ON LEAVING ROOM FOR DOUBT: USING FREGE-GEACH TO ILLUMINATE EXPRESSIVISM'S PROBLEM WITH OBJECTIVITY

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Abstract

Expressivism holds that normative thought and language express non-cognitive attitudes. In print, the central objection to the view has been the Frege-Geach problem: the charge that expressivist semantics cannot accommodate the fact that normative claims match ordinary descriptive ones in their logical behavior. Yet few cognitivists are cognitivists because of this problem, but because they have "deeper" worries about expressivism—worries they have spent comparatively little time pursuing in print. Part of the explanation for this, I suspect, is that cognitivists understand these deeper worries to be largely metaphysical. For example, many cognitivists doubt that expressivism can accommodate their sense that normative truth must be *objective*. Unfortunately, given that expressivism is not a metaphysical view—at least not straightforwardly—it can be hard to see how to make the charge stick. My goal in this paper is to make this charge stick by introducing claims about thought and language, rather than metaphysics, that represent common intuitions about objectivity. I argue that expressivists cannot accept the claims in question if they are to solve the Negation Problem—an aspect of Frege-Geach. If successful, this shows that expressivists really do have a problem accommodating normative objectivity. But, significantly, it does so without requiring any assumptions about what expressivist metaphysics look like (if there even is such a thing). As an added bonus, Frege-Geach turns out to represent some of cognitivists' "deeper worries" after all.