate.⁴

If Expressivism is to be distinguished as a form of anti-Realism distinct from Error Theory, it must deny that the meaning of a normative sentence can be faithfully represented with a proposition. And, indeed, the Expressivist's other theoretical commitments *commit her to this*. Why? Suppose the meaning of a normative sentence ϕ is represented with a proposition. Either the fact that ϕ 's meaning is a proposition encodes information about ϕ 's conventional use, or it doesn't.

- If it does, that information is compatible with ϕ being used representationally (since descriptive sentences plausibly mean propositions, if anything does, and their meaning makes it the case, according to an Expressivist, that their conventional use is representational). But, in view of Expressivism's baseline commitment to CMAU, *meaning must determine use* for an Expressivist. So, since ϕ is by stipulation a normative sentence, ϕ 's meaning is incompatible with its being used in a way that is not primarily practical.⁵
- If it doesn't, ϕ 's meaning does not determine its use. But *meaning must determine use*, for the Expressivist.

So, for the Expressivist, the meaning of a normative sentence cannot be faithfully represented with a proposition. This is *not* to say that the meaning of a normative sentence cannot be *partially* represented with a proposition. Nor is it to say that the meaning of a normative sentences cannot somehow *characterize* a proposition (in, perhaps, the way that propositions plausibly characterize, without reducing to, functions from worlds to truth-values). Nor, finally, is it to say that the Expressivist cannot allow the possibility of *any theoretical purposes* for which it would be useful to view normative sentences as characterizing propositions.⁶

It is, rather, just to say that, for the Expressivist, the meaning of a normative sentence is not a matter of the proposition, if any, with which it is associated, nor of whatever relationship holds between that sentence and the proposition, if any, it happens to characterize.⁷ Even if there were a particular class of propositions up to the job of determining a distinctive, primarily practical use for sentences associated with them,⁸ that use, rather than the propositions themselves, would be explanatorily

⁴ See, e.g., Mackie (1977). Error Theory is usually described as claiming that all normative sentences are false. However, since, for any normative sentence ϕ , neither ϕ nor $\neg\phi$ is, for the Error Theorist, true, it seems better to say that Error Theory is committed to describing all normative sentences as exhibiting something like *catastrophic presupposition failure* (cf. Yablo 2006).

⁵ There are, of course, some normative sentences (e.g., those invoking "thick" terms like 'brave') that, by the Expressivist's own lights, have a use that is *both* representational and practical (see Gibbard 1990: 112–7). But in the case of a sentence ϕ with *purely normative* conventional meaning, the Expressivist is committed to saying that ϕ cannot be used in a way that is not primarily practical.

⁶ In particular, certain Expressivists ("Quasi-Realists") are interested in affirming ACCURACY (see esp. Blackburn 1988, 1998; Gibbard 2003). This is just one theoretical purpose that regarding normative sentences as characterizing propositions would serve. For similar thoughts, see Alwood (2010).

⁷ Compare the standard (stronger) view in pragmatics that propositions are "essentially forceless", i.e., a proposition is always apt for being put to a variety of discursive uses, and, depending on the force with which it is paired in a specific illocutionary act, can serve the communicative purposes of speakers with a diverse array of communicative intentions (for discussion, see Charlow 2010c,a; Green 2000).

⁸ Expressivists typically endorse an account of motivation (the Humean Theory) that they understand to be incompatible with the existence of such propositions. For classic discussions, see Smith (1987, 1994).

fundamental, according to *CMAU*, in any account of their meaning.

2 Dividing the Terrain

These distinctions, together with some others I'll draw presently, allow us to draw a rough taxonomy of the theoretical terrain in the debate between Expressivists and their opponents. But our interest in describing this taxonomy is not just classificatory. Drawn properly, it reveals a region of theoretical space that has gone unnoticed and undiscussed in the contemporary philosophical discussion of Expressivism. Views occupying this region of theoretical space are, I want to suggest, interesting, and not just because of the lack of attention paid to them in contemporary philosophical discussion. Such views, I will go on to argue, offer the best prospects for developing a theory of normative sentence meaning along the lines outlined in the prior section.

2.1 *The Role of Propositions*

Maybe the key variable is the role that a theory of meaning accords to the sorts of entities in terms of which meaning is *standardly* elucidated: propositions, truth-conditions, possible worlds, properties, and the like. For expository ease, I will focus largely on propositions. Propositions can, as we will see, play a variety of theoretical roles in an Expressivist meta-ethic. The claim, then, is that a useful way of dividing the theoretical terrain is according to the theoretical role they assign propositions. Specifically, we will see that it useful to divide them according to the following questions. (ϕ refers to an arbitrary normative sentence.)

Q1. Does ϕ have a proposition as its *semantic value*?

Q2. Are propositions *enlisted to do logical or semantic work* (explaining inconsistency, ϕ 's semantic behavior under embedding, etc.)?

Schroeder (2009)—in remarks that are, it's fair to say, representative of the larger dialectic—proposes to distinguish Hybrid and Pure Expressivists is according to their answers to Q1 and Q2. Hybrid Expressivists, in contrast to Pure Expressivists, use propositions “to underwrite [their] answer to the Frege-Geach Problem,” i.e., the problem of explaining inconsistency and embedding for a normative fragment (261). Later, he elaborates:

[P]ure expressivism promises a particular way of accounting for the semantics of moral sentences. Rather than accounting for their semantics by saying what they are about or what their truth conditions are, the expressivist program is to account for their semantics by saying what kind of thoughts they express. I think of it this way: for pure expressivists, the right kind of semantics for moral sentences doesn't assign them propositions as values. It assigns them mental states instead (264).

As these remarks make clear, Schroeder *collapses* Q1 and Q2 (or, at least, does so for purposes of his discussion of Pure Expressivism). But Q1 and Q2 are, we should note, different, although related, questions. A 'yes' answer to Q1 plausibly entails the 'yes'

answer to Q2 (likewise, ‘no’ to Q2 entails ‘no’ to Q1), but the status of the reverse entailment is less clear: *prima facie*, it seems possible for one’s semantic theory for ϕ to make use of the properties of propositions, without having ϕ ’s semantic value *be* a proposition. A Pure Expressivism which answers ‘no’ to Q1 and ‘yes’ to Q2 may be a theoretical impossibility, but we have seen no reason, as yet, for thinking this is so.

What is going on here? Schroeder is not, I think, guilty of mischaracterizing the commitments of Pure Expressivists like Blackburn and Gibbard. The most sophisticated developments of Pure Expressivism do, indeed, try to explain the semantic properties of normative sentences in terms of properties of their associated mental states (uses), rather than in terms of the properties of propositions. (For a case study, see Section 2.2.) But why do they do that? There is, lurking in the background, a substantive commitment about linguistic methodology that philosophical discussion of Expressivism has taken for granted. Call that commitment “Meaning Reductionism.”

MEANING REDUCTIONISM

If things of kind K are fundamental⁹ in a theory of ϕ ’s meaning (i.e. the “basic” theory of meaning is given in terms of K ’s), any facts about ϕ ’s meaning must be explained *by appeal to features of K ’s*.

Notice that, if Meaning Reductionism and CMAU are each correct, any *semantic* facts about ϕ must be explained by appeal to properties of ϕ ’s *use*. Meaning Reductionism is what makes sense of the tendency—common to both Expressivists and their critics—to collapse Q1 and Q2—to assume that Expressivists cannot avail themselves of the properties of propositions (rather, may only avail themselves of the properties of uses) to explain the semantic properties of normative language. It has remained unarticulated (perhaps because the parties to the debate take it to be obvious or in need of no defense). But it is, nevertheless, a *substantive methodological assumption*. So while Schroeder may be innocent of mischaracterizing the commitments of Pure Expressivists like Blackburn and Gibbard, it may (and, indeed, I will argue that it *does*) turn out that he mischaracterizes the commitments of Pure Expressivism.

I will expand on these points in Section 2.4. For now, the role of Meaning Reductionism is offered as a neutral observation. There may, in fact, be no objection to ignoring semantic theories which make use of propositions while declining to assign propositions as semantic values. It will depend on whether the coarsened picture of theoretical space that results from conflating Q1 and Q2 yields a dialectically adequate division of that space—whether the only theoretically interesting division is between meta-ethical theories which answer ‘yes’ to both Q1 and Q2, and those which answer ‘no’ to both.

⁹ I will not say too much about fundamentality (although subsequent discussions will somewhat flesh out the general sort of notion I have in mind). I will say that fundamentality rankings are meant to be a function of *explanatory* relationships: if, in a theory T , features of K ’s explain features of K^* ’s (and not vice versa), then K ’s are more fundamental than K^* ’s in T . To say that K ’s are fundamental in T (*sans phrase*) is to say that K ’s are maximally fundamental in T , with respect to the fundamentality ranking for T .

2.2 Hyperplan Semantics

Both Expressivists and their opponents appear to presuppose Meaning Reductionism. As an illustration, consider Gibbard's semantics for normative language. (If you are familiar with Gibbard's view, or do not require an illustration, feel free to skip to the end of Section 2.3.)

Now, at first glance, it might seem that Gibbard's theory, contra Schroeder, actually fails to assign mental states as the semantic values of normative sentences. For, on Gibbard's theory of normative content, the content of any atomic normative sentence (e.g., 'murder is wrong') is a *property of a cognitive state*, and is represented as a set of pairings of "Hyperplans" (roughly, fully specified contingency plans) and worlds. In the case of 'murder is wrong', this content is apparently represented, *not* as an attitude of disapproving of murder (or, perhaps, of disapproving of the wrong-making features of murder), instead with a GIBBARD CONTENT. Formally, the Gibbard Content of 'murder is wrong', for instance, is just the set of pairs $\langle \pi, w \rangle$ such that the sentence 'according to π , murder is disallowed'—a purely descriptive sentence about the content of the rules of π —is true at w (see esp. Gibbard 2003: Chapters 3–4). More or less equivalently, the Gibbard Content of 'murder is wrong' is the property a Hyperplan has when it disallows murder.¹⁰

The reason Gibbard's theory does, in fact, count as Pure, in Schroeder's sense, is that sets of Hyperplan-world pairs function, for Gibbard, as an *abstract mathematical representation of an individual's practical state of mind*. In the representation of practical states of mind, Gibbardian Hyperplans play a role analogous to that played by possible worlds in the representation of belief. So, as the beliefs of someone who is uncertain about p are often represented with a set of worlds (complete and consistent assignments of truth-values to atomic sentences), some of which satisfy p , some of which satisfy $\neg p$, the practical state of mind of someone who is uncertain about whether to do some action in some contingency can be represented with a set of Hyperplans. Gibbard takes the analogy to worlds seriously, understanding Hyperplans as complete and consistent assignments of to-be-done values to actions (relativized to situations or contingencies). A Gibbardian Hyperplan π is thus stipulated to satisfy both of the following constraints.

COMPLETENESS

For any alternative α and situation S , *you do α in S* is a rule of π , or *you do not do α in S* is a rule of π .

CONSISTENCY

For any alternative α and situation S , it is not the case that both *you do α in S* is a rule of π and *you do not do α in S* is a rule of π .

Representing contents in terms of sets allows the usual Boolean treatment of the connectives: \wedge is associated with intersection, \neg with absolute complement, etc.

¹⁰ My discussion here draws freely from both Gibbard's (1990) theory, which makes use of systems of norms paired with worlds, and his (2003) theory, which invokes fully specified contingency plans.

Gibbard, however, is explicit that this abstract Boolean representation is just that: a *representation* of a more fundamental psychological reality, chosen for (i) its formal well-behaved-ness and (ii) its ability to roughly approximate the semantically interesting properties of that more fundamental reality:

One way to think of fact-plan content is to mimic truth functions and quantification... These [recursive mental] operations—combining, ruling out, generalizing—mimic standard logical operations on statements: conjunction, negation, and universal generalization (Gibbard 2003: 54).

The formalism itself is, of course, intended to be explanatory, in some sense, of semantic phenomena concerning normative language. But its explanatory status is wholly *derivative*: the semantic *explananda* are ultimately explained by characteristics of *representandum* (mental states), rather than of *representans* (Gibbard Contents). Gibbard's expectation, of course, is that the characteristics and behavior of representans adequately represent those of representandum. Indeed, the point of the formalism is to *elucidate* the recursive and combinatory nature of psychological space, by claiming that its structure is mirrored by that of a familiar Boolean algebra.¹¹

2.3 *The Role of Propositions, Again*

Recall the distinction drawn above between views assigning a normative sentence a proposition as its *semantic value* and views on which it merely *characterizes* a proposition. Prima facie, there is nothing essentially non-Expressivist about a semantics which has normative sentences characterizing propositions. Indeed, Gibbard's semantics has them doing exactly that: relative to a Hyperplan π , a Gibbard Content trivially characterizes a possible worlds proposition (namely, the set of worlds w such that $\langle \pi, w \rangle$ is in the Gibbard Content of 'murder is wrong') (cf. Dreier 1999). In the case of *thick* normative predicates—predicates like 'brave' blending practical and representational content (in virtue of attributing a non-normative property, like exhibiting warrior-like qualities, to an action, while also expressing approval of that action, or the class of actions exhibiting warrior-like qualities)—the proposition thus characterized is typically *contingent*.¹² That is because whether an action is required at w by a Hyperplan that enjoins warrior-like qualities depends on what sorts of qualities the warriors at w actually exemplify. But, in the case of *thin* normative predicates—predicates whose content is purely practical, which place no conditions whatever on the situation in which an action occurs—the proposition thus characterized is typically *necessary*. Distinctive of Gibbard's semantics is the *explanatory inertness* of the proposition thus characterized. If Q is a thin normative predicate, $\ulcorner Q(\alpha) \urcorner$ and $\ulcorner Q(\beta) \urcorner$ will, on Gibbard's view, characterize precisely the same possible-worlds proposition (\top), for any rigid action-designators α and β , and with

¹¹ For similar thoughts, see Schroeder (2008c); Dreier (2006).

¹² Strictly speaking, this depends on how coarsely available alternatives are individuated. If they are individuated very finely (so that *taking out the trash in S* and *taking out the trash in S'* count as distinct), worlds cease to play any independently interesting role in the semantics, and no Gibbard Contents will end up characterizing contingent propositions. I am going to assume, as is fairly standard (see, e.g., Belnap, Jr. & Perloff 1988), that available alternatives are typically individuated more coarsely than this, and that their extensions sometimes vary according to the situation/world in which they are performed.

respect to any Hyperplan. Hence, any difference in their semantic characteristics cannot be explained by appeal to the possible-worlds proposition thus characterized.

Hybrid accounts, to contrast, characteristically treat normative language as *contentful along the propositional dimension*. A typical way of doing this assigns as a semantic value to a normative predicate Q a purely descriptive property (e.g., maximizing pleasure) that serves to determine *substantive, non-normative application-conditions* on Q .¹³ A sentence of the form $\ulcorner Q(\alpha) \urcorner$ would thus have as its semantic value the proposition that α meets the non-normative application-conditions for Q . This proposition would then be invoked to explain the semantic properties of the sentence. So far, so Realist. Where Hybrid accounts differ from Realist accounts is in attributing to normative language a conventionalized practical use, independent of (not determined by) its semantics.¹⁴ Hybrid theories thus answer ‘no’ to Q4, hence ‘no’ also to Q3, while Pure theories answer ‘yes’ to Q3, hence ‘yes’ also to Q4:

Q3. Does ϕ 's semantic value *exhaust its meaning*? Should ϕ 's meaning be *identified* with its semantic value?

Q4. Does ϕ 's meaning *supervene* on its semantic value? Is ϕ 's meaning determined by its semantic value?

Hybrid theories, unlike either Gibbardian Expressivism or Realism, represent normative sentence meaning as *two-dimensional*. The meaning of a normative sentence ϕ is both propositional and practical, and a complete theory of meaning for ϕ must build in machinery for the representation of both dimensions: the usual semantic machinery (for computing ϕ 's propositional semantic value), as well as some non-semantic machinery (whatever is requisite for computing ϕ 's practical meaning).¹⁵

2.4 Expressivism without a Semantics of Use

To summarize: the division of theoretical space with which we're left is this.

¹³ This sort of view originated with Stevenson (1944); Hare (1952), and is a feature of the recent Hybrid theories of Copp (2001); Barker (2000); Boisvert (2008) (although these views differ in the mechanism by which the descriptive property is associated with the normative predicate; see Schroeder 2009 for discussion). Another sort of view, hinted at in Alwood (2010), is reminiscent of Hare's well-known treatment of imperatives (see, e.g., Hare 1967). Hare represents imperatives with formulas in which an illocutionary operator (expressing directive force; Hare dubs this the *neustic*) scopes over a content (the state of affairs enjoined, which Hare dubs the *phrastic*), but treats the semantics of the imperative as exhausted by the proposition expressed by the phrastic.

¹⁴ Different theorists understand this use in different ways. According to Barker (2000), this use takes the form of a *conventional implicature*, to the effect that the speaker bears some non-representational attitude toward actions meeting the application-conditions for the relevant normative predicate. According to Boisvert (2008), this use is represented as the speaker's performance of a purely expressive speech act, of the sort that one performs when one utters a pejorative.

¹⁵ It is open to Hybrid approaches to endorse (a suitably qualified of) *CMAU*. I am wary of Hybrid approaches that claim *no distinction* in semantic type between sentences claimed to diverge in conventional use (e.g., Alwood 2010, perhaps Stevenson 1944; Hare 1952). For reasons I cannot discuss here (but see Portner 2004 for discussion), I endorse a one-one correspondence between semantic types of sentences and conventional uses: conventional use supervenes on a proper subclass of a sentence's lexical properties (its semantic properties) and each use is associated with a single sentential semantic type. Sentences, then, cannot differ in conventional use without differing in semantic type.

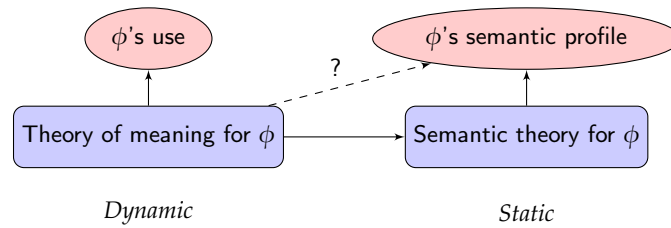
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
PURE	N	N	Y	Y
HYBRID	Y	Y	N	N

I want to conclude this section with a bold claim (one I will spend the rest of the paper supporting): this division is inadequate and has systematically distorted the debate between Pure Expressivists and their opponents. This is precisely because this division reflects the presupposition that an Expressivist semantics must be a *semantics of use*, in which attitudes, discourse roles, and the like are ultimately doing the semantic heavy lifting. It rests on a misunderstanding that is effectively common ground between Pure Expressivists and their opponents: that “for pure Expressivists, the right kind of semantics for moral sentences doesn’t assign them propositions as values. It assigns them mental states instead” (Schroeder 2009: 264). It rests, in other words, on [Meaning Reductionism](#).

My favored form of Expressivism does endorse a distinctive, non-propositional semantics for normative language, but it is emphatically *not* a semantics of use. On the theory developed and defended here:

- Normative sentences characterize propositions, which are enlisted to do logical and semantic work. It is the semantic values for normative sentences that are responsible for characterizing these propositions, but the semantic value of a normative sentence isn’t itself a proposition.
- The relationship holding between a sentence’s semantic value and its meaning (use) is one of *mutual determination*, rather than *reduction*: meaning supervenes on, without reducing to, semantic value (and vice versa). Most importantly for the expressivist, an expression’s use is distinct from, although it supervenes on, its properly lexical (semantic) properties. Use is lexically encoded in the semantics: what an expression can be used to do (its “functional potential”) is a function of its semantic value; having a certain semantic value means being apt to be put to use in certain ways.
- The theory of meaning (use) is theoretically fundamental or prior: the theory of meaning *governs* the semantics. Theorizing about language of a certain type *T* begins with an account of the use of language of type *T*. Because meaning is lexically (namely, semantically) encoded, this *constrains* semantic theorizing about *T*-language: the correct use for *T*-language must be derivable from the semantics for *T*-language (perhaps in conjunction with “law-like” statements connecting semantic properties to facts about use).

A theory of this sort is able to exploit a possibility that other theories, because of their commitment to [Meaning Reductionism](#), have ignored: a theory of meaning can govern semantic theorizing, without all semantic explanations being explanations *within* the theory of meaning. The theory developed in this paper, then, will have something like the explanatory structure plotted here. ($a \rightarrow b$ represents the claim that *b* is explained by *a*; oval nodes represent object-language explananda; rectangular nodes represent theoretical accounts of these phenomena.)



On this picture, language has both *dynamic* and *static dimensions*. These dimensions are concerned, respectively, with how language is used in communication, as well as its model-theoretic properties (e.g., the logical profile of sentences of that language). Expressivism begins from the assumption that the dynamic dimension is somehow theoretically prior to the static: a theory of *meaning* for a language is, above all, an account of its dynamic dimension; what people do with sentences is more theoretically central than, e.g., the logical relations those sentences bear to one another. So, an account of the dynamic dimension is explanatorily *fundamental*. But it is not, on this picture, explanatorily *complete*: properties of the entities of the semantic theory, rather than the entities of the basic theory of meaning (i.e., uses), explain ϕ 's semantic profile, in spite of the fact that the basic theory of meaning governs the shape and content of the semantic theory. (Note: As the dashed arrow suggests, I am neutral on the transitivity of explanation. The basic theory of meaning for ϕ may, in a derivative sense, “explain” ϕ 's semantic profile, in virtue of governing the theory in which *the explanation* for ϕ 's semantic profile is actually given. I am simply claiming that the explanation of ϕ 's semantic profile is not *part of* the basic theory of meaning for ϕ .)

So far, this is not an account; it is just a preliminary attempt to carve out a region of theoretical space in which one might be situated. Before stating a concrete theory (which we will not actually do until Section 4.2), we should get clear about the difficulties that are usually thought to beset Expressivist theories of normative discourse. This will help us see what sorts of challenges Expressivism is up against, as well as to be precise about the ways in which our version of Expressivism strictly improves on the standard version.

3 Embedding Problems

This section presents two versions of the major challenge to an Expressivist theory¹⁶ of the meaning of normative discourse: the Embedding Problem. Drawing on linguistic work on clause-type and the semantics of imperatives, I'll argue that, although theories like Gibbard's *do* run into at least one version of the Embedding Problem, it is reasonably clear that there *is* a version of Expressivism which does not. This is, so far, not to say what form such a theory should actually take (although I will go on to suggest such a theory in the next section). It is a case for optimism—one whose success does not depend on the success of the theory I'll go on to propose.

As a theory of meaning, Expressivism is subject to the usual methodological and theoretical constraints on such theories. For instance:

¹⁶ From now on, I'll drop the “Pure” qualifier, unless it is needed.

COMPOSITIONALITY

A theory of meaning for a fragment \mathcal{L} should yield a method of computing the meaning of any well-formed expression α of \mathcal{L} , on which that meaning is a function of (i) the meanings of α 's constituents and (ii) the mode in which those meanings are combined.

LOGICALITY

A theory of meaning for \mathcal{L} should give rise to satisfactory notions of *logical consequence* and/or *validity*.

Compositionality, I trust, speaks for itself. Logicality, perhaps, does not. Minimally, of course, a theory of meaning for \mathcal{L} should predict, for any sentence ϕ of \mathcal{L} , that ϕ stands in the consequence relations in which we know it to stand (WEAK LOGICALITY). More strongly, this prediction must be generated *in a theoretically satisfactory way* (STRONG LOGICALITY). Expressivism's critics charge that it has difficulty respecting compositionality and logicality (in its weak and strong guises) in its account of the meaning of constructions embedding normative constructions in "unasserted" environments (under negation, in conditional antecedents, etc.). It generally goes undisputed that Expressivism is subject to such demands. But, as we'll see, what, exactly, these demands require of a theory can be controversial.

3.1 Frege-Geach

As initially formulated,¹⁷ the Frege-Geach Problem was just to explain why, if a sentence ϕ 's meaning was identified with its use, certain ways of embedding ϕ seemed to systematically vitiate or cancel that use. Whatever the sentence 'doing meta-ethics is wrong' is typically used by a speaker to do (display disapproval of meta-ethics, say), someone who utters either (1) or (2) is not using it to do *that*.

- (1) Doing meta-ethics isn't wrong, not even a little bit.
- (2) If doing meta-ethics is wrong, I don't want to be right.

The problem originates in the Expressivist's commitment to **CMAU**, which presupposes that meaningful sentences have conventionalized (in the sense of Sect. 1.1) uses, and claims that such uses constitute, in some sense or other, their meaning. Sentences like (1) and (2) seem to be worrying for both of these notions. Indefeasibility is a hallmark of linguistic conventionality (and especially of linguistic meaning): 'the house is red,' as a matter of linguistic convention and meaning, expresses the proposition that the house is red, and this is not defeated by embedding it under negation. If 'doing meta-ethics is wrong,' as a matter of linguistic convention and meaning, expresses or displays disapproval of meta-ethics, we should not expect this to be cancelled by embedding the sentence under negation, as in (1). But it *is*.

¹⁷ See Searle (1962); Geach (1965). For a critical discussion, see Schroeder (2008c,d).

This worry is not too troublesome. Though it's often suggested to threaten the compositionality of an Expressivist theory of meaning, that is clearly not right.¹⁸ Although compositionality does plausibly require an embedded normative sentence to contribute its conventional meaning to the computation of the meaning of the construction embedding it,¹⁹ it does not require that a computation of the meaning of some maximal syntactic projection (e.g., a complete sentence) “pass up” the meanings of its parts, or that those meanings “project” to the whole. It requires only that there be *some function from the meanings of those parts to the meaning of the whole*. Gibbard's account—which has negation expressing the mental operation of *ruling an attitude out*, and material implication the mental operation of ruling out accepting the attitude expressed by its “left” argument while ruling out the attitude expressed by its “right” argument—is designed, in part, to meet exactly this constraint. It predicts, *prima facie* correctly, that a sentence like (1) conventionally expresses the attitude of ruling out disapproving of meta-ethics, rather than disapproval of meta-ethics.²⁰

Linguistic research, moreover, lends cautious support to the Expressivist's claim that there is a conventionalized relationship between sentences and their uses, specifically between a sentence's clause-type (declarative, interrogative, imperative, etc.) and its canonical discourse role (assertion, interrogation, instruction) (see esp. Sadock & Zwicky 1985; Portner 2004). So long as there is a conventionalized relationship between sentences and their uses, there will *be* (even if we cannot presently identify) some adequate explanation of how a sentence ϕ can conventionally express, for instance, an assertion, without certain constructions that embed ϕ (as, for instance, the antecedent of a conditional) expressing an assertion that ϕ as well.²¹

3.2 Inconsistency and Disagreement

More troubling is Logicality. Weak Logicality was long thought to be a problem for Expressivism, in light of the fact that notions like logical consequence and validity were standardly defined in terms of a relationship of truth-preservation holding between propositions, inconsistency in terms of the impossibility of simultaneous truth of two propositions. But Weak Logicality turns out to be no sort of problem for Expressivism at all: Gibbard Contents yield *formally satisfactory* notions of both inconsistency and validity. If $\llbracket \phi \rrbracket$ is the Gibbard Content for ϕ :

GIBBARD INCONSISTENCY

ϕ and ψ are Gibbard-inconsistent iff $\llbracket \phi \rrbracket \cap \llbracket \psi \rrbracket = \emptyset$.

¹⁸ Here we basically follow Schroeder (2008c,d).

¹⁹ Geach (1965) presents the requirement that an embedded occurrence mean the same thing as an unembedded occurrence as due to Logicality (rather than Compositionality): if ϕ has a different meaning when embedded in a conditional of the form $\ulcorner \phi \rightarrow \psi \urcorner$, it's not clear why modus ponens should be valid.

²⁰ It is overlooked that pioneers of so-called DYNAMIC SEMANTICS developed precisely this sort of account for computing the force of Boolean compounds in the 1970s (and have since added accounts of quantification, modality, anaphora, etc., to the basic framework). On Dynamic accounts, sentences determine *update potentials*—functions from input states to updated output states—and Boolean operators are operations on such functions (\wedge , for instance, corresponds to function composition). Some classics in this tradition are Kamp (1981); Heim (1982); Groenendijk & Stokhof (1991); Veltman (1996). An interesting piece of trivia: the anti-Expressivist arguments we consider here can all be adapted into arguments against the Dynamic program. I take that as an embarrassment for those arguments, rather than Dynamic Semantics.

²¹ Alwood (2010) makes the same point. For an account of the clause-type/use relationship, see my (2010b).

GIBBARD VALIDITY

ψ is a Gibbard-valid inference from ϕ_1, \dots, ϕ_n (notation: $\phi_1, \dots, \phi_n \vDash \psi$)
 iff $\llbracket \phi_1 \rrbracket \cap \dots \cap \llbracket \phi_n \rrbracket \subseteq \llbracket \psi \rrbracket$.

The reader familiar with Possible Worlds semantics will recognize that there is nothing special about these definitions at all: Gibbard-inconsistency is defined *exactly* as the property of inconsistency is standardly defined in Possible Worlds semantics.

Strong Logicality is the snag: a by-now-familiar point from the meta-ethical discussion is that the account of inconsistency and validity thus generated, although formally adequate, seems doomed to be theoretically or explanatorily deficient (Dreier 2006, 2009; Schroeder 2008a,c,d; Unwin 1999, 2001). Schroeder's presentation of this problem is especially cutting. He invites us to consider the pairs in (3), (4).

- (3) a. One should commit murder $\approx O\phi$
 b. It's not the case that one should commit murder $\approx \neg O\phi$
- (4) a. One shouldn't commit murder $\approx O\neg\phi$
 b. It's not the case that one shouldn't commit murder $\approx \neg O\neg\phi$

What attitudes do sentences (3a) and (3b) express? Schroeder suggests two possible Expressivist responses:²²

SAME ATTITUDE ANALYSIS (SAA)

A normative sentence and its negation express the *same propositional attitude* (perhaps toward inconsistent contents).

DIFFERENT ATTITUDE ANALYSIS (DAA)

A normative sentence and its negation *distinct propositional attitudes* (perhaps toward the same content).

On the SAA, it's natural to say that (3b) and (3a) express the same attitude, toward inconsistent contents; likewise for (4a) and (4b). This is turned into an account of inconsistency by supposing the attitude expressed is *inconsistency-transmitting*.

INCONSISTENCY-TRANSMITTING ATTITUDES

A propositional attitude A is inconsistency-transmitting iff bearing A toward inconsistent propositions is itself inconsistent.

Attitudes like belief and intention are paradigmatically inconsistency-transmitting (whereas attitudes like desire are paradigmatically not). On the SAA, the inconsistency of (3a) and (3b) is thus explained by the fact that (3a) and (3b) express some inconsistency-transmitting attitude A toward inconsistent contents.

But there is a problem. Supposing, as seems natural, that the propositional objects of the attitudes expressed by (3a) and (4a) are jointly exhaustive (the former, perhaps, expresses an intention to commit murder, the latter, perhaps, an intention

²² Schroeder presents this argument in many venues. The presentation here follows closely his (2008c).

not to commit murder), it follows that (3b) and (4b) inconsistent.²³ That, of course, is the wrong prediction: someone indifferent about murder—hence, who accepts (3b) and (4b)—is morally repellent, but not thereby inconsistent.

DAA fares no better. According to DAA, (3b) and (3a) express *distinct attitudes*—while (3a) expresses, perhaps, disapproval of failure to murder, (3b) expresses the attitude of tolerating failure to murder. But what, exactly, is inconsistent about both disapproving and being tolerant of someone’s failure to murder? The account must effectively *stipulate* rational norms on which it is inconsistent to both disapprove and tolerate ϕ . But, says Schroeder, the Expressivist is not entitled to assume the existence of such norms. There are “few good examples” of rational norms requiring such relations between “logically unrelated” attitudes (2008c: 581).

Gibbard’s account is a version of the DAA (and, as such, encounters difficulties with Strong Logicality). On Gibbard’s account, (3a) expresses, roughly, the state of mind of planning not to murder (for any contingency whatever). This state of mind is represented with the set of Hyperplan-world pairs $\langle \pi, w \rangle$ such that ‘according to π , murder is disallowed’ is true at w . This set’s complement represents the state of mind of *disagreeing with planning not to murder*. But, unless this state of mind is just the state of *planning to murder* (and, evidently, it is not²⁴), we cannot explain the inconsistency of (3a) and (3b) in terms of the inconsistency-transmitting-ness of planning. So, although the state of mind [planning not to murder while disagreeing with planning not to murder] cannot be represented with a Gibbard Content (since their associated Gibbard Contents are, by stipulation, disjoint), Gibbard’s account leaves unexplained why disjoint Gibbard Contents are appropriate ways of representing their representanda. Saying they *disagree* is question-begging. We want an account of *why* the states of mind expressed by (3a) and (3b) are in disagreement with one another; Gibbard’s account seems simply to stipulate this (cf. Dreier 2006, 2009; Schroeder 2008c).

4 A Sketch of a Theory

In this section, I draw on (and expand upon) the sorts of considerations developed in Section 2 to argue that, while meeting the Strong Logicality constraint is problematic for Gibbard’s Expressivism, doing so is by no means problematic for Expressivism *per se* (in particular, an Expressivism that jettisons *Meaning Reductionism*). There are two parts to my argument here. In the first, I show how *Meaning Reductionism*, together with an independently plausible set of claims about the meaning and semantics of directive language (e.g., imperatives), generates a specious Embedding Problem for directives. In the second, I show how to build theories of directive semantics and

²³ Proof (cf. Schroeder 2008c: 579): By SAA, (3a), (3b) must express A toward inconsistent contents (respectively: ϕ and some ψ s.t. $\phi, \psi \vDash \perp$), and (4a), (4b) must too (respectively: $\neg\phi$ and some χ s.t. $\neg\phi, \chi \vDash \perp$). Since $\phi, \psi \vDash \perp$ and $\neg\phi, \chi \vDash \perp$, it follows that $\psi, \chi \vDash \perp$. So, since A is inconsistency-transmitting, bearing A toward ψ and ϕ is inconsistent. So, then, are (3b) and (4b). The way to block this argument is to suppose that the contents of the attitudes expressed by (3a) and (4a) are not jointly exhaustive (indeed, Schroeder 2008a suggests an Expressivist semantics that does exactly that). I will not be interested in this response here, as I reject the pressures that would lead an Expressivist to appeal to it.

²⁴ A major problem for Gibbard’s account, stressed by Dreier (2006, 2009) and Schroeder (2008c), is that, it actually conflates these states of mind. By the *Completeness* constraint on Hyperplans, the complement of $\{\langle \pi, w \rangle : \text{‘according to } \pi, \text{ murder is disallowed’ is true at } w\}$ is $\{\langle \pi', w \rangle : \text{‘according to } \pi', \text{ murder is required’ is true at } w\}$. We discuss this further in Section 5.2.

directive meaning that jettison [Meaning Reductionism](#), while retaining the set of independently plausible claims with which we began.

4.1 Part I: The Negation Problem as Pseudo-Problem

In this section, I show that, if one understands Strong Logicality as leading to a problem for Expressivism about normative language, one is committed to understanding Strong Logicality as a problem for Expressivism about imperative (and, more broadly, directive) language. But there are good reasons—independent, linguistic reasons, having nothing to do with standard motivations for Expressivism in meta-ethics—for being (something that is reasonably referred to as) Expressivist about directive language. This presents the opponent of Expressivism with a dilemma: give up Expressivism for directive language, or admit there is something defective about an argument against Expressivism built on Strong Logicality.

4.1.1 Expressivism for Directive Language.

Building on Lewis' (1979a) classic account of direction, Paul Portner (2004; 2007) has constructed an influential account of imperative meaning around the following three claims:

CONVENTIONALIZATION OF USE

Sentences typically have a conventionalized use (discourse role, illocutionary force, etc.), and they have that use in virtue of their *clause-type* (declarative, interrogative, or imperative).

IMPERATIVES ARE USED NON-REPRESENTATIONALLY

The conventional use of imperatives should be represented, at the level of discourse, as a tendency to *introduce obligations* on an addressee, via addition to a contextual parameter that determines, in part, what that addressee ought to do (her "To-Do List").

IMPERATIVE MEANING AS USE

A theory of imperative meaning is a theory of their conventional use. An account of an imperative's conventional use explains "everything that needs to be explained about its meaning" (2007: 366).

Portner develops this account in opposition to Modal Accounts of Imperative Meaning. A Modal Account of the meaning of an imperative $!\phi$ (read: *see to it that ϕ*) is defined as any account which assigns it the same semantic content as a modalized obligation-statement (something like: *you must see to it that ϕ*).²⁵ More generally, Portner's account stands in opposition to any propositional account of imperative meaning: any account which proceeds by assigning a proposition as the

²⁵ For versions of the modal view, see Aloni (2007); Åqvist (1964); Han (1998); Schwager (2006).

content of the imperative.²⁶ All such accounts face a major difficulty: the problem of explaining why, if the meaning of an imperative is represented with a proposition, the conventional use of any imperative is *performative* (obligation-creating), rather than *representational* (obligation-describing). Why, if $!\phi$ means that you must see to it that ϕ , can $!\phi$ not be used to *assert that* you must see to it that ϕ ?²⁷

The going theory of imperative meaning—Portner’s—is, in short, an Expressivist theory. Portner endorses a **CMAU** claim for imperatives, claims the conventional use of imperative use is principally performative (rather than representational), and rejects **Propositionalism** for imperative sentences.

4.1.2 The Negation “Problem” for Directive Language.

By loading *all* of an imperative’s conventional meaning into its performative use, Portner would seem to face a challenge similar to that faced by the Expressivist, namely, meeting Strong Logicality. Indeed, there’s a particularly vivid parallel with the negation problem for Expressivism: an imperative $!\phi$ (e.g., *do not jaywalk*) is obviously *inconsistent* with a contrary grant of permission $!\neg\phi$ (e.g., *you may jaywalk*). It seems clear that these sentences are inconsistent; that anyone who issues them (e.g., a judge or police officer) can rightly be charged with inconsistency; and that anyone who accepts them as binding (by which I do *not* mean that they come to *believe that* they are binding, rather, that they try to adjust their desires and plans accordingly) can rightly be charged with inconsistency.

Assuming **Meaning Reductionism**, then, the onus would seem to be on the imperative Expressivist to explain the inconsistency of $!\phi$ and $!\neg\phi$ *in terms of properties of their associated uses* (that is to say, their associated discourse roles, or speech acts). As before, there are two possibilities: $!\phi$ and $!\neg\phi$ express a single inconsistency-transmitting speech act (toward inconsistent contents), or they express distinct, logically unrelated speech acts (commanding and permitting, perhaps). Each way, the imperative Expressivist seems to face precisely the problem faced by the Expressivist about normative discourse.

There is a rather important dialectical difference. For independent reasons, Expressivism has a strong claim to being the correct view about the meaning of imperatives. Most of us are loath to think imperatives have propositions as their contents, or that the meaning of an imperative can be faithfully represented with a proposition (with good reason, if conventional use supervenes on semantic value; cf. footnote 15). Moreover, the conventional use of an imperative is clearly performative, hence non-representational. Finally, given the centrality of the characteristic use and force of imperatives in our understanding of their meaning, there is a *prima facie* case for thinking a theory of their meaning should be an account of their characteristic use and force—that the purpose of such a theory is to illuminate the distinctive role

²⁶ There are many accounts that fit this bill. For instance, some accounts analyze imperatives with explicit performatives ($!\phi \approx I \text{ command you to see to it that } \phi$) and assign the latter satisfaction conditions (Lewis 1970). Others analyze them in terms of future-tense indicatives ($!\phi \approx \text{you'll do } x$) (Geach 1958). And others still claim that the meaning of $!\phi$ is exhausted by its fulfillment-conditions (i.e., the satisfaction-conditions for ϕ) (Jørgensen 1937-8; Hare 1952, 1967; Bennett 1970).

²⁷ Certain maneuvers are, of course, available. None, so far as I know, is satisfactory. See my 2010c.

of directive language in discourse and communication.

These sorts of intuitions are, I think, widely shared, and together they define an Expressivist view of imperative meaning. Still, I don't want to rest too much weight on them. While it would be surprising if, for instance, we were required to state a **Propositionalist** account of imperative meaning, expectations are, perhaps, not the most reliable guide to philosophical and linguistic truth. So, in the next section, I'll offer a vindication of these expectations, by stating an Expressivist theory of imperative meaning that (i) violates **Meaning Reductionism**, (ii) meets the requirement of Strong Logicality. The theory is easily adapted to an Expressivist theory of normative meaning.

4.2 Part II: An Expressivist Theory for Directive and Normative Language

The project of stating an account of the meaning of directive and normative language is an enormous one, and I can only begin to gesture at it here. We'll make things easier by restricting our attention to:

- An imperative fragment consisting of a propositional language \mathcal{L}_P and formulas of the form $\ulcorner !\phi \urcorner$ and $\ulcorner \text{j}\phi \urcorner$ (for any $\phi \in \mathcal{L}_P$).
- A normative fragment \mathcal{L}_N consisting of a propositional language \mathcal{L}_P and formulas of the form $\ulcorner O\phi \urcorner$ (for any $\phi \in \mathcal{L}_N$)
- A modal fragment \mathcal{L}_M consisting of a propositional language \mathcal{L}_P and formulas of the form $\ulcorner \Box\phi \urcorner$ (for any $\phi \in \mathcal{L}_M$)

Formulas of the form $\ulcorner !\phi \urcorner$ and $\ulcorner \text{j}\phi \urcorner$ ('directives') are regimented representations of natural language imperatives and permissives; formulas of the form $\ulcorner O\phi \urcorner$ of *normative claims* like 'one ought to give to charity'; and formulas of the form $\ulcorner \Box\phi \urcorner$ of *non-normative descriptions* of what is required by an independently fixed set of considerations (claims like 'according to the rules, ϕ is required', which in no way commit a speaker to endorsement of those rules). Natural language is not nearly so well behaved as this, of course, but the strategy I outline for these fragments should generalize without much difficulty.

4.2.1 Propositionalism for Directives

Propositional accounts of the meaning of directives meet the Strong Logicality requirement. Indeed, they meet it easily: on one common account—the Modal Account (introduced in Section 4.1.1)—an account of the inconsistency of $!\phi$ and $\text{j}\neg\phi$ seems immediate. The Modal Account analyzes $!$ and j in terms of the alethic modality \Box , so that they express requirement and permission, respectively, with respect to an independently fixed body of rules (the To-Do List T). (As before, $\llbracket \cdot \rrbracket$ is an interpretation function mapping an expression to its semantic content.)

THE MODAL ACCOUNT OF DIRECTIVES

$$\llbracket !\phi \rrbracket := \llbracket \Box\phi \rrbracket$$

$$\llbracket \text{j}\phi \rrbracket := \llbracket \neg\Box\neg\phi \rrbracket$$

Inconsistency is immediate: since $\Box\phi \wedge \neg\Box\neg\phi$ is a classical contradiction, $\llbracket \text{!}\phi \rrbracket \cap \llbracket \text{j}\neg\phi \rrbracket = \emptyset$. Put differently: suppose $\text{!}\phi$ and $\text{j}\neg\phi$ were consistent—that $\llbracket \text{!}\phi \rrbracket \cap \llbracket \text{j}\neg\phi \rrbracket \neq \emptyset$. Then, on the [Modal Account](#), it would follow that $\llbracket \Box\phi \rrbracket \cap \llbracket \neg\Box\neg\phi \rrbracket \neq \emptyset$, thus that $\llbracket \Box\phi \wedge \neg\Box\neg\phi \rrbracket \neq \emptyset$. And that is a *contradiction*! Note that this result is *not* a matter of stipulation (unlike the similar result generated by Gibbard’s account; cf. Section 2.2). The explanation of inconsistency follows from a substantive claim about the proper semantics for ! and j . The adequacy of this explanation depends primarily on the empirical adequacy of that semantics. There’s no question of the [Modal Account](#) yielding a satisfactory account of inconsistency, supposing it’s empirically adequate. (I’ll elaborate on this in Section 5.1.)

All that’s needed to complete the [Modal Account](#) is an interpretation of \Box . (Although we’ll reject the [Modal Account](#), it will, we’ll see, be useful to have such an interpretation around.) We start by defining a modal accessibility relation on worlds.

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{THE ACCESSIBILITY RELATION } R_T \\ &wR_T v \text{ iff } \forall p \in T(w) : v \in p \end{aligned}$$

A world v is accessible from world w iff every proposition the To-Do List at w requires allows v . Think of the set of worlds accessible from w as the Sphere of Permissibility at w —the set of worlds that can be permissibly actualized, by T ’s lights, at w (cf. [Lewis 1979a](#)). The modality \Box is treated as a universal quantifier over that sphere: $\Box\phi$ is true at w just in case ϕ holds throughout the Sphere of Permissibility at w .²⁸

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{SEMANTICS FOR } \Box \\ &\llbracket \Box\phi \rrbracket^w = \text{true iff } \forall v : wR_T v \Rightarrow \llbracket \phi \rrbracket^v = \text{true} \end{aligned}$$

To sum up: the [Modal Account](#) secures Strong Logicality, but at the price of an account of the performative dimension of directive meaning. On the [Modal Account](#), the content of a directive is identified with a representational content, to the effect that certain sorts of requirements issue (or fail to issue) *from* a given To-Do List. To contrast, on Portner’s Expressivist account, the meaning of a directive is understood in terms of its distinctively performative use—in terms of the sort of operation it *performs on* the To-Do List. The Expressivist account illuminates the characteristic use of directive language, but seemingly at the price of a satisfactory account of inconsistency. The two perspectives seem irreconcilable: a theory of imperatives can give a satisfactory account of their semantic properties, or it can give a satisfactory account of their use. But it does not seem that it can do both.

4.2.2 Non-Propositionalism for Directives

This picture, I think, rests on a misunderstanding. There is nothing proprietary about the [Modal Account](#)’s explanation of inconsistency. The Expressivist about directives would, of course, face difficulties if she tried to adopt that explanation wholesale.

²⁸ For a more sophisticated treatment of the semantics for \Box , see [Kratzer \(1981\)](#).

But, so long as she designs her account of directive content in the right way, I'll show that she can exploit its central insight.

Where the *Modal Account* errs is in banishing action-guiding, or practical, content from its depiction of directive content. Directives, unlike descriptive sentences, obviously have such content: they tell people *how to plan*, rather than *what to believe*. It is natural (although not obligatory) to think that this difference (described, so far, as a difference in how descriptive and directive sentences are typically *used*) demands a difference in the semantic analysis; the fact that certain types of sentences are apt for being used in certain ways is something that should be semantically encoded. One natural way of cashing that out: the semantic content of a purely descriptive sentence—one apt for being used to express a belief—is a *proposition*, while that of a directive is... something else.

How can use be semantically encoded? The semantic value of a sentence can be treated as characterizing a *property of a cognitive state*: it partitions cognitive states into those which meet some condition specified by the sentence, and those which fail to meet that same condition.²⁹ A proposition p , for instance, characterizes the property of accepting or believing that p . More precisely, suppose for concreteness that an agent's doxastic state is represented as a set of possible worlds (the agent's doxastic alternatives), and that a proposition p is just a set of possible worlds. Then p will partition the space of possible doxastic states into:

- i. The set of doxastic states that accept p : $\{D : D \subseteq p\}$
- ii. The set of doxastic states that do not accept p : $\{D : D \not\subseteq p\}$

An utterance whose semantic value is a proposition p conventionally constitutes a proposal that one's interlocutors should come to accept p . Accepting an utterance whose semantic value is a proposition p involves adjusting one's doxastic state so that it comes to accept p . Rejecting such an utterance involves remaining in a state in which one's doxastic state does not accept p . If, per *Stalnaker (1978)*, "The purpose of expressing propositions is to [distinguish among alternative possible ways that things may be]," accepting an utterance whose semantic value is a proposition involves assenting to that proposition's representation of the way that things are.

The general idea is that the envisioned, semantically encoded partitions also encode conventional uses, in a straightforward way:

THE SUPERVENIENCE OF USE ON SEMANTIC VALUE

An utterance by S of a sentence whose semantic value characterizes a cognitive property F conventionally constitutes a proposal that the cognitive state(s) of S 's addressee(s) come to satisfy F .

On this sort of account, Propositionalism about directives errs by assigning them the *wrong sorts* of semantic values—semantic values, namely, that are incompatible with

²⁹ There are many important precedents for the account I state here. The idea that a semantic value should be thought of as determining a conventional use is a central claim of *Portner (2004)*. The idea to extract cognitive properties from semantic values comes from *Yalcin (2007, forthcoming)*. Finally, the idea that such properties can be thought of as proposing *constraints* on cognitive states is from *Swanson (2006)*.

the way that directives are conventionally used in conversation. For directives have practical, rather than representational, uses: they tell us how to plan and act, rather than what to believe. The semantic value of a directive, then, should not characterize a property of a doxastic state. Instead, it should characterize a property of a *planning state*. It should, in other words, partition the space of possible *To-Do Lists*, rather than the space of possible doxastic states.

4.2.3 The Ladom Account of Directives

How should it partition them? A natural idea is that the semantic value of a command directive $!\phi$ partitions the space of possible To-Do Lists into:

- i. Those that, in any relevant situation, require ϕ
- ii. Those that, for some relevant situation, don't require ϕ

A permission directive $!\phi$, on the other hand, partitions the space of To-Do Lists into:

- i. Those that, in any relevant situation, permit ϕ
- ii. Those that, for some relevant situation, don't permit ϕ

A plausible constraint of adequacy on a semantics for directives is that the semantic value it assigns to a directive should determine such a partition. The following semantics for command and permission directives—the *Ladom Account*—is a natural way of doing just that.³⁰

THE LADOM ACCOUNT OF DIRECTIVES

$$\llbracket !\phi \rrbracket := \{T : \text{when evaluated relative to } T, \forall w : \llbracket \Box\phi \rrbracket^w = \text{true}\}$$

$$\llbracket !\phi \rrbracket := \{T : \text{when evaluated relative to } T, \forall w : \llbracket \neg\Box\neg\phi \rrbracket^w = \text{true}\}$$

The desired partitions can, in fact, be read directly off the proposed semantic values: $\llbracket !\phi \rrbracket$ is the set of To-Do Lists that, in any relevant situation, require ϕ ; its complement is the set of To-Do Lists that, for some relevant situation, do not.³¹ Likewise, $\llbracket !\phi \rrbracket$ is the set of To-Do Lists that, in any relevant situation, permit ϕ , while its complement is the set of To-Do Lists that, for some relevant situation, do not.

The *Ladom Account* is *designed to capture the practical content of a directive*. And it does. An utterance whose semantic value is a set of To-Do Lists, all of which require ϕ in w , conventionally constitutes a proposal that the plans of one's addressee should require ϕ in w . Accepting such a proposal involves adjusting one's plans accordingly. Rejecting such an utterance means declining to adjust one's plans accordingly. Similar

³⁰ Notice that a genuine account for conditional directives—directives applying to a restricted type of situation, rather than every situation *sans phrase*—is not too far off. For discussion of conditional directives in this vein, see Mastop (2005); Charlow (2010c).

³¹ Suppose, for instance, that $T \in \llbracket !\phi \rrbracket$. According to the *Ladom Account*, this holds iff, when evaluated with respect to T , for any world w , $\Box\phi$ is true at w . By the semantics for \Box , this holds iff $\forall v : wR_T v \Rightarrow \llbracket \phi \rrbracket^v$. Iff, that is to say, ϕ holds throughout the Sphere of Permissibility T specifies for w . So $T \in \llbracket !\phi \rrbracket$ iff T requires ϕ , in any relevant situation.

conventions are in place for permission directives. (For further detail, see [Charlow 2010c,a](#).)

But it accomplishes this while managing to hold onto the [Modal Account](#)'s strategy for securing Strong Logicality. Suppose, for reductio, that $!\phi$ and $;\neg\phi$ were consistent—that $\llbracket !\phi \rrbracket \cap \llbracket ;\neg\phi \rrbracket \neq \emptyset$. On the [Ladom Account](#), it would then follow that there is some T such that, when evaluated with respect to T , $\llbracket \Box\phi \rrbracket^w = \text{true}$ and $\llbracket \neg\Box\neg\neg\phi \rrbracket^w = \text{true}$ (for any w). Supposing there is some such T and at least one world, we arrive at exactly the same contradiction as before: $\llbracket \Box\phi \wedge \neg\Box\neg\neg\phi \rrbracket \neq \emptyset$.

There is, of course, a lot to fill in about this account. How does it manage to be just as explanatory as the [Modal Account](#), while nevertheless retaining an Expressivist core? In Section 5, I'll argue that the key to this question lies in our answers to Q1–Q4 and the rejection of [Meaning Reductionism](#). Before doing that, I want to gesture at how this sort of strategy might be extended to properly normative language, by stating a Ladom Account for the normative fragment \mathcal{L}_N .

4.2.4 Normative Language

The operator O is intended to represent normative verbal auxiliaries like *should*, *must*, and *ought* (although there are, of course, important differences between these auxiliaries, which we'll ignore here). Modal languages (and their familiar semantics), it's well-known, are useful tools for understanding the semantics of such auxiliaries (cf. [van Fraassen 1972](#); [Lewis 1974](#); [Kratzer 1981](#); [Jackson 1985](#)). From here it might seem a short step to analyzing these auxiliaries *as* modal operators, so that O just expresses the modal concept of requirement with respect to an independently fixed body of rules (perhaps a body of rules with a special authority or status, depending on the sort of normativity involved).

THE MODAL ACCOUNT OF O ³²

$$\llbracket O\phi \rrbracket := \llbracket \Box\phi \rrbracket$$

The [Modal Account](#)'s account of inconsistency and validity is, of course, immediate. As, however, we saw from our look at directive language, whether a Modal Account of O is suitable might well depend on whether:

- i. The property of a cognitive state characterized by a sentence of the form $O\phi$ is indeed the property of accepting the proposition that $\Box\phi$.
- ii. An utterance whose semantic value is $\llbracket O\phi \rrbracket$ is conventionally a proposal that one's interlocutors should come to accept some proposition as true.

These, questions, of course, raise substantive philosophical and empirical issues, about which Expressivists and their opponents disagree. But, significantly, it's not the

³² The Modal Account is much too simple, for, perhaps, a non-obvious reason. $O\phi$ expresses *unconditional* or *categorical obligation*, i.e., obligation holding in every relevant contingency. On the semantics stated here, $O\phi$ expresses the weaker claim that ϕ is required in the contingency of evaluation. (Similar remarks hold for the Modal Account of Directives.) In the interests of keeping things simple, I'll decline to fix this. The Ladom Accounts do not have this defect.

Expressivist’s take on *these* issues to which advocates of the various versions of the Embedding Problem are objecting. Like the arguments against Expressivism about directive language, the arguments from Embedding against Expressivism about normative language trade on alleged methodological and theoretical inadequacies of a *theory of linguistic meaning* which tries to cash out Expressivist views about (i) and (ii), rather than Expressivist views about (i) and (ii) *per se*. Supposing Expressivists are right about (i) and (ii), and that normative content is practical, rather than representational, there would be reason to trade in the [Modal Account](#) for some version of the [Ladom Account](#). (I elaborate on this in [Section 5.1](#).)

Just to give a flavor how such an account might go, someone who thought the use of normative language has a directive flavor ([Stevenson 1944](#); [Hare 1952](#)) might wish to view obligation-sentences as expressing something like *Gibbard Contents*: sets of Hyperplans (with Hyperplans understood as a special kind of To-Do List—those satisfying Completeness and Consistency). Letting Π be the space of Hyperplans:

THE LADOM ACCOUNT OF O

$$\llbracket O\phi \rrbracket := \{\pi \in \Pi : \text{when evaluated relative to } \pi, \forall w : \llbracket \Box\phi \rrbracket^w = \text{true}\}$$

The [Ladom Account of \$O\$](#) allows the Expressivist to co-opt the [Modal Account’s](#) explanation of inconsistency. Suppose that $O\phi$ and $\neg O\phi$ were consistent—that $\llbracket O\phi \rrbracket \cap \llbracket \neg O\phi \rrbracket \neq \emptyset$. On the [Ladom Account of \$O\$](#) , it would then follow that there is some π such that, when evaluated with respect to π , $\llbracket \Box\phi \rrbracket^w = \text{true}$ and $\llbracket \neg\Box\phi \rrbracket^w = \text{true}$ (for any w). The contradiction is immediate.³³

5 Situating This Theory

In this final section, I want to mount a preliminary defense of the semantic adequacy of [Ladom Accounts of directive and normative language](#). I’ll first argue that the [Ladom Account of directives](#) yields an adequate account of the semantics of ! and ;—at least as satisfactory, in any case, as the [Modal Account of directives](#). If the [Ladom Account of directives](#) is theoretically adequate, it will be theoretically adequate for the normative case too. I then do a comparison of the [Ladom Account of \$O\$](#) with [Gibbard’s theory](#). [Gibbard’s theory](#) can, in fact, be assimilated to the [Ladom Account](#), provided that he jettisons his commitment to a semantics of use (hence also his commitment to [Meaning Reductionism](#)). I close with some remarks on why this theory really does constitute a genuinely Expressivist theory.

5.1 On Semantic Adequacy

We’ve been happy to take for granted that the [Modal Account of directives](#) is theoretically adequate. But here is a case for thinking it isn’t. The case turns out to be weak. But seeing how it goes wrong will help us articulate more plausible conditions

³³ There are, of course, important differences in the ways directive and normative language are respectively used. One difference is that normative language is not generally used to introduce obligations; utterances of normative sentences do not generally display *performative* force. It is not hard for the expressivist to accommodate this, but I will not attempt it here.

of theoretical adequacy on an account of meaning, which we will then use to assess the adequacy of the [Ladom Account of directives](#).

Hare (1967) notes that embedding an imperative under negation is either ungrammatical (5a), or expresses a “a meta-linguistic statement; it reports the second-order fact that somebody has” failed to issue the relevant command (5b).³⁴

- (5) a. *Not: do your homework
b. You aren't to do your homework

This turns out to be interesting, for several reasons. Most interesting for us is that this shows that the directive operators we use to represent directive constructions in English are not syntactically inter-definable: j must be introduced as a syntactic primitive, rather than an abbreviated way of writing $\neg!\neg$. If that is right, it seems the [Modal Account of directives](#) may have a problem. For the semantic values of $!\phi$ and $\text{j}\neg\phi$, the [Modal Account](#) assigns inconsistent modal propositions ($\llbracket\Box\phi\rrbracket$ and $\llbracket\neg\Box\neg\phi\rrbracket$). But, as we saw with Gibbard's use of disjoint Hyperplans to model inconsistency, such inconsistency-via-stipulation is easily won. The [Modal Account](#) offers no motivation for the stipulation—it simply *assumes* the appropriateness of assigning j a semantic value identical to that of $\neg\Box\neg$.

This argument demands too much of semantic theory. We start theorizing equipped with an understanding of the meaning of the object language. The job of semantic theorizing is to provide a formal presentation of that understanding, not to *argue in favor of it* or somehow try to *ground* it (whatever that would entail). In the most straightforward cases of semantic theorizing, the theoretical procedure is something like this (cf. Larson & Segal 1995: Chapter 1).

STAGE I: OBSERVATION

Identify and describe object-language phenomenon P .

STAGE II: METALINGUISTIC ASCENT

State a canonical representation R of P in a theoretical metalanguage.

STAGE III: THEORY-INTERNAL REASONING

Identify R 's consequences in the context of a larger linguistic theory.

STAGE IV: METALINGUISTIC DESCENT

Associate these consequences with predictions about object-language phenomena, and evaluate these predictions for correctness.

Although claims made at the Observation stage are, of course, subject to scrutiny, such scrutiny is best viewed as prior or external to semantic theorizing. The semantic theorist, qua semantic theorist, is concerned with meta-linguistic representation

³⁴ Whether languages like Dutch or Korean embed imperatives under negation is neither here nor there for us, as we are interested in the semantics of a fragment of English.

of object-language phenomena, rather than a vindication, defense, or account of judgments about these phenomena.³⁵

In the case of clear-cut object-language inconsistency, job one for the theorist is to state a canonical representation of that inconsistency in her favored metalanguage. Whether that representation is theoretically adequate depends on whether:

METHODOLOGICAL ADEQUACY

It meets independent desiderata for canonical representations of inconsistency in a theoretical metalanguage.

EMPIRICAL ADEQUACY

It generates correct predictions about other object-language phenomena, in conjunction with one's other theoretical commitments.

Regarding methodological adequacy, the central desideratum for canonical representations of inconsistency—perhaps there are others—is that the metalinguistic representation *itself display some sort of contradiction or inconsistency*:

METALINGUISTIC INCONSISTENCY

A canonical representation *R* of an object-language inconsistency is methodologically adequate only if *R* itself displays inconsistency.³⁶

The Modal Account, of course, is engineered to satisfy this desideratum. The theoretical adequacy the Modal Account thus turns on its empirical adequacy. This is what I had in mind when I remarked (Section 4.2.1) that there was no question of the Modal Account yielding a satisfactory account of inconsistency, supposing it was empirically adequate.

This is how a proponent of the Modal Account should reply to the objection that her theory is merely stipulative. The theoretical adequacy of the Modal Account is an empirical, rather than methodological, issue. But note that if the Modal Account meets methodological muster on these grounds, the [Ladom Account of directives](#), which generates the very same metalinguistic inconsistency as the Modal Account, *must as well*. The dispute between these accounts thus reduces to the question of whether each account generates reasonable predictions about other object-language phenomena, in conjunction with our other theoretical commitments. The [Modal Account of directives](#), I've argued, does not. The [Ladom Account of directives](#), engineered to capture the distinctively practical content of directives, does.

What goes for directives goes equally for normative language. Concerns of methodological adequacy do not decide between the [Modal](#) and [Ladom](#) Accounts of *O*: these accounts share the property responsible for the [Modal Account of directives](#)

³⁵ Of course, this is not to rule out that in “the process of constructing a rigorous and explicit theory, we must be prepared for elements in the pretheoretical domain to be reanalyzed and redescribed in various ways” (Larson & Segal 1995: 8).

³⁶ I remain neutral on (i) what, exactly, displaying inconsistency requires, (ii) whether the [Same Attitude Analysis](#)'s proposed representation (Section 3.2) would display inconsistency in the requisite sense. More important for my purposes is that [Different Attitude Accounts](#) clearly do not do so.

meeting methodological muster, namely, the fact that their proposed canonical representations of the object-language inconsistency of $O\phi$ and $\neg O\phi$ display an inconsistency (indeed, the very same inconsistency). The dispute between these accounts thus reduces to the question of whether each account generates reasonable predictions about other object-language phenomena, in conjunction with our other theoretical commitments. To be clear, I *haven't* argued that the **Ladom Account of O** does better on this score than its competitor. That will depend on the truth of substantive philosophical and empirical questions about the role of normative language in communication and thought. Expressivists defend a characteristic set of answers to these questions. Contra those who have used Expressivists' difficulties with embedding to express worries about whether Expressivist theories are even semantically tractable, it is according to these answers that an Expressivist account of the meaning of normative sentences should be judged.

5.2 Comparison with Gibbard

There's a sense in which Gibbard's theory of normative content (see Section 2.2) is a special case of the Ladom Account. The Gibbard Content plausibly expressed by $O\phi$ is the set of Hyperplan-world pairs $\langle \pi, w \rangle$ such that according to π , ϕ is unconditionally (i.e., in every relevant contingency) required at w . The world parameter does no work in this formulation; ignoring it, we're left with the set of Hyperplans π such that according to π , ϕ is unconditionally required. Assuming a modal treatment of 'according to π , ϕ is unconditionally required' (so that it is true iff, when evaluated with respect to π , $\forall w : \llbracket \Box\phi \rrbracket^w = \text{true}$), then, the resulting Gibbard Content is *identical* to the semantic value furnished by the **Ladom Account of O** (Section 4.2.4).

Is there any difference between the accounts? Yes, a foundational one. Recall from Section 2.2 that Gibbard Contents have wholly derivative explanatory status in Gibbard's theory: their theoretical function is to represent practical states of mind (a consequence of Gibbard's implicit commitment to **Meaning Reductionism**). The semantic facts are ultimately explained by characteristics of the *representanda*, rather than of Gibbard Contents. To be sure, Gibbard's account, understood as a Ladom Account, is able to generate the same contradiction as the **Ladom Account**: supposing the Gibbard Contents expressed by $O\phi$ and $\neg O\phi$ have a non-empty intersection entails that there is some world at which both $\Box\phi$ and $\neg\Box\phi$ are true. But, strictly speaking, this contradiction is not properly viewed as a *deliverance* of Gibbard's theory. The reason is that, for Gibbard, the canonical metalinguistic representation of an object-language inconsistency is not in terms of sets of Hyperplans. It is, rather, in terms of the states of mind that sets of Hyperplans serve to represent. Gibbard's account fails to meet the requirement of **Metalinguistic Inconsistency** because the *canonical representations he suggests* for $O\phi$ and $\neg O\phi$ —the states of mind of [planning to see to it that ϕ] and [disagreeing with planning to see to it that ϕ]*—do not themselves display any clear inconsistency.*

To put the point a bit differently, we can see that Gibbard is actually making use of two metalanguages, two ways of presenting canonical representations of object-language phenomena: the metalanguage of states of mind, and the metalanguage

of Hyperplans. He assumes, crucially, that it is possible to translate freely between these languages. But, we've seen, this is not obvious: whether the states of mind Gibbard designates as [planning to see to it that ϕ] and [disagreeing with planning to see to it that ϕ] can be faithfully represented with disjoint sets of Hyperplans surely depends on whether those states of mind are themselves inconsistent. But Gibbard offers no obvious account of their inconsistency.

Can Gibbard's account be repaired simply by jettisoning the metalanguage of states of mind? Not quite. As Dreier (2006, 2009) and Schroeder (2008c) note, the Gibbard Content of $O\phi$ is the set of Hyperplans that unconditionally require ϕ . This set's complement (the Gibbard Content of $\neg O\phi$) is the set of Hyperplans that do not unconditionally require ϕ . But, by the Completeness constraint on Hyperplans, the latter is just the set of Hyperplans that require ϕ in some situation(s) S . So, it's predicted that $\neg O\phi$ (which says *only* that ϕ is not unconditionally required) and *if S , ϕ is required* express the same Gibbard Content—not a happy result! To avoid this, Dreier proposes that Gibbard re-work the Completeness constraint on Hyperplans:

COMPLETENESS*

For any alternative α and situation S , one of the following is a rule of π : *you do α in S , you do not do α in S , or you may choose either to do α or not to do α in S .*

The original formulation of Completeness misses the fact that one way to be fully decided about what to do in a situation is to decide that it does not matter what you do in a situation. Completeness* avoids this mistake, and thereby allows $\neg O\phi$ and $O\neg\phi$ to express different Gibbard Contents.

This tack conflicts with the rationale we've used to motivate the Ladom Account. Consider some Hyperplan π_i that, for any situation, is indifferent between ϕ and $\neg\phi$. Obviously, π_i should be in the Gibbard Content of $\neg O\phi$, and not in the Gibbard Content of $O\phi$. But what motivates a semantics that assigns sets of Hyperplans to sentences in this way? The only available answer, as best I can tell, is that a planning state of being indifferent between ϕ and $\neg\phi$ is simply *inconsistent* with one which unconditionally prefers ϕ —that these planning states disagree. But this is exactly the sort of claim which a proponent of the Ladom Account would prefer to avoid making—such planning states do not, after all, display their inconsistency in the right way (cf. Schroeder 2008c: 586–7).

The real way around this is to abandon Completeness, in any of its forms. The Ladom Account is entitled to do this because, within the Ladom Account and the Gibbard account, Hyperplans are *playing completely different theoretical roles*. In the Ladom Account, it is not the job of a Hyperplan to play a role in the representation of practical states of mind analogous to that played by possible worlds in the representation of belief. Rather, the semantic role of the parameter filled by a Hyperplan is simply to characterize an *accessibility relation* (or, in a fancier version of the semantics, a partial ranking) on worlds. Characterizing such a relation in no way demands that a plan be complete, in any sense of that notion; an ordinary To-Do List

can do the job just as well as a Hyperplan.³⁷

5.3 *Its Place in the Metaethical Landscape*

To close, some remarks about why the view proposed above, for both directive and normative language, is a clear-cut, full-throated Expressivism, rather than a form of watered-down (“Hybrid”) Expressivism. Recall the standard division of theoretical space sketched in Section 2.3.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
PURE	N	N	Y	Y
HYBRID	Y	Y	N	N

The accounts of directives and normative language defended here are, I’ll suggest, best plotted as follows.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
LADOM	N	Y	N	Y

Although I’ll focus on the [Ladom Account of directives](#), what I say goes equally for the [Ladom Account of O](#).

The Role of Propositions. The [Ladom Account](#) assigns directives sets of To-Do Lists (partial contingency plans) as their semantic values. It does not assign propositions as their semantic values (hence answers “no” to Q1). But the [Ladom Account](#) does enlist propositions to do logical and semantic work (hence answers “yes” to Q2): the explanation for the inconsistency of $!\phi$ and $!\neg\phi$ is that (i) the contents of these sentences can be faithfully represented as sets of To-Do Lists that make corresponding modal sentences ($\Box\phi$ and $\neg\Box\neg\phi$, respectively) true (a substantive empirical claim about the proper canonical metalinguistic representation for directives), (ii) the supposition that any To-Do List could make both $\Box\phi$ and $\neg\Box\neg\phi$ true leads to contradiction. There is, then, a clear sense in which the semantic properties of *modal propositions explain* the semantic properties of directives. It’s just this fact that the [Ladom Account of directives](#) exploits in its account of directive inconsistency.

Semantics, Use, and Meaning. The [Ladom Account of directives](#) builds in a tight link between the semantic value of a directive and its conventional use: the fact that directives conventionally have a non-representational use *motivates a semantics on which they are practically contentful*: a semantics on which they induce a non-trivial partition on sets of possible plans. That they lack a representational use motivates a semantics on which they are not propositionally contentful: they fail to introduce a non-trivial partition on ways the world might be. That descriptive sentences, on the other hand, typically have a conventionalized representational

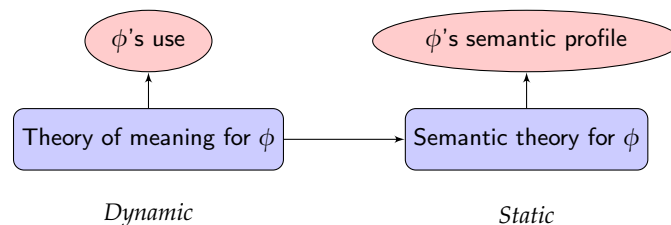
³⁷ Indeed, it’s well-known that, if we move to an ordering-semantics, on the model of [Kratzer \(1981\)](#); [Lewis \(1981\)](#), so that the domain of quantification is restricted to the worlds that are *best* according to some set of rules π (roughly, worlds satisfying as many rules in π as any other world), rather than worlds that are ideal, the set of rules or imperatives that determines the accessibility relation needn’t even be consistent.

(but lack a conventionalized practical) use motivates a semantics on which they are propositionally contentful (but not practically contentful).³⁸

What is the best way to categorize the relationship between semantic facts and facts about conventional use, on this account? The relationship is, I think, best understood in terms of mere *supervenience* or *determination*, rather than *reduction*. On the account we've suggested, the fact that a directive with a given semantic value has a conventionalized non-representational use is a *further fact* about it, albeit one that follows from facts about its semantic value (that it is practically, rather than propositionally, contentful), together with "law-like" linguistic conventions associating ways of being contentful with communicative uses.³⁹

How best to understand the relationship between *conventional meaning* and *conventional use* on this account? Whether a directive's use can claim to be part of its conventional meaning is a largely terminological issue. As Tyler Burge notes, "[T]he term 'meaning' has always been vague, multi-purposed, and to some extent adaptive to the viewpoint of different theories" (1979: 398). One may, of course, define theoretical terms as one likes. Someone for whom facts about conventional meaning are exhausted by *semantic* facts will resist the notion that "dynamic" facts about a sentence's conventional use, although distinct from "static (i.e., properly semantic) facts about that sentence, nevertheless constitute part of its conventional meaning. But, insofar as the **Ladom Account** is an account of directive *meaning*, this understanding of "meaning" seems not to accurately reflect its subject matter.

In fact, the **Ladom Account** seems to satisfy **CMAU**. It is, after all, a desire *to get the conventional use of directives right* (together with the claim that a propositional theory of directive content will fail to do this) that motivates the **Ladom Account** of directive content. The explanatory structure of the account is, to re-use the diagram from Section 2.4, something like the following (for an arbitrary directive ϕ):



The **Ladom Account** begins from the assumption that an account of directive meaning is fundamentally an account of directive use—that the central constraint of adequacy on canonical representations of directive meaning is that they predict their canonical

³⁸ To explain syntactic coordination, subordination, and various other kinds of embedding, it is important (though, pace [Schroeder 2008b](#): 94–5, not essential) that the Expressivist assign normative and descriptive declaratives semantic values of the *same semantic type*. The natural thought is to have all declaratives express a pair of a set of To-Do Lists and a proposition. Normative declaratives will, according to the Expressivist, be distinguished from descriptive declaratives, not by semantic type, instead according to whether their semantic values induce non-trivial partitions on plans or possibilities.

³⁹ I want to stay neutral on the further question of how to classify such conventionalized use-facts. I can say they are probably not classifiable as conventional implicatures ([Barker 2000](#)) or purely expressive content ([Potts 2007](#); [Boisvert 2008](#)). Such facts, although lexicalized, tend to be *independent of semantic value* (e.g., the fact that 'but' denotes conjunction has no bearing on its conventionally implicating a contrast between its conjuncts), in a way that I'm supposing conventionalized use-facts are not.

uses. That the conventional uses of directives are not themselves suitable for certain theoretical jobs—e.g., the job of accounting for facts within the “static” dimension of directive meaning—is not in tension with the account’s overarching theoretical aim: to build a theory of meaning that explains the role of directive language in communication and the expression of thought.

In addition to satisfying **CMAU**, the **Ladom Account of directives** also clearly satisfies **Practicality** and **Non-Propositionalism**. So it is a clear-cut form of non-Hybrid Expressivism for directives. But, in answering “no” to **Q3** (while still endorsing the supervenience of use on semantic content), it diverges sharply from the sort of theory favored by Expressivism’s major proponents. If our account is on target, then, it suggests a new strategy for Expressivists who are interested in developing a serious, empirically estimable theory of the meaning of normative language. It is, of course, only a start. But it is a promising one. It is explicit about how Expressivism should discharge its linguistic commitments. And it actually, in large part, discharges them.

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