

ERRATUM:

In: Miller, A. and Surgener K., (2019). Ecumenical Expressivism and the Frege-Geach Problem, *BPA* 32, 7-25, the text on pp.9-10 should read as below:

2. Blackburn's Quasi-Realist Expressivism and the Frege-Geach Problem

The fundamental expressivist ideas are that we give an account of the meaning of a sentence in terms of the state of mind that it expresses and that in the case of a moral sentence such as "Murder is wrong" the relevant state of mind is a non-cognitive attitude of disapproval of murder: B!(murder).¹ These ideas, however, leave the expressivist with a problem. While it is plausible to think of the meaning of "Murder is wrong" as it appears in an asserted context such as e.g.

(1) Murder is wrong

in terms of B!(murder), it is difficult to see how this account can be extended to cover the appearance of "murder is wrong" as it appears in an unasserted context such as the antecedent of (2):

(2) If murder is wrong then getting Peter to murder people is wrong,

since someone sincerely asserting (2) needn't have an attitude of disapproval towards murder (or indeed towards getting Peter to murder people) – think of how those who approve of helping the aged can still sincerely utter "If helping the aged is wrong then getting Peter to help the aged is wrong". If this extension turns out not to be possible it looks like the inference from (1) and (2) to

(3) Getting Peter to murder people is wrong

will be vitiated by a fallacy of equivocation, since "Murder is wrong" will have different meanings as it appears in (1) and in the antecedent of (2). And this is highly problematic, as the inference is an instance of Modus Ponens, a valid inference form.² This is the Frege-Geach Problem, and the challenge to the expressivist is therefore to give an account of the contribution made by the meaning of a moral sentence to the meaning of a more complex sentence in which it appears in terms of the state of mind it expresses when used in an asserted context, in such a way that intuitively valid inferences involving it are not impugned (by, for instance, the commission of fallacies of equivocation).

¹ Ridge characterises expressivism as a form of "ideationalism", where "Ideationalism maintains that facts about the semantic contents of meaningful items in a natural language are constituted by facts about how those items are conventionally used to express states of mind" (2014: 107). For an account of the philosophical motivations for expressivism – in metaphysics, epistemology and moral psychology – see chapters 3 – 5 in Miller (2013).

² Notice that it will not do for the expressivist to simply accept that this aspect of moral discourse is in bad faith: as we noted above the problem in this area extends to most of moral reasoning. Going down this road would leave the expressivist with an account of the meaning of positive, atomic, moral statements but not much else. At this point it is unclear why developing expressivism is preferable to simply adopting an error theory.