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1-1-2015

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Derek Clayton BAKER

*Lingnan University, Hong Kong*

Jack WOODS

*Bilkent University, Turkey*

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#### Recommended Citation

Baker, D., & Woods, J. (2015). How expressivists can and should explain inconsistency. *Ethics*, 125(2), 391-424. doi: 10.1086/678371

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# How Expressivists Can and Should Explain Inconsistency<sup>\*</sup>

Derek Baker and Jack Woods<sup>†</sup>

**This is the penultimate draft of a paper forthcoming in *Ethics*. Please contact one of us if you wish to cite it.**

Abstract: We argue that a number of difficulties facing expressivist solutions to the Frege-Geach problem are paralleled by almost exactly analogous problems facing realist semantic theories. We argue that a prominent realist solution to the problem of explaining logical inconsistency can be adopted by expressivists. By doing so, the expressivist brings her account of logical consequence more in line with philosophical orthodoxy, while simultaneously purchasing herself the right to appeal to a wider class of attitudinal conflicts in her semantic theorizing than is allowed, for instance, by Mark Schroeder in his recent work. Finally, it emerges that a standard objection to expressivist theories is based on a misinterpretation of the Frege-Geach problem. We explain this misinterpretation and show how expressivists can easily skirt the objection it motivates.

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<sup>\*</sup> Thanks to Jamin Asay, Jamie Dreier, David Faraci, Vera Flocke, Dan Greco, Robbie Hirsch, Barry Maguire, Jimmy Martin, Tristram McPherson, Beau Madison Mount, Andreas Mueller, Cory Nichols, Giulia Pravato, Jim Pryor, Karl Schafer, Derek Schiller, Julia Staffel, Mark van Roojen, and audiences at the Humboldt University, Princeton, the New York Philosophy of Language Workshop, and the Rocky Mountain Metaethics Conference. The work in this paper was partially supported by a grant from the Research Grants Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China (Project No. LU342612).

<sup>†</sup> Order of names is alphabetical. Both authors contributed equally.

## 1. Introduction

Our evaluations, credences, preferences, goals, and of course our beliefs are often inconsistent. Sometimes we can explain this inconsistency by means of some feature of the content of the attitudes. Beliefs are inconsistent when what is believed is *logically* or *semantically* inconsistent.<sup>2</sup> It is, however, not obvious that all inconsistency of attitude can be explained in this way.

Many theorists have introduced an *unreduced* notion of inconsistency of attitude to account for how non-cognitive attitudes can be inconsistent with one another.<sup>3</sup> They then appeal to this notion in developing expressivist semantics, using inconsistency of attitude to explain various forms of linguistic inconsistency, including the inconsistency that exists between logically contradictory statements like ‘Murder is wrong’ and ‘Murder is not wrong’. In other words, an unreduced notion of inconsistency of attitude is a key element in their solutions to the Frege-Geach problem—in its most general form, the problem of developing a compositional semantics for an attitude-expressing language.

We view this strategy as promising, whatever the fate of particular instances of it. But recently Mark Schroeder has argued that expressivists may appeal only to inconsistencies of attitude that are themselves explained by the semantic inconsistency of their contents—

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1 Roughly: “I hate and I love. How do I do that, perhaps you ask?  
I do not know, but I feel it happen and I am torn apart.”

2 There is a difficult issue about how much logical structure is built into propositions and whether the logical relations between propositions are inherited from their vehicles of expression. This issue will come up repeatedly.

3 For example, see Simon Blackburn, *Spreading the Word* (Oxford: Clarendon Oxford University Press, 1984); Alan Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings: A Theory of Normative Judgment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), and *Thinking How to Live* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2003).

beliefs being the paradigm case—if they are to solve the Frege-Geach problem.<sup>4</sup> Call such inconsistency of attitude *A-type*. Nick Zangwill and Mark van Roojen raise similar worries.<sup>5</sup> Schroeder is concerned that more expansive notions of attitudinal inconsistency are theoretically obscure; all three are concerned that expressivists will be forced to conflate logical and non-logical forms of inconsistency. This objection is misguided. If expressivism fails, it fails because it is extensionally inadequate. If an extensionally adequate form of expressivism is available, there is no cogent objection that it appeals to an unreduced notion of inconsistency of attitude.

We will show that cases of non-A-type inconsistency are ubiquitous and are no less amenable to explanation than A-type (section 2). Any of these types of inconsistency of attitude can serve as a perfectly respectable *explanans*. We will then argue that the expressivist should view logical properties as properties of sentences<sup>6</sup> and only derivatively as properties of attitudes (section 3). This parallels the standard understanding of the nature of logical consequence. It follows from this discussion that many objections to expressivism rest on a mistaken interpretation of the Frege-Geach problem—as a demand that the expressivist provide a psychologistic explanation of logic. This the expressivist need not and should not do. These points jointly underwrite a promising style of solution to the Frege-Geach problem.

We do not aim to offer an expressivist semantics here, but to show that expressivists have sufficiently more theoretical resources than is often thought. It has been overlooked that expressivists can appeal to features of the *vehicle of expression* of moral judgments—such as

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4 See his *Being For: Evaluating the Semantic Program of Expressivism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), and *Noncognitivism in Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

5 Nick Zangwill, “Moral Modus Ponens,” *Ratio (New Series)* 2 (1992): 177-93; and Mark van Roojen, “Expressivism and Irrationality,” *The Philosophical Review* 105 (1996): 311-35.

6 It would be more accurate to say “interpreted sentences,” but it would also be potentially misleading, as the sense in which they are interpreted falls far short of a full account of their meaning. The sense of interpretation will be made clear in fn. 79.

syntactic properties of normative language and a designated class of privileged expressions—as part of their solution to the Frege-Geach problem. Far from being some theoretically desperate maneuver, this appeal to, say, the syntactic properties of normative language brings expressivist solutions to Frege-Geach in line with the orthodox understanding of logic. In fact, a number of the difficulties thought to face expressivist solutions to the Frege-Geach seem to presuppose an understanding of logic entirely idiosyncratic to discussion of expressivism. In the next section we provide an overview of how we understand the debate between realism and expressivism, the basic theoretical resources open to both, and an outline of the argument that will run throughout the paper. This outline will show that the defenses we offer on behalf of expressivism almost exactly parallel the defenses a realist should give if faced with similar objections. This in place, we will move to the specific objections of Schroeder, van Roojen, and Zangwill.

Readers have probably noticed at this point that there are at least four notions of inconsistency at work—semantic, logical, metaphysical, and attitudinal inconsistency. To prevent confusion, we will call attitudes *discordant* when they are inconsistent. This is a term of art, and is not meant to indicate anything other than that the set of attitudes have a property that is often called ‘inconsistency’. We will present reasons in subsequent sections to think this is a real property and its instances make up a unified theoretical kind. The other three forms of inconsistency will continue to bear the name ‘inconsistency’ as they make up a family, at least within this discussion: they are all properties of sets of sentences or propositions, are all connected with truth and falsity, contradiction, incompatibility, and impossibility in much the same way. We will argue that none of logical, semantic, or metaphysical inconsistency is a necessary or sufficient condition on discordance of attitude—and so discordance, having no essential connection to truth or contradiction, will have its own name. When engagement with the literature forces us to call attitudes ‘inconsistent’, the word

will appear in angled brackets like so *<inconsistent>*.

## 1.1. Overview of the Argument

Let's start with two sample sentences,  $p$  and  $\sim p$ , and assume that  $p$  is normative: it tells us that murder is wrong, that perseverance is admirable, or that Guns N' Roses, however overwrought some of their songs might be, is on the whole a good band.  $\sim p$  denies the same.

Here are the three starting data points that everyone should agree to:<sup>7</sup>

1.  $p$  and  $\sim p$  are inconsistent sentences.
2.  $p$  is true if and only if  $\sim p$  is false and  $p$  is false if and only if  $\sim p$  is true.
3. A set of sentences is inconsistent if and only if its members cannot be jointly true.

3 establishes a connection between truth and inconsistency. The debate between the realist and expressivist can be profitably understood in terms of a Euthyphro problem regarding that connection. Are the sentences inconsistent because they cannot all be true, or must at least one of the sentences be false because they are inconsistent?<sup>8</sup> Does 1 explain 2, or does 2 explain 1?

For the typical realist, the sentence denotes a proposition, and, necessarily, the proposition denoted by  $p$  is true if and only if the proposition denoted by  $\sim p$  is false. This explains the truth of 2; and 2, combined with 3, explains 1. This explanation may seem straightforward enough, but keep in mind that in giving it the realist has taken on large theoretical burdens, and much about this explanation remains telegraphic. The explanation

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7 We bracket those benighted few who think that sentences such as  $p$  will not be truth-apt. Expressivists typically have and should accept that normative sentences can be true or false in at least a minimalist sense of truth and falsity.

8 Some of these points are inspired by Zangwill's outline of the realist-expressivist debate in "Non-cognitivism and Consistency," *Zeitschrift für die philosophische Forschung* 65 (2011): 465-84.

relies on propositions (theoretical posits), and necessary connections between distinct propositional objects. There must also be necessary connections between the truth of propositions and concrete objects in the world and a story about our epistemic access to them.

Explanations have been offered, such as identifying propositions with structured wholes of objects and properties or with sets of possible worlds. But these explanations come with problems of their own—the unity of the proposition or the nature of possible worlds, for example. These problems are hardly decisive; rather they set the stage for further research programs. We mention them not to criticize, but rather because what the realist can say in response to such problems shows what an expressivist should say in response to analogous objections.

Appeal to propositions and truth can be explanatory, despite the obscurity of the *explanans*. Most agree that sentences have meanings and, philosophical difficulties aside, we all have a sense of what it is for a claim to be true or false. We are familiar with these notions, know how to apply them, and find ourselves generally in agreement about which claims are true and what they mean. So they can serve in acceptable and informative explanations, even if a theoretically satisfying account of their nature remains elusive.

There is a more serious difficulty for the realist if she wishes to explain inconsistency in terms of truth: at first glance, she has no way of distinguishing logical inconsistency from metaphysical inconsistency. The truth of ‘X is water’ is just as incompatible with the truth of ‘X is not H<sub>2</sub>O’ as with that of ‘X is not water’. We need something other than truth, then, to capture the fact that only the latter sentence is logically inconsistent with the first. The most obvious explanation is that one can know that ‘X is water’ and ‘X is not water’ have incompatible truth values solely by knowing the meaning of the word ‘not’. Knowing that ‘X is water’ and ‘X is not H<sub>2</sub>O’ are inconsistent, by contrast, requires that one know that ‘water’ and ‘H<sub>2</sub>O’ denote the same property. Generalizing on this, the realist can distinguish logical

inconsistency as inconsistency in virtue of some privileged subset of the vocabulary.

This cleaves to the almost universally held picture of the nature of logical relations—that they are formal relations. Tarski’s approach—by far the dominant orthodox conception of logical consequence and logical truth—designates a subclass of the analytic truths as logical truths—namely, those which are analytic by virtue of the meaning of a designated vocabulary.<sup>9</sup> The dominant unorthodox account of logical consequence and logical truth holds, by contrast, that logical truths are that subclass of necessary truths that can be identified by means of syntactically defined proof rules;<sup>10</sup> *mutatis mutandis* for logical consequence. In short, the standard accounts in the philosophy of logic make logical properties primarily properties of sentences. They explain logicity in terms of syntax and a designated class of expressions, and so logical properties will depend essentially on being related to a syntax.<sup>11</sup>

The realist admittedly has another option for explaining logical inconsistency: she can appeal to fine-grained propositions that are composed out of concepts. These concepts can then either be identified with Fregean senses—this is effectively to stipulate that they have the properties needed for our semantic theory—or individuated by something like inferential role.<sup>12</sup> But we think the direct syntactic account is the most promising: it easily captures the standard commitment that logic is formal. And in any case, it is the account that could be most easily adapted to expressivism.<sup>13</sup>

These points about realism help better clarify the explanatory burdens of the

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9 Alfred Tarski, “On the Concept of Following Logically,” *History and Philosophy of Logic* 23 (2002): 155-96.

10 Stephen Read, “Formal and Material Consequence,” *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 23 (1994): 247-65.

11 Note that this does not exclude the possibility of propositions with logical properties—so long as such fine-grained propositions are partially individuated by their relations to sentences; see for example David Lewis, “General Semantics,” *Synthese* 22 (1970): 12-67; and Jeffrey C. King, *The Nature and Structure of Content* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

12 Identifying concepts as lexical items in a language of thought will just lead to a special case of the syntactic account of logic considered above.

13 We will not address in more detail this Fregean alternative, except to note that all of our discussion of logical inconsistency could be modified in terms of the analogue of syntactical structure captured by the Fregean account of propositions.

expressivist. As Zangwill points out, expressivism can be seen as reversing the order of the realist's explanations, putting inconsistency first.<sup>14</sup> On our picture, it explains 2 in terms of 1 and 3.  $p$  is true if and only if  $\sim p$  is false because  $p$  and  $\sim p$  are inconsistent, and inconsistent sentences cannot be jointly true.<sup>15</sup> So what explains their inconsistency? The expressivist sees the primary role of normative language in its communicative purpose. The sentences are inconsistent because, say, they would fail to communicate if the same speaker uttered both; and they would fail to communicate because the attitudes expressed by the two sentences are discordant.<sup>16</sup>

The first explanatory burden of the expressivist, then, is to demonstrate that we have intuitive familiarity with discordance of attitude. This parallels the realists' appeals to meaning (cashied out using propositions) and truth as intuitively familiar. In section 2, we show—contra Schroeder—many of the cases of discordance with which we are familiar are not what he calls A-type. We address Schroeder's complaint that it is difficult to explain non-A-type discordance, pointing out that it is difficult for everyone to explain discordance. We then show that the two explanations of attitudinal discordance (e.g. discordance of beliefs with semantically inconsistent contents) offered in the literature are clearly compatible with the existence of non-A-type discordance.

The other burden is to account for logical inconsistency. This will only be done in part. We will address the objection that non-A-type forms of discordance, while they may be familiar enough, are not logical, or too ubiquitous to ground logicity, and hence they are the wrong type to appeal to for solving the Frege-Geach problem. This objection, we will argue

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14 Zangwill, "Non-cognitivism and Inconsistency."

15 This explanation requires a completeness assumption guaranteeing that at least one of  $p$  and  $\sim p$  is true.

16 Zangwill, *ibid.*, argues that an expressivist will be forced to accept cognitivism about the norm of attitudinal <consistency>. We disagree, but addressing this objection is outside of the scope of this paper.

in section 3, rests on a mistaken interpretation of the Frege-Geach problem.<sup>17</sup>

The key to this argument is to remember that while a realist can explain the distinction between logical and non-logical inconsistency in terms of the logical properties of propositions, she need not. It is acceptable that propositions always be inconsistent in some generic, non-logical sense (metaphysically or semantically)—so long as we can sometimes identify that inconsistency in virtue of a restricted class of syntactic facts about the sentences denoting those propositions. Rather than try to identify an especially logic-like form of psychological conflict to ground logical properties, the expressivist should claim that attitudes, when discordant, are always discordant in some generic, non-logical sense, and insist on an explanation of logicity essentially involving the syntactic features of their vehicle of expression.<sup>18</sup>

## 2. Schroeder's Argument against B-type Discordance

As we've said, expressivists will hold that the sentences 'murder is wrong' and 'murder is not wrong' are inconsistent because they express discordant attitudes. Schroeder gives two ways that attitudes might be discordant.<sup>19</sup>

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17 Readers interested in the history of this problem should see G.F. Schueler, "Modus Ponens and Moral Realism," *Ethics* 98 (1988): 392–500; and Crispin Wright "Realism, Antirealism, Irrealism, Quasi-realism," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 12 (1988): 25–49. Both object that Blackburn's account of modus ponens conflates moral failings with logical ones. For summary and discussion of this objection see Alexander Miller, *An Introduction to Contemporary Metaethics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003): Chapter 4.

18 See Nate Charlow, "The Problem with the Frege-Geach Problem," *Philosophical Studies*, 167 (2014): 635–665 for a different way for expressivists to avoid commitment to a psychologistic semantics.

19 *Being For*, 48.

**A-type discordance** A set of attitudes is A-type discordant if and only if the set of attitudes is discordant in virtue of being a set of attitudes of the same type with inconsistent contents.

**B-type discordance** A set of attitudes is B-type discordant if and only if the set of attitudes is discordant but not in virtue of being a set of attitudes of the same type with inconsistent contents.

Beliefs are offered as a paradigm case of A-type discordance, and Schroeder cites approval and disapproval as attitudes which have been thought to be capable of B-type discordance. We should note that our definition of B-type discordance differs slightly from Schroeder's. Schroeder describes B-Type <inconsistency> as a case of holding "two distinct and apparently *logically unrelated* attitudes toward the *same* content" [emphasis in original].<sup>20</sup> Note that on this definition, the two types of discordance Schroeder identifies are not exhaustive. We will use our definition, then, since our goal is to establish that Schroeder is incorrect when he says, as he does, that A-type discordance is the *only* type.

Restricting discordance to cases of A-type discordance turns out to have devastating consequences for expressivism. Consider the sentence 'Jack is not poor.' This assertion presumably expresses a belief. But it is logically inconsistent with 'Everyone is either wicked or poor, but Jack is not wicked' which uses normative vocabulary.<sup>21</sup> For the (pure) expressivist, sentences with normative content express, when asserted, conative rather than cognitive attitudes. But sentences are inconsistent only if the attitudes they express are discordant. And to be discordant, according to Schroeder, attitudes must be A-type discordant,

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> This style of example is familiar from Arthur Prior "The Autonomy of Ethics," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 38 (1960): 199-206.

and so of the same type. It follows that belief is really a type of non-cognitive attitude. Schroeder goes on, almost heroically, to develop a theory compatible with this conclusion. But, as he acknowledges, many people will “conclude this amounts to a reductio of expressivism.”<sup>22</sup>

Schroeder’s point is one about acceptable ideology. Assuming the existence of A-type discordance is “respectable,” according to Schroeder, “[u]nlike the assumption of brute B-type inconsistency, for which there are no good models...”<sup>23</sup> Schroeder’s justification for restricting our ideology is, unfortunately, never given a clear statement. Two basic concerns emerge in his discussion: A-type discordance seems like it could be explained in terms of *semantic* inconsistency of contents, which is somewhat understood, whereas B-type seems like it could not; and as there are familiar cases of A-type discordance, but no familiar cases of B-type, the latter is theoretically exotic. However, as we will now show, no cogent objection can be constructed out of either concern.

## 2.1. Lack of an Explanation

Schroeder at several points indicates that there is an explanatory asymmetry between A-type and B-type discordance. He writes about B-type discordance:

Let me be clear that we *can* do things this way. ...But once we do things in this way, it should be very clear that we have left completely unexplained and apparently inexplicable why ‘murder is wrong’ and ‘murder is not wrong’ are inconsistent.<sup>24</sup>

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22 *Being For*, 92-3.

23 *Ibid.*, 59.

24 *Ibid.*, 47.

And:

All of the paradigm cases of inconsistency between mental states are cases of bearing the same attitude toward inconsistent contents. ...An explanation that appeals to such materials is *respectable*, in the sense that it appeals to the kinds of assumption that it is reasonable for expressivists to hope to be able to explain.<sup>25</sup>

So the problem with B-type discordance might be that we cannot explain why attitudes of different types, or attitudes with logically consistent contents, would conflict with each other. Expressivists need to provide such an explanation before they can appeal to B-type discordance in their semantic theories, otherwise they are “essentially helping [themselves] to the very thing... that expressivists need to explain.”<sup>26</sup>

Now obviously a theory should aim to explain as many of its important concepts as possible. But just as obviously, any theory must appeal to some unexplained notions—unless Hegel’s completely presuppositionless metaphysics is a viable program. The failure of B-type theorists to provide an explanation of B-type discordance is objectionable only if there is something especially onerous about accepting this particular primitive. Since Schroeder accepts A-type discordance, there should be some asymmetry between A- and B-type. Either, (i) there is no need to provide an explanation of A-type discordance or (ii) A-type discordance can be explained.

There are a number of seductive reasons for accepting (i). One may think ‘<inconsistent attitudes>’ just means ‘attitudes with inconsistent contents.’ But this is obviously false: desiring  $p$  while believing  $\sim p$  is not discordant. One may think instead that ‘<inconsistent> attitudes’ means ‘attitudes of the same type with inconsistent contents.’ This

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

is getting dangerously close to begging the question, but in any case, it cannot be correct either. One can fear that Malachi escaped and fear that he did not without discordance and it is controversial whether desiring  $p$  and desiring  $\sim p$  is discordant.<sup>27</sup>

Schroeder is explicit that only a small portion of our attitudes are discordant when they have inconsistent contents: belief and intention are the clearest cases.<sup>28</sup> But this just highlights the fact that <inconsistency> in this debate cannot simply be identified with some putatively unproblematic notion such as having inconsistent contents. This leads us to option (ii): A-type discordance can be explained, while B-type cannot. Schroeder dubs the property—whatever it is—in virtue of which two attitudes with inconsistent contents are discordant ‘inconsistency-transmission’. He then writes:

Cognitivists, on the other hand, have the easiest of times explaining why these thoughts [*murder is wrong*] and [*murder is not wrong*] are inconsistent. They are inconsistent because they are beliefs towards inconsistent contents, and belief is inconsistency-transmitting.<sup>29</sup>

But this is misleading; the cognitivist has the easiest of times explaining A-type discordance *given an explanation of inconsistency-transmission*.<sup>30</sup> Without the latter explanation, the cognitivist merely has a description of what an explanation would look like. Simply naming the phenomenon does not amount to explaining it. And sometimes Schroeder writes, quite

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27 For arguments that it is, see Simon Blackburn, “Attitudes and Contents,” *Ethics* 98 (1988): 501–17; for arguments that it is not, see Derek Baker, “Ambivalent Desires and the Problem with Reduction,” *Philosophical Studies* 150 (2010): 37–47. Schroeder’s example of an attitude with this property is wondering whether, *Being For*, 8.

28 *Being For*, 40–1.

29 *Ibid.*, 51.

30 Should we refer to Schroeder’s property as “inconsistency-transmission” or as “<inconsistency>-transmission?” We do not know. The inconsistency that gets transmitted is semantic inconsistency, which we have chosen to leave outside of angled brackets. The inconsistency that gets received is discordance or <inconsistency>. We suspect talk of transmission here is an unhelpful and potentially misleading metaphor.

differently, that he “is not certain that anyone has given a satisfactory explanation of the A-type inconsistency of intention and belief...”<sup>31</sup>

We need an explanation of why some attitudes are inconsistency-transmitting whereas some are not. There is no evidence that the explanation would be similar in each case. It is not merely beliefs that are inconsistency-transmitting for Schroeder, but also intentions and the *being for* attitude. The latter are not truth-apt states. Why would we think that inconsistency-transmission is explained by the same properties there as in the case of belief?<sup>32</sup>

Nor can we explain why beliefs are inconsistency-transmitting simply by appealing to the fact that they are representational. If one’s beliefs are inconsistent, then one is representing the world falsely. But explaining inconsistency-transmission solely in terms of the representational nature of the attitudes both under- and overgenerates. Intentions can be inconsistency-transmitting, but they are not representational, truth-apt attitudes.<sup>33</sup> And supposing, imagining, entertaining, and plausibly some forms of perception are representational; yet it is not discordant to, say, suppose  $p$  while believing  $\sim p$  or to have a perceptual experience representing  $p$  while believing  $\sim p$ .

One might argue that beliefs represent their objects in a special way, different from suppositions and like attitudes. We suspect this is correct, but note that attempts to account for finer-grained distinctions within the class of representational (or motivating) attitudes

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31 *Ibid.*, chapter 3, fn. 5.

32 Some readers may have been concerned that on our characterization, B-type discordance ceases to be a unified theoretical class, and turns into a grab-bag, amounting to any discordance that is not A-type. We are not concerned about this, because we see no reason at present to believe that A-type discordance is a unified class. It includes both representational and non-representational attitudes. The fact that intentions and beliefs are both discordant if their contents are inconsistent could turn out to be a very superficial similarity. In the absence of a larger theoretical picture, such taxonomies should be regarded as arbitrary. See also fn. 60.

33 J. David Velleman, “On the Aim of Belief,” in *The Possibility of Practical Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000): 244-82.

inevitably appeal to things like functional role, or rationalizing relations among attitudes.<sup>34</sup> In section 2.2 we will argue that all of our examples of B-type discordance plausibly involve contravention of functional role or breakdown of holistic rational coherence. For now, it is enough to note that the idea that only A-type conflicts between attitudes would involve contravention of functional role or fractures in rationalizing connections—and that other types of psychological conflict could not—is simply incredible without further argument.

We thus cannot charitably read Schroeder as pursuing option (ii). So this leads us back to (i). If ‘inconsistency’ does not just mean ‘logical inconsistency’ or ‘A-type discordance,’ what could justify the assumption that B-type stands in need of explanation whereas A-type does not? One reason suggested by the text is that A-type discordance is familiar, but B-type discordance is theoretically exotic. Supporting this interpretation, we’ve already seen that Schroeder writes:

But B-type inconsistency is not something that expressivists can take for granted, because there are no good examples of it.<sup>35</sup>

Now, it seems to us that approving and disapproving of murder is itself an excellent example of B-type discordance, but in any case, there are others. What’s more, while explanations of *why* these cases are discordant are sketchy, they exist, and they work just as well for B-type cases as for A-type cases.

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34 For discussions of finer-grained ways of individuating attitude-types, see Michael Bratman, “Practical Reasoning and Acceptance in a Context,” *Mind* 101 (1992): 1-16, and “Intention, Belief, Practical, Theoretical,” in *Spheres of Reason: New Essays in the Philosophy of Normativity*, ed. Simon Robertson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); J. David Velleman, “The Guise of the Good,” *Noûs* 26 (1992): 3-26, and “On the Aim of Belief;” and Karl Schafer, “Perception and the Rational Force of Desire,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 110 (2013): 258-81.

35 *Being For*, 48.

## 2.2. Examples of B-type Discordance

Before offering our examples, we wish to sketch out two accounts of why possessing certain combinations of attitudes strikes us as <inconsistent>. As we've noted, we regard these explanations as incomplete—much as we regard explanations of the nature of the proposition or of truth. But they have four functions in our argument. First, they show that even if the expressivist should treat discordance as a primitive within her semantic theory, there is no need to think that this involves postulating an irreducible, potentially non-natural property. Second, we will see that these explanatory projects both make predictions about the key features we should expect discordant attitudes to exhibit; this justifies our assumption that all of our cases, which are unlike in important respects, are nonetheless instances of the same phenomenon—that discordant attitudes make up a unified class. Third, it will become apparent that both explanatory pictures will apply just as well to forms of B-type discordance as A-type so there is no asymmetry of theoretical respectability. Finally, as we will see in section 3, both of the available explanations of discordance can be put to work to explain why sentences expressing discordant attitudes yield a form of communicative breakdown.

The first explanatory project identifies discordance with a strong sense of interpretive incoherence.<sup>36</sup> The person who believes  $p$  and believes  $\sim p$  is incoherent in this way; she seems to be in disagreement with herself and, while we might ultimately be persuaded to attribute the contradictory beliefs to her, there will be a residual sense in which it is unclear what she could be thinking. Intending inconsistent ends is likewise incoherent. If two distinct people were to intend  $q$  and  $\sim q$ , respectively, we would see them as rivals, and the individual who intends both is typically committed to undermining his own actions. While we might be

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<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Donald Davidson, "Incoherence and Irrationality," *Dialectica* 39 (1985): 345-54.

persuaded that someone's state of mind is best described by attributing an intention that  $q$  and an intention that  $\sim q$ , the agent falls short of the paradigm case of possessing the relevant attitude, because (the idea goes) attitudes are in part individuated by their rational connections to other attitudes.<sup>37</sup>

The second explanatory project is a Velleman-style account in terms of functional role.<sup>38</sup> Since the function of belief is to represent the world, a belief is doing its job properly when the world is the way the belief says it is. Of course, the functional-role of beliefs must be distinguished from representational states like imagining, but providing such an account here is beyond the scope of the paper.<sup>39</sup> Beliefs with inconsistent contents are discordant since they are guaranteed to misrepresent the world. Given the role intentions play in directing action, intentions with inconsistent content will likewise see their functional role undermined.<sup>40</sup>

We do not wish to commit to either style of explanation and, moreover, we need not.<sup>41</sup> All that is necessary for our purposes is that we convince you that (a) the property we are calling "discordance" is real and (b) can, in principle, be given a satisfying explanation in some way such as the two just sketched. We see it as very plausible that each case below can be explained in either way; moreover, we see this as evidence that these examples form a

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37 We do not mean to argue against ways of understanding discordant sets of beliefs in terms, say, of fragmentation, as in David Lewis's "Logic for Equivocators," *Noûs* 16 (1982): 431-41. Rather, what we are pointing out is that accommodating discordant beliefs requires relaxing our ordinary ways of understanding speakers. Treatments such as Lewis's testify to our point. We should also note that the form of unintelligibility at work here need not be one recognized within the empirical discipline of psychology. This is unintelligibility *given* a project of providing *rationalizing* interpretations of thoughts and behavior. We doubt that this counts against its naturalist bona fides, but that problem is outside the scope of this paper. Our thanks to an anonymous referee for asking us to clarify this.

38 See J. David Velleman, "The Possibility of Practical Reason," *Ethics* 106 (1996): 694-726, and "On the Aim of Belief."

39 Presumably it will point to things such as the way beliefs tend to bring out of existence beliefs with incompatible contents, and the role belief plays in directing action. Readers interested in this problem should see the titles cited in fn. 33.

40 Michael Bratman, *Intentions, Plans, and Practical Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

41 This is quite a good thing—we disagree about which explanation of the two just sketched is more plausible. Luckily, modding out our differences does not affect our argument in the slightest.

unified class. We will thus henceforth use the existence of interpretive incoherence, and the guaranteed contravention of functional role as evidence of discordance. Mere conflict between attitudes will not be treated as sufficient evidence unless both of these conditions are met.

### 2.2.1. Preferences

Comparative preferences<sup>42</sup> are a clear case of familiar, yet B-type discordance. The axioms governing preference yield a natural definition of discordance of preference: discordant preferences violate the preference axioms.<sup>43</sup> But preferences take as their content *pairs* of mutually exclusive propositions. It is unclear, then, what it could mean for preferences to be A-type discordant.

For example, an agent could prefer  $p$  to  $\sim p$ . This seems like a reasonable enough thing to do. But notice that the contents,  $p$  and  $\sim p$ , are inconsistent. This does not make the preference discordant. Since discordance of preferences is independent of the inconsistency of the contents, it is B-type. One might object that this is an overly uncharitable way of understanding how an A-type partisan would make sense of discordant preferences.

Presumably there would be some more sophisticated way of *extending* the notion of A-type discordance to include attitudes which take pairs of propositions as their contents.<sup>44</sup> But it is

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42 By ‘comparative preferences’ we mean conative attitudes that are explicitly or implicitly comparative in nature. The most obvious case is preferences, of course. But note that we also have expressions such as ‘I want pizza rather than ice cream’ or ‘I desire to ride my bike more than I desire to swim’, which are also comparative, even if they use the verbs ‘want’ or ‘desire’. For an argument that all uses of ‘prefer’ are implicitly comparative, see Robert Stalnaker, “From Contextualism to Contrastivism,” *Philosophical Studies* 119 (2004): 73–103.

43 We view the axioms governing preferences as an idealization of our intuitive conception of preference. For elaboration of this idea, see Philip Pettit, “Decision Theory and Folk Psychology,” in *Rules, Reasons, and Norms: Selected Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003): 192–221; and James Dreier, “Rational Preference: Decision Theory as a Theory of Practical Rationality,” *Theory and Decision* 40 (1996): 249–76.

44 Thanks to an anonymous referee for helping us clarify this point.

unclear how the notion could be extended; and in any case, it seems unnecessary for understanding discordance of preference.

Alternatively, one might try to account for discordance of preference by suggesting that the preference actually implicitly posits a relation between the two states of affairs represented by the propositions. So long as the relation in question is transitive and asymmetric, discordance of preference will be explainable in terms of semantic inconsistency.<sup>45</sup> The most natural candidate is the *better than* relation.<sup>46</sup> There is some plausibility to the idea that to prefer one thing to another, one must regard it as better *in some way*. But note that this does not explain the axioms. For example, pizza is better than ice cream in some respect, but ice cream is certainly better than pizza in some other respect. So, if preferences represented one of their objects as better in some way than the other, a person could have asymmetric preferences without any semantic inconsistency in the contents. In order to explain the axioms solely on the basis of semantic inconsistency, one must insist that preferences always represent one object as superior to the other in the same respect. But this is psychologically implausible. *Utility* is typically understood as a theoretical construct within Decision Theory because of the implausibility that our preferences rank options according to a single measure of value.

So we suggest that discordance of preference should be understood as a form of B-type discordance.<sup>47</sup> Given the plausible functional role of preferences—directing choice—preferences that violate the axioms contravene their functional role. A person with cyclic preferences is famously vulnerable to Dutch books, and hence is willing to expend effort and resources to undermine the intended effects of his own most recent choice. And such a

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45 We would like to thank an anonymous referee for raising this issue.

46 Those interested in developing such an account should see John Broome, *Weighing Goods: Equality, Uncertainty, and Time*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991).

47 Jamie Dreier, in his Author-meets-Critics session on *Being For*, notes that the natural way to understand inconsistency of preference is B-type <inconsistency>. Alan Gibbard makes the same point in his recent book, *Normativity and Meaning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

person's psychology is plausibly incoherent in the Davidsonian sense;<sup>48</sup> it is entirely unclear if there is anything we can say the person who prefers  $p$  to  $q$ ,  $q$  to  $r$ , and  $r$  to  $p$  really wants most.

### 2.2.2. Credential States

Credences present another case of B-type discordance. A credence of .6 in  $p$  is not a belief that  $p$  has a 60% chance of being true. The .6 corresponds to the strength of one's confidence that  $p$ . In other words, it represents an idealized property of the psychological state which takes  $p$  as its content. In everyday English we would describe being in this state as having as moderate confidence that  $p$ . Now, a person with a credence of .6 that  $p$  is rationally required to have a credence of .4 that  $\sim p$ . Such a person has consistent credences regarding  $p$ . A person with a .6 credence that  $p$  and a .5 credence that  $\sim p$  is discordant. The contents of the first person's credences are identical to the contents of the credences of the second. So the discordance cannot be explained *merely* by the contents—it must be B-type.<sup>49</sup>

Imagine that Bob is almost certain that there was a first president of the United States, is highly confident that the first president was George Washington, and is highly doubtful that it was some person other than Washington. His friend Steve, on the other hand, is certain that there was a first president of the United States, but is highly doubtful that the first president was George Washington, and is highly doubtful that it was some person other than Washington. Steve's attitudes are discordant, Bob's are not. Yet the *contents* of their credences are identical. So Steve must suffer from a case of B-type discordance. The discordance, moreover, is a form of interpretive incoherence. His psychology is, to some

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48 Failure of preference transitivity is one of Davidson's examples of psychological incoherence, in his "Incoherence and Irrationality."

49 See again Gibbard's *Meaning and Normativity* for a similar take on credences and B-type discordance.

degree, unintelligible: Steve seems to lack any stable considered opinion about the first president of the United States. As far as functional role goes, credences like beliefs presumably have the function of representing the world, but in a manner that allows for uncertainty. Steve's credences clearly contravene that functional role.

### 2.2.3. Intentions and Beliefs

Intending ends that one *believes* inconsistent is also discordant. For example, if I intend  $p$  and I intend  $q$  while simultaneously believing  $p$  only if  $\sim q$ , my intentions and beliefs are discordant. But the belief must be present to make the intentions discordant. Given that both beliefs and intentions are supposed to coordinate to present the agent with a picture of the world and direct him to make changes within it, this combination of attitudes seems to clearly contravene its functional role. Difficulty in interpreting the attitudes is also present—it is unclear what I am really trying to do, or if I really do believe that  $p$  and  $q$  are incompatible.

Schroeder himself allows that intentions can be <inconsistent> with beliefs, as well as with each other. Schroeder postulates that there is a master expressivist attitude, the *being for* attitude, and argues, for reasons given in the first section, that for an expressivist beliefs must reduce to a special case of *being for*. Schroeder goes on to argue that one advantage of this reduction is that we could plausibly reduce intention to a special case of *being for* as well, and this “would explain why intending to is inconsistent with believing that you will not, without requiring any positive belief that you will...”<sup>50</sup>

Admittedly Schroeder can treat discordance between intentions and beliefs as A-type. But consider the dialectic. The reason the expressivist had to conclude beliefs were really conative was that there were no good examples of B-type discordance. Conative beliefs, then,

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<sup>50</sup> *Being For*, 101.

were the only way to explain how normative and non-normative sentences could be discordant with one another. Only after it is accepted that beliefs are conative is the possibility of discordance between beliefs and intentions taken seriously. But this raises a question: why couldn't the expressivist have introduced discordance of belief and intention earlier, as a good example of inter-attitudinal discordance and hence B-type discordance? This would have obviated the need to identify beliefs as conative in the first place.

As another way of making the same point, Schroeder can be seen as arguing:

1. Beliefs and intentions can be discordant with each other.
2. If attitudes are discordant, they are A-type discordant.
3. If attitudes can be A-type discordant, then they are attitudes of the same type.
4. Conclusion: Beliefs and intentions are attitudes of the same type.

But one man's *ponens* is another man's *tollens*: the expressivist can insist that 4 is false, and conclude from that that 2 must be false as well.

Why would the expressivist reject 4? For one thing, it leads the expressivist to non-cognitivism about beliefs, which Schroeder correctly describes as a reductio of expressivism. It requires, moreover, rejecting a typical motivation for expressivism—that normative language and descriptive language have fundamentally different roles, that the first has to do with motivation and the second with assessing an independently given world.

The other oddity with Schroeder's argument is apparent on a second glance. *It has nothing to do with expressivism*. If the argument is sound, it is sound whether or not expressivism is true. If A-type discordance is the only sort and if beliefs and intentions are directly discordant, then intentions and beliefs must be attitudes of the same sort, regardless of one's semantics. But then either non-cognitivism about belief must be true, or cognitivism

about intention. Surely this is too strong. Arguments have been advanced in favor of cognitivism about intention, the thesis that intention is really a species of belief.<sup>51</sup>

Nonetheless, the position is controversial; there is common-sense plausibility to the idea that intentions and beliefs are distinct types of mental states.<sup>52</sup> Given this, it is unclear why the expressivist is forbidden from putting forward the discordance between belief and intention as a plausible example of B-type discordance.

#### **2.2.4. Non-Propositional Attitudes**

Note that the above examples of B-type discordance all had, as their content, some variation on propositional content. This does not exhaust the realm of attitudes that can be discordant. We will discuss here non-propositional attitudes, starting with the simple attitudes of like and dislike, then discussing the more complicated case of approval and disapproval. We start with the obvious fact that we typically like things or actions, not propositions. I can, of course, like *that Joe is at the coffee shop*, but this is not the common case. The targets of our evaluations are typically things like hamburgers, coffee shops, cigarette brands, people, dancing, and going to the store. We like Susan, Camels, rye whiskey, doing cartwheels, and the curve of our partner's neck. We dislike Fred, Newports, vodka, waiting at the DMV, and the new shoes our partner mistakenly bought us on a whim. The naïve and correct view of the structure of such attitudes is object directed.<sup>53</sup> When we like Fred, the content of the attitude we are giving voice to is Fred—or, at worst, a non-propositional representation of Fred. It is

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51 For example, see Velleman, "The Possibility of Practical Reason."

52 See Michael Bratman, "Cognitivism about Practical Reason," *Ethics* 102 (1992): 117-28, and his "Belief, Intention, Theoretical, Practical."

53 Note that we cannot reduce liking and disliking to preferences since the structure of preferences is irreducibly comparative whereas the structure of likes and dislikes is not. Thanks to Jamie Dreier for conversation about this point.

not that *Fred exists* or that *Fred is thus and so* or even a collection of Fred-properties.<sup>54</sup>

Possessing a pair of attitudes such as liking and disliking aimed at a similar subject (say, the unfortunate shoes my partner bought me) is a paradigmatic example of discordance. We can be conflicted about something, of course, and indecisive. We can fail to know whether we like or dislike something. We can like *that X is such and so* while disliking *that Y is thus and so*. This relation could even be fine grained: we like the Thai food for being spicy, but dislike it for being painful, even though the painfulness may be constitutive of the spiciness.<sup>55</sup> But it is discordant to have an all things considered like and an all things considered dislike of one and the same object, or like and dislike it under the same aspect. To like or dislike something in this way, even privately, is to take a stand on something. The interpersonal role of these attitudes is to guide our group decisions and to coordinate our reactions to various events. (When we say that they guide group decisions, we mean this only in the very quotidian sense that what a group of people like and dislike for dinner will guide the group's decision on what to eat.) The intrapersonal role is to structure our decisions over time. Since liking and disliking of one and the same thing contravenes this purpose, it is discordant. Note also that we are inclined to interpret a claim that someone likes and dislikes something as the claim that they like different aspects of that thing, or that they alternate between liking and disliking it over time. The state of mind is thus also plausibly incoherent in the interpretive sense given above. Discordance of like and dislike cannot be a case of A-type discordance since (a) objects cannot be inconsistent with each other and (b) it is a case of distinct attitudes aimed at identical objects.

Of course, there is good reason to posit hidden structure in the case of other

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54 This naïve view has a long pedigree. To our knowledge, it is first explicitly discussed in Book IV of the Republic in the course of Plato's argument for the tripartite division of the soul. See (437E-439A).

55 For example and more discussion of "hyperintensional" forms of ambivalence, see Baker, "Ambivalent Desires;" and Matt Strohl, "Horror and Hedonic Ambivalence," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 70 (2012): 203-12.

intensional transitive verbs such as ‘wants,’ which yields an ambiguity when placed in either the past or the future tense and adverbially modified.<sup>56</sup> Consider: ‘I wanted an iPad before any of my colleagues.’ This might mean that before any of my friends wanted an iPad, I wanted an iPad. It also might mean that I wanted [to have] an iPad before anyone [else] had an iPad. The natural way to explain this ambiguity is to posit hidden structure. If we construe ‘want’ as ‘want to have’ then we can explain the ambiguity easily. In the former case, ‘before anyone’ modifies ‘want.’ In the latter, it modifies ‘to have.’ This sort of consideration is the best reason for positing hidden structure. But the same sort of ambiguity does not arise for ‘like.’ ‘Joe liked Berlin before any of his friends’ does not suffer from an ambiguity which could be resolved by positing unarticulated structure between ‘liked’ and ‘Berlin’ as we must do to resolve the ambiguity in ‘Joe wanted an iPad before anyone’. If there is an ambiguity here, it’s a lexical ambiguity concerning ‘before’, not a structural ambiguity as in our case above.<sup>57</sup> So, the best reason for positing hidden structure for intensional transitive verbs like ‘want’ does not hold for the case of ‘like’.

‘Like’ and ‘dislike’ are not the only examples of intensional transitive verbs which admit of something like B-type discordance. ‘Admire’, ‘disdain’, ‘love’, ‘hate’, and so on all seem to have the same sort of character. They cannot in any straightforward way be translated into propositional attitudes, they take a direct object, and they can stand in coherence relations with one another. We should expect that many of these can stand in relations of B-type discordance to one another.<sup>58</sup>

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56 Graeme Forbes, *Attitude Problems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

57 Note also that there are cases like ‘Joe liked New York in the fall’, which seem weakly ambiguous. The ambiguity here is to be resolved by distinguishing between two possible objects: New York and New York-in-the-fall, not by adding propositional structure. Also, and more importantly, it’s enough for our purposes here to demonstrate a single unambiguous case. Additional ambiguous cases do not matter.

58 For further convincing arguments against sententialism for all attitudes, see Alex Grzankowski “Not All Attitudes are Propositional,” *European Journal of Philosophy*, forthcoming. For a contrasting view about the nature of the contents of some emotions, such as moods, see Angela Mendelovici “Intentionalism about Moods,” *Thought: A Journal of Philosophy*, 2 (2013): 126-36.

### 2.2.5. Approval and Disapproval

We can like and dislike not just objects, but also *actions* such as dancing. Just as liking Susie and disliking Susie is discordant, liking dancing and disliking dancing is discordant. But act-types, like propositions and unlike ordinary objects, take negations in some sense. Thus, we can like not dancing while we cannot like not shoes. Note that we still cannot explain the discordance of liking dancing and disliking dancing by means of the inconsistency of the content.<sup>59</sup> The reason for this is that there is nothing incoherent about liking dancing and liking not dancing, that just makes you easy-going; and if your grandmother dislikes dancing and dislikes not dancing, she is being curmudgeonly, but not discordant. However, disliking dancing and liking dancing is discordant.

Similar remarks apply to attitudes like approval and disapproval. This is especially important given the common expressivist analysis of moral judgments in terms of approval, disapproval, and tolerance. Compare the following two pairs of sentences:

(1a) Joe disapproves of dancing.

(1b) Joe disapproves of not dancing.

(2a) Joe disapproves of dancing.

(2b) Joe approves of dancing.

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<sup>59</sup> Strictly speaking, actions do not stand in semantic relations like propositions. However, dancing (at a time, in a place, etc.) excludes not dancing (at that place, at that time, etc.) The looseness of our discussion on this point thus should not cause any confusion.

It should be clear that the pair (1a) and (1b) is not discordant; it is simply the attitudes of someone who is mean-spirited. (2a) and (2b) are, however, discordant. The comparison shows that this inconsistency cannot be A-type.

Summing up, B-type discordance does not just seem to be theoretically useful and methodologically legitimate, it seems to border on a necessary part of an explanation of certain attitudes, such as those which are not inconsistency transmitting, but which can be discordant. For the purpose of the latter half of the paper, note that one important lesson of these examples is that quite frequently some *other* factor needs to be invoked, other than semantic or logical inconsistency, to explain why certain collections of attitudes are discordant and others, like approving of two situations which exclude one another, are not.<sup>60</sup>

### 2.3. Can B-type Accounts Be Explanatory?

Schroeder occasionally raises another worry for B-type accounts which is unconnected with skepticism about the existence of the B-type discordance, but motivated instead by skepticism about its theoretical utility in an expressivist semantics. He writes that if one does not accept his A-type account:

The *only* alternative is to posit, along with Horgan and Timmons, an infinite hierarchy of distinct and logically unrelated attitudes and to postulate that they miraculously bear the right inconsistency relations to one another. Views like theirs and Gibbard's don't tell us what 'not'

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<sup>60</sup> A-type discordance groups intentions and beliefs together, as attitudes that are both discordant when their contents are semantically inconsistent. But we could just as well have grouped attitudes according to representational and conative cases of inconsistency. Then beliefs and credences would have been grouped together, while intentions, preferences, and likings would also make a class. Or we could have divided attitudes according to whether their content was propositional or not, arriving at a new taxonomy. We of course will continue to speak of A- and B-type discordance throughout the remainder of the paper. But we see no reason at all to believe that the taxonomy carves forms of discordance at the joints. Thanks to an anonymous referee for asking us to clarify this point.

means. They tell us what elaborate hypothesis has to be true, in order for expressivism to be true, but they don't do anything at all to make this hypothesis credible.<sup>61</sup> [emphasis ours]

Horgan and Timmons develop an expressivist account according to which each logically complex sentence expresses a distinct type of attitude.<sup>62</sup> In other words 'Grass is green and murder is wrong' expresses one type of attitude, and 'Grass is not green or murder is not wrong' expresses a different type of attitude. This holds for each new complex sentence. The problem Schroeder identifies is that this requires we postulate an infinite number of different attitude types and an infinite number of distinct B-type discordance relations between them. Finally—though he is less clear on this point—the majority of the attitudes types posited are intuitively unfamiliar, and so we have no way of checking whether the claims the theory makes about discordance relations are independently credible. Schroeder believes that any B-type account will have to resort to similar theoretical expedients. Or, at least, this is what is suggested by claiming that this is 'the only alternative' to his account. So it may be that Schroeder's rejection of B-type expressivism does not depend on his arguments against B-type discordance.

The first point to make in response to this problem is that while we believe an expressivist account is allowed to appeal to unexplained primitives, it is obviously unacceptable for a theory to appeal to an *infinite number* of unexplained primitives. While this is clearly a powerful objection to the B-type expressivism put forward by Horgan and Timmons, it is not obvious that Schroeder is justified in criticizing Gibbard on the same grounds (likewise with Blackburn and Dreier). Schroeder does claim of Gibbard's theory:

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61 *Being For*, 61.

62 Terence Horgan and Mark Timmons "Cognitivist Expressivism," in *Metaethics after Moore*, eds. T. Horgan and M. Timmons, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006): 255-98.

...[W]hat it is really saying is merely that ‘murder is not wrong’ must express a mental state that is inconsistent with all and only the hyperdecided mental states that ‘murder is wrong’ is not inconsistent with. And again, that looks more like a list of the criteria that we hope the attitude expressed by ‘murder is not wrong’ will satisfy, in lieu of a concrete story about which mental state this actually is, and why it turns out to be inconsistent with the right other mental states.<sup>63</sup>

The claim that Gibbard gives no concrete story about the mental state is strange, given that Schroeder himself writes earlier in the same book that Gibbard’s “primary claim is to construct an expressivist language to express intentions—plans, as he calls them.”<sup>64</sup> As for the complaint that Gibbard cannot explain why the relevant mental states are discordant, it is presented much too quickly to tell if it is based on anything other than Schroeder’s rejection of B-type discordance, or whether there are additional difficulties as there are in the case of Horgan and Timmons.

In any case, an objection like Schroeder’s, that there are far too many individual attitudes expressed on the expressivist account, is far more pressing when we lack a compositional story about how to obtain complex mental states from simple ones.<sup>65</sup> A similar objection could be raised against the number of sentence meanings, but such an objection is misplaced in the presence of a compositional account. Gibbard’s own theory, if it is committed to an infinite number of complex mental states (an issue on which we are neutral), seems especially well suited to telling a compositional story about them. Atomic sentences express being in the same mental state as a set of hyperdecided agents—agents with fully complete, fully coherent sets of intentions and beliefs. The logical connectives denote operations on these sets: negation the complement, disjunction the union, and conjunction the

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63 *Being For*, 52.

64 *Being For*, 13. To be fair, this degree of concrete detail was not part of Gibbard’s initial proposal in *Wise Choices*, but was added in *Thinking How to Live*.

65 Mark Richard, *When Truth Gives Out* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

intersection. In that case, if ‘*p* and *q*’ expresses a complex state, we can identify it as the state that will be shared by all maximally decided and coherent agents who have both the state expressed by *p* and the state expressed by *q*. Note that if orthodox functionalism about mental states is true, there *must be* some set of psychological dispositions shared by all such agents (though it may lack a name in English; it may not even be an attitude). Any inconsistency relations that a set of dispositions stands in can be explained by the relation that it must bear to the dispositions making up the simpler attitudes. The key point here is that the image of a logical operation like conjunction on attitudes may not itself be an attitude, though what it is will depend on the attitude it is applied to—a familiar and often overlooked point in the literature on the Frege-Geach problem due originally to R.M. Hare.<sup>66</sup>

Even if we are overly optimistic here—or, what’s more likely, such a compositional story cannot be told in Gibbard’s framework for anything beyond the logical connectives—this does not show that B-type expressivism cannot be pursued, only that extant versions fail. The points raised by Schroeder and Richard show two connected desiderata a B-type account must meet. First, the number of unexplained primitives posited by a theory must be finite. Second, if a theory posits an infinite number of complex mental states, the discordance relations among these should be explained by compositional relations between simpler mental states, mirroring the compositional form of the language.

Schroeder clearly regards the Gibbardian solutions as a clear case of theft over honest toil. In his later book he charges it with being “Non-constructive and Unexplanatory.”<sup>67</sup> Schroeder goes on to argue that “no formally adequate expressivist account satisfying a couple of very simple constraints *can* be constructive.”<sup>68</sup> This argument, however, cannot be

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66 R. M. Hare, *The Language of Morals* (Oxford: Clarendon Oxford Press, 1952).

67 *Noncognitivism in Ethics*, 131.

68 *Ibid.*, 133.

an *independent* reason for rejecting B-type expressivism; one of the “very simple constraints” turns out to be that the theory restrict itself to A-type discordance.<sup>69</sup>

This means that [if we rely on attitudes of approval and disapproval] not only have we failed to give an account of what mental state is expressed by ‘stealing money is wrong’, but also that there is no state that we can assign to it, such that we can explain all of the inconsistencies that we need to explain as cases of disapproving of inconsistent contents—which disagree in the same, non-Moorean way, as beliefs with inconsistent contents do: by being cases of the same attitude with inconsistent contents.<sup>70</sup>

But we also have something new here—a distinction between Moorean and non-Moorean disagreement. Schroeder’s new thought seems to be that B-type discordance is simply the wrong type of discordance to explain the logical properties of normative sentences. Note that this worry is different from saying that B-type discordance does not exist, and thus is not settled by our prior examples. This objection, if cogent, would undermine much of the interest in B-type discordance. Happily, it is no more cogent than the previous objection. Examining why will allow us to flesh out how we think a B-type account should go.

### **3. Incoherence: Semantic and Psychological—and a Diagnosis of the Mistake**

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69 We actually do not know what Schroeder could have in mind by ‘constructive’ other than not relying on B-type inconsistency—on a normal interpretation, the account offered in *Being For* is inferior to Gibbard’s own with regards to its constructiveness. This is not meant as *tu quoque*. It is simply that, until a clearer criterion for explanatory constructiveness is offered, we are not in any position to judge Schroeder’s account explanatorily superior to Gibbard’s.

70 *Ibid.*, 135.

The worry is how normative utterances, on typical B-type expressivist accounts, can stand in *logical relations* of inconsistency.<sup>71</sup> Restriction to A-type discordance could potentially be motivated by the thought that sentences expressing attitudes could not be *logically* inconsistent, unless the contents of the attitudes expressed by them were logically inconsistent. The distinction Schroeder invokes between Moorean and non-Moorean <inconsistencies> comes from van Roojen.<sup>72</sup> The problem van Roojen presents is that not all cases of psychological conflict are cases of logical error. Moore’s paradox—‘It is raining but I don’t believe that it’s raining’—clearly expresses a fractured psychology. But there is no *logical* error involved, since both conjuncts can be true. Some expressivist accounts, such as Blackburn’s, seem to conflate the two types, treating any case of fractured psychology as a logical error.<sup>73</sup>

This is where our claim that the expressivist should appeal to properties of the language used to express attitudes as an explanatory resource becomes relevant. Schroeder, along with van Roojen and, as we will see, Zangwill, believes that expressivists must find a special sub-class of discordance to account for logical inconsistency, as opposed to the broadly linguistic inconsistency of the Moore-paradoxical sentence. Since accounting for the logical properties of sentences is to provide a necessary component to a solution of the Frege-Geach problem, this amounts to the claim that no solution to the Frege-Geach problem could be genuine, unless it provides a successful psychologistic explanation of logic. We will argue that expressivists are instead entitled to something much closer to the standard understanding of logic, and that cleaving more tightly to the standard understanding of logic in fact frees expressivists of the need to identify an especially “logical” form of discordance.

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71 Of course, given an explanation of inconsistency, an explanation of entailment generally follows.

72 Van Roojen, “Expressivism and Irrationality.”

73 Blackburn, *Spreading the Word*.

### 3.1. Moore's Paradox and Varieties of Inconsistency

On one standard cognitivist semantics, sentences denote propositions, and propositions can stand in all sorts of relations of entailment and inconsistency. Sentences are inconsistent only if their propositions are; moreover, inconsistency is primarily a property of propositions, and sentences are logically inconsistent *in part* because the propositions they express are inconsistent.<sup>74</sup>

The expressivist cannot use this story. If the meaning of the sentence is the attitude expressed, we are committed to logically inconsistent sentence 'meanings' that do not stand in relations of entailment, but instead relations of rational coherence or contravention of role. The strangeness of this position may in part motivate Schroeder's rejection of B-type discordance. He writes:

[Mark van Roojen's (1996)] diagnosis was that though Blackburn may have explained why there is something irrational about accepting the premises of an argument and denying its conclusion, irrationality is too easy to come by in order to suffice for an account of validity. Lots of combinations of mental states are irrational.

So the moral of the failure of HOA [Higher-Order Attitude] approaches is that if expressivists are going to explain a version of the inconsistency property or the inference licensing property that suffices to distinguish valid argument from invalid arguments, then they can't appeal to just any old kind of rational conflict between mental states—they need to appeal to the very kind of clash that obtains between beliefs with inconsistent contents.<sup>75</sup>

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74 Note that this "in part" explanation is compatible with what we take to be the sensible realist position, that vocabulary is also essential to explaining logical relations among sentences.

75 *Noncognitivism in Ethics*, 122.

This is a mistake. The expressivist story about logic should proceed in two steps. First, they should note that directly inconsistent (logically or otherwise) sentences are incoherent in the sense of yielding a communicative breakdown. When someone endorses premises but refuses to grant the conclusion they obviously entail, or asserts ‘ $p$  and  $q$ ’ but refuses to grant the truth of  $p$ , we are not entirely sure how to make sense of the speaker’s assertions. This fact should form the core of the expressivist account of the various forms of linguistic inconsistency. As we’ve noted, for the expressivist the more complex, regimented features of meaning should be grounded in the communicative role of the sentences. Each of the two accounts of the nature of discordance (provided in section 2.2) allow us to explain why a set of inconsistent sentences are unintelligible, why they fail in communication.

On the Davidsonian explanation of discordance, we have an extremely simple explanation of why inconsistent sentences are incoherent. The sentences express a psychology that is uninterpretable, or at least very difficult to sensibly interpret. The sentences get their meaning, at the most fundamental level, by expressing the speaker’s psychology. They are able to fulfill their other meaning-related roles—denoting, asserting—in virtue of the fact that they express a psychology. If the psychology expressed is incoherent, their use does not coherently denote or assert. So we do not understand what the speaker is saying.

If we use the functional-role explanation of discordance, our explanation will be different, but only marginally more complicated. Sentences can be understood as expressing commitments, where those commitments are understood in terms of the functional role of the relevant attitude. A sentence expressing the belief that  $p$  can be understood as expressing a commitment to reason and behave in the ways constitutive of the belief that  $p$ .<sup>76</sup> A sentence

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<sup>76</sup> This definition of belief may seem to saddle the expressivist with the non-cognitivism about belief we found unattractive in Schroeder’s theory. The expressivist can say that the sentence expresses, *among other things*,

expressing approval for something can be understood to express a commitment to ‘reason’ (i.e., update one’s other attitudes) and behave in the ways definitive of such approval. Since discordance, on this picture, involves having attitudes that cause mutual functional breakdowns, there will be no commitments definitive of a discordant mental state; or, at the very least, no precise commitments. Once again, the other aspects of a sentence’s meaning are explained by the commitments it expresses. So, the unclarity of the commitments being expressed explains the general incoherence of the sentences.

Now at this point, we do not yet have an explanation of *logical* inconsistency. As van Roojen points out, Moore-paradoxical sentences are “inconsistent” with each other, in a sense; but they are not logically inconsistent. ‘It is raining but I don’t believe that it is raining’ strikes us as a contradiction, even though it is not literally a contradiction; both conjuncts could be true.<sup>77</sup> The standard explanation of why this sentence strikes us as contradictory is that it is a pragmatic contradiction. Assertion pragmatically implies or commits the asserter to belief (or knowledge) of what is asserted, but the asserter of a Moore-paradoxical construction denies he believes his assertion. The worry for the expressivist, however, is that she may be forced to conflate pragmatic contradiction with semantic or logical contradiction.

The challenge for the expressivist is to show that she can explain why ‘it is raining, but I don’t believe it is raining’ involves no logical or semantic inconsistency—that it is a mere pragmatic contradiction rather than a logical or semantic contradiction. In the next section we do both, showing that the expressivist, appealing solely to properties of the language expressing the attitudes, has a principled account of how the Moore-Paradoxical sentence is merely a pragmatic contradiction. Most readers will have guessed at this point that our explanation of why such contradiction is non-logical involves off-loading logical

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commitments to reasoning and behavior, though these commitments do not exhaust what it is to have the belief (they are necessary, not sufficient). We would like to thank the editor who suggested this clarification.  
77 Van Roojen, “Expressivism and Irrationality,” 332.

relations onto formal features of the language. But Moore-paradoxical sentences still leave the expressivist with a serious problem in distinguishing semantic from pragmatic inconsistency; in other words, the expressivist must have a principled explanation of how both conjuncts could be true, despite her commitment to explaining truth in terms of communicative failure and (ultimately) psychological discordance. We will first account for what is easier—logical inconsistency—then what is harder—avoiding collapse of pragmatic and semantic inconsistency.

### **3.2. Logical Inconsistency as a Property of Sentences and an Account of Semantic Contradiction**

The expressivist should insist that logical properties are primarily properties of sentences, and that sentences can be logically inconsistent even though what they express (attitudes) cannot be. Sentences are broadly inconsistent in virtue of expressing discordant attitudes: attitudes which yield an unintelligible psychology or a set of incompatible commitments. As a first pass, logical inconsistency is what happens when a set of sentences express discordant attitudes *in virtue of the logical vocabulary*. In other words, we may not know which attitudes any of the logically primitive sentences express; we just need to know that, given how logical vocabulary connects or modifies those primitive sentences, they must express a *psychologically* <inconsistent> set of attitudes. We don't know which particular attitude is expressed by a normative sentence  $p$  but it must be discordant with the attitude expressed by  $\sim p$ . This runs entirely parallel to the standard realist account of logical inconsistency identified in section 1.1—logically inconsistent sentences are just the subset of inconsistent sentences identifiable as such solely in virtue of logical vocabulary.

Consequently, expressivist accounts must be able to specify a set of rules which tell you how to get from attitudes that can be expressed to others on the basis of the logical expressions that occur in the sentence, with that state of mind having appropriate relations of harmony and discordance.<sup>78</sup> That is, in parallel to realist semantics use of truth-functional operators, expressivists need to specify an attitude-theoretic function to stand as the denotation of an expression like ‘not’ when applied to moral sentences. A suitable account of how we pick out the logical vocabulary in these cases must also be given.

More complexity will be needed. Our account of logical inconsistency will have to extend the basis on which sentences can be identified as inconsistent to include some knowledge of which terms are occurring as objects, which as predicates, etc. ‘Murdering is wrong’ is logically inconsistent with ‘murdering is not wrong’ rather than ‘not murdering is wrong.’ We will thus need a broad notion of *logical structure* to replace logical vocabulary.<sup>79</sup> So our more refined version of the thesis is: sentences are logically inconsistent when they are identifiable as expressing psychologically inconsistent attitudes entirely in virtue of their logical structure.

‘It is raining’ and ‘I believe it’s not raining’ are broadly inconsistent when uttered by the same speaker, because they express a discordant state of mind; but they are not logically inconsistent. One must understand what ‘believes’ means in order to know that the attitudes expressed are discordant. ‘Believes’ is not plausibly part of our logical vocabulary, and neither is the connection between assertion and belief a part of our basic apparatus for

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78 When, of course, the attitudes expressed are discordance-apt. A fully worked out attitude-theoretic account would need to include an account of which sentences express discordance-apt, and hence attitude-functional negation taking, attitudes and which do not.

79 Note that this commitment to some form of pre-semantics is a commitment shared by all semantic theories—the main difference is that the majority of work in semantics has been on non-normative language and the pre-semantics of non-normative language is more familiar. Note also that this is the sense in which such sentences are interpreted (see fn. 6). The interpretation does not involve assigning a particular meaning to the sentence; it requires instead that we identify the logical structure: which terms are predicates, which are names, which are quantifiers, which are connectives and operators.

understanding logical form. As far as our logic is concerned, sincere assertion might express a commitment to disbelief or preference. On the other hand ‘murder is wrong’ and ‘murder is not wrong’ are identifiable as expressing inconsistent attitudes simply by knowing that ‘not’ switches the attitude expressed to its complement (one doesn’t need to know that ‘wrong’ expresses disapproval). The property of expressing an <inconsistent> state of mind is not to be identified with the property of *logical* inconsistency on the expressivist’s account any more than the property of being necessarily false is to be identified with the property of being logically inconsistent on the realist’s account. Both accounts need to add a formal element—that is, a choice of logical constants whose meaning is held fixed—to accommodate logical inconsistency.<sup>80</sup>

While it may seem like a cost to expressivism that it grants sentences logical properties that are not possessed by the things those sentences express, we should remind ourselves that on sensible realist accounts, this is also the case. It is simply a consequence of the fact that logic is formal, and meanings, whether propositions or expressed attitudes, are not.<sup>81</sup> Or, if they do have a formal aspect, the most natural way for a realist to capture this is to allow for a fine-grained propositions, which are partially individuated by their relations to sentences. The expressivist analogue of this will be discussed in section 3.3.

Explaining why ‘it’s raining, but I don’t believe it’s raining’ isn’t a logical contradiction is easy for the expressivist. Explaining why it is a pragmatic contradiction—

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80 Michael Ridge has also recently argued that an expressivist account of logical inconsistency needs to appeal to formality in order to keep logical inconsistency from over-generating. We regret that this work was released too late for us to be able to take more detailed account of it. See his *Impassioned Belief*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

81 Ruth Weintraub also notes that expressivists will need to (and are entitled to) distinguish between entailments that are semantic or analytic, and those that are logical. She notes that the difference is that analytic entailments hold in virtue of the meaning, but that “logical truth is formal.” See her “Logic for Expressivists,” *The Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 89 (2011): 601-16.

rather than a semantic contradiction—is harder.<sup>82</sup> Expressivism of course relies on the distinction between expressing an attitude and self-attributing an attitude to avoid collapse into subjectivism. The expressivist can thus appeal to the same distinction as the realist. ‘It is raining’ expresses a belief that it is raining, but does not describe such a belief. ‘I don’t believe that it is raining’ describes a belief. The conflict is not between what the first and second conjunct denote, but between what the first conjunct expresses and the second denotes.

This is correct, but the difficulty is that the expressivist is committed to explaining the truth and falsity of sentences in terms of their inconsistency. Inconsistency, in turn, is explained by the incompatibility of figuring in coherent communication, because the sentences express discordant states of mind. A Moore-paradoxical sentence fails to communicate, and it does so because of what seems like a discordant state of mind.<sup>83</sup> Given that an agent cannot possibly accept ‘It is raining’ and ‘I don’t believe it is raining’ without discordance, how does an expressivist resist the conclusion that these sentences are inconsistent, and hence cannot be true at the same time?

The inconsistency of an assertion of ‘it’s raining, but I don’t believe it’s raining’ depends heavily on context. Most obviously, it depends on the first-person indexical—‘it’s raining, but Frank doesn’t believe it’s raining’ is unproblematic—but it also depends on an implicit ‘now’ and ‘actually’ to generate the sense of contradiction. ‘It was raining, but I didn’t believe it was raining’ is intelligible, as is ‘it could have been raining, but I wouldn’t have believed it was raining’. If the expressivist can maintain that truth and falsity are

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82 While there is substantial pressure for the expressivist to account for non-normative meaning in terms of the attitudes—beliefs—expressed, so that the semantic theory is unified, we suspect there are ways for the expressivist to resist this. Nonetheless, we will use a standard Moore-paradoxical case. Even if we are correct, it is possible that normative versions of Moore’s paradox can be generated, though for some worries about such cases, see Jack Woods, “Expressivism and Moore’s Paradox,” *Philosopher’s Imprint* 14 (2014): 1-12.

83 Believing that one does not have a belief is arguably another case of B-type discordance. It is intuitively a case of psychological incoherence and a threat to the proper functioning of first-order belief. For argument in favor of and elaboration of this position, see Sydney Shoemaker, “On Knowing One’s Own Mind,” *Philosophical Perspectives* 2 (1988): 183-209, and “Self-Knowledge and Moore’s Paradox,” *Philosophical Studies* 77 (1995): 211-28.

explained by sentential inconsistency, *so long as the inconsistency does not depend on context*, she will have a way of distinguishing pragmatic from semantic contradiction. For example, if the expressivist can maintain that truth and falsity are explained by sentential inconsistency only if the inconsistency does not *essentially*<sup>84</sup> depend on indexical expressions, she will have a way of resisting the claim that the Moore-paradoxical sentence is a literal contradiction. This would provide an explanation of why this particular communicative conflict between asserted conjuncts is disconnected from their truth.<sup>85</sup>

Can the expressivist offer a defense that isn't ad hoc? In fact, such a position follows almost inevitably from reflection on the disquotational role played by truth. If Frank says, 'it is raining', and Lou says 'what Frank said is true', one of the functions of Frank's ascription of truth is to reassert that it is raining. Likewise, saying "'the dog is brown' is true' is a way of asserting that the dog is brown. Expressivists are under considerable pressure to maintain a deflationary picture of truth, where there isn't much more to truth than its role as a disquotational device. But even if we adopt a more robust picture, everyone should agree that being able to serve as a disquotational device is an essential component of our concept of truth and our ascriptions of truth to sentences.

What needs to be explained is why we can say of Moore-paradoxical utterances that they can be true, while explaining truth and falsity at least partially in terms of discordance. The trick is to notice that pragmatic features of assertions, such as speaker, location, and context are not preserved in all quotation contexts. Thus in some quotation contexts, the

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84 We use "essentially" to indicate that there's a particular kind of dependency on indexical expression we're not concerned with—'I'm at the store and I'm not' is semantically inconsistent, but it does not essentially depend on the presence of the first-person pronoun.

85 There remains the question of how to generally distinguish pragmatic from semantic inconsistency. We will not offer a solution to that here, since it would require considering large numbers of pragmatic inconsistencies that the expressivist is under pressure to conflate with the semantic. The strategy we are pursuing here could presumably be generalized to deal with these cases. Note that because of the link between semantic inconsistency and truth and falsehood, the expressivist is under no pressure at all to regard inconsistencies involving non-assertoric sentences ('Boo to murder!') as semantic.

reference of indexical expressions are transposed. If Frank says, “I am short,” and Lou says, “That’s true,” Lou does not reassert [I am short]. He reasserts, obviously, that Frank is short. Analogously, Lou can say without discordance that Frank’s assertion “it is raining, but I don’t believe it is raining” is true, since what he agrees with is not [it is raining, but I don’t believe it is raining], but that it is raining, but Frank doesn’t believe it is. Likewise, Frank can say of himself later, “when I said earlier ‘it it raining, but I don’t believe it is raining,’ what I said was true,” without expressing any discordance. Again, what Frank is now asserting when he calls the former statement true is that it was raining, but he did not believe it was raining. One can agree with a Moore-paradoxical sentence. The inconsistency is only found in certain *uses*. But a sentence needn’t be usable to be possibly true; it only need be such that a third-party could *in principle* affirm it as true without thereby expressing discordance.

The expressivist, then, should refine the account of truth we attributed to her in section 1.1. Sentences are broadly inconsistent just in case a speaker could not sincerely utter all of them without discordance. But some inconsistencies are pragmatic. The semantic inconsistencies can be identified as those which are not pragmatic—such as those that remain inconsistent when claimed true by a third-person speaker or a speaker at a different time or place.<sup>86</sup> This follows from the essential tie between disquotation and truth. So the expressivist has a principled way of maintaining that the Moore-paradoxical sentence is inconsistent, but not in a way that rules out the possibility of both conjuncts being true.

### **3.3. Logical and Illogical Reasoning**

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<sup>86</sup> Note that this states a necessary condition, not a sufficient condition, for semantic inconsistency.

Logical patterns are not simply realized in language, however. They are realized in our psychology when we draw inferences, or notice contradictions.<sup>87</sup> There is a natural worry, then, that by tying logic so heavily to the vehicles expressing our thoughts, we have ruled out any possibility that our thoughts themselves could stand in logical relations. Van Roojen, for example, writes:

...[S]ince the realist will find a *contradiction* between ‘Lying is always good,’ and ‘Lying is not always good,’ the expressivist will want a translation that counts the judgments as inconsistent in the less stringent expressivist sense. And where two judgments taken in a realist fashion do not contradict, the expressivist will want there to be no contradiction in the broader expressivist sense. Still, the expressivist’s sense of contradiction is an extension beyond the orthodox conception. Attitudes that would not count as contradictory on the latter account will count as contradictory on the former.<sup>88</sup>

Even if the expressivist can draw a line between literal and pragmatic contradiction, doing so depended on features of how language works. Both forms of contradiction expressed the same type of underlying discordance. So the attitudes must always contradict each other in the same way.

Similar concerns are voiced by Zangwill:

...If Blackburn is to imitate the logical structure of realistic thought, he requires that the contradiction obtains between the propositional attitudes, not just between their contents. For the moral realist, the two beliefs [X is good] and [X is bad] are logically contradictory. And the contradiction between the two beliefs obtains because of the contradiction between their contents. But just because of the difference between attitudes and beliefs, it is difficult to

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87 How to exactly characterize this is complicated. Logical relations are not simply “rules of thought,” as we know from Gilbert Harman, *Change in View: Principles of Reasoning* (Cambridge, MA: Bradford MIT Press, 1988).

88 “Expressivism and Irrationality,” 330.

envisage anything parallel for the projectivist. Those who hooray X and also boo X would be confused, but there would be no contradiction between their attitudes. Perhaps a confused person will be in a practical muddle, and that is not a good state to be in. But this is not a logical evaluation.<sup>89</sup>

So for a bit of reasoning to be “logical” requires that the components of such reasoning, attitudes, stand in logical relations to each other. But only a few such attitudes have the appropriate logical properties. Notice that Zangwill’s way of stating the objection assumes that attitudes have logical properties, which strikes us as a category mistake. But in any case, instances of inferring or reasoning can be logical or not, and an expressivist should be able to account for this at least.

Van Roojen, Zangwill, and Schroeder all seem to think that the expressivist cannot solve the Frege-Geach problem until she first explains how attitudes or instances of moral reasoning are logical. But this objection demands that the expressivist put the cart before the horse. The only way for expressivists to solve this problem is to solve the Frege-Geach problem—that is, to demonstrate that she can provide an adequate compositional semantics for normative terms. Once that problem is solved, solving this one is relatively easy.

Rather than explaining the logical properties of sentences by holding that they inherit those properties from the attitudes expressed, the expressivist should hold that the logical properties of the normative attitudes are inherited from the sentences that express them or that the logical properties of an inference are inherited from the argument that would express it. That is the whole of the expressivist solution. This may seem like theft over honest toil, until we look at how realism deals with an analogous problem.

Consider Zangwill’s two sample beliefs [X is good] and [X is bad]. The first thing to notice is that it is debatable whether these are even logically inconsistent: the inconsistency

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<sup>89</sup> “Moral Modus Ponens,” 182.

might be merely metaphysical or semantic. ‘Good’ and ‘bad’ are not obviously part of our logical vocabulary.<sup>90</sup> Even if one insists, contra plausibility, that they are, we can still generate inconsistencies of belief that are non-logical. Assume utilitarianism is true. The beliefs [X is good] and [X needlessly decreased happiness and increased suffering] have incompatible truth values, in that case. But they do not logically contradict one another. How does the realist account for this?

We actually don’t know. But this is well-known to be a difficult problem. If propositions are just defined in terms of truth values or sets of possible worlds, conflating metaphysically inconsistent beliefs with logically inconsistent beliefs is hard to avoid. One (to us) obvious solution is to individuate beliefs, in part, according to their relations to *sentences*.<sup>91</sup> The beliefs would either be primarily relations to sentences and derivatively to propositions, or they would be relations to fine-grained propositions partly individuated by sentences. But this is effectively the solution we’ve suggested for the expressivist; in fact, given the quasi-realist ambitions of contemporary expressivism, it is likely that these are simply variations on the same solution.<sup>92</sup>

Van Roojen notes that the rational relations between attitudes are a broader class than the logical relations between attitudes, and takes this to be a problem for the expressivist.<sup>93</sup> It is. But the realist faces a parallel problem: relations of entailment among propositions are a much broader class than the logical entailments between propositions. The natural solution is

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90 “[T]he incompatibility of ‘X is good’ and ‘X is bad’ is *analytic*, and not logical.” Weintraub, “Logic for expressivists,” 607. Weintraub also notes that we can *extend* our logical vocabulary so as to make the incompatibility (non-classically) logical.

91 For an example of this strategy, see Hartry Field “Mental Representation,” *Erkenntnis*, 13 (1978): 9-61.

92 Note also that virtually all contemporary forms of expressivism have some quasi-realist ambitions, which involves giving an account of how we can have cognitive relations to moral contents. Variations of this story are told by Blackburn, Gibbard, Horgan and Timmons, and Schroeder; it involves using the minimal notion of truth already appealed to, along with a reductive or minimalist notion of beliefs. Given a minimal notion of truth as a disquotational and quantificational device, we can give a deflationary notion of propositions. With this in place, any attitude which is expressed by sentences in the assertoric mode will present a (deflated) propositional content as true.

93 “Expressivism and Irrationality,” 334.

the same in both cases. Logical properties are primarily properties of sentences. The logical properties of other entities, fine-grained propositions, beliefs, other attitudes, and acts of reasoning, are explained by relations to formal properties of the vehicles of expression, for the realist as much as the expressivist.

### **3.4. Brief Summary of the Solution**

The expressivist should start by saying that certain combinations of attitudes are discordant—where this is explicitly not the same as being logically inconsistent. Assertions expressing discordant attitudes may fail as vehicles of communication due to constraints on interpretability or they may incur incompatible commitments. Some such failures of communication are semantic. It is a necessary condition on semantic inconsistency that not all of the sentences could be true at the same time; hence, inconsistencies are semantic only if discordance would result for any party asserting their truth or reiterating another's assertion of them. Some sentences are such that their assertion expresses discordant attitudes simply in virtue of their logical vocabulary and other structural features. These are the logically inconsistent sentences. Reasoning is logical or illogical because of relations the attitudes involved bear to sentences. An account of how attitudes can be assigned to logically complex sentences or predicates on the basis of the attitudes assigned to the atomic units must be given: this is called 'a solution to the Frege-Geach Problem'. We still need one of those.

At no point should the expressivist attempt to explain why failures of inference are logical failings independently of her story about the language. Such an explanation cannot be offered—except perhaps by appealing to an especially discordant form of discord, or something equally silly and besides the point.

## 4. Scorekeeping

We take the one uncontroversial outcome of this discussion to be that there are excellent examples of B-type discordance and, moreover, that explaining the B-type discordance of these examples is not significantly different than explaining the A-type discordance of <inconsistent> beliefs. This is important even outside the expressivist debate: there is a standard project of explaining rationality (at least partially) in terms of the <consistency> requirements on the relevant practical or theoretical attitudes. For example, one may try to reduce practical rationality to decision-theoretic <consistency> of preference.<sup>94</sup> If B-type discordance were a wholly fictitious notion, this project would be impossible. Likewise, Greg Restall advocates an ambitious project of explaining logical relations in terms of the rational coherence or incoherence of accepting and rejecting certain packages of claims.<sup>95</sup> It would be surprising if this project failed on the grounds that we *must* explain discordance of acceptance and rejection in terms of logical inconsistency.

Another upshot is that the expressivist should distinguish between logical and non-logical relations between sentences by appeal to their formal properties, rather than by appealing to special types of psychological conflicts among our attitudes. By itself, this does not solve the Frege-Geach problem, but it saves the expressivist the challenge of searching for an especially “logic-like” form of discordance; and it would bring her account of logical consequence more in-line with standard understandings, rather than saddling her with an unattractive psychologism, one which has looked especially bad since Harman’s *Change in*

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94 Dreier, “Decision Theory as a Theory of Practical Rationality.”

95 Greg Restall “Multiple Conclusions,” in *Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science: Proceedings of the Twelfth International Congress* (London: King’s College Publications, 2005): 189-205.

*View*. In other words, she buys herself a less restricted space in which to theorize, at the cost of making her account of logic look more plausible. The prospects for solving the Frege-Geach problem thus increase dramatically.

The other objections to B-type expressivist accounts have to do with specific failings of those accounts: they invoke an infinite number of primitives, they overgenerate logical inconsistencies, or they are explanatorily vacuous. These are serious objections, of course; but even if successful they only show that extant versions of B-type discordance cannot work. No argument that all B-type accounts must suffer from one of these defects has been provided. And, if B-type discordance is a theoretically respectable notion, we need such an argument if the claim that A-type discordance is ‘the only way forward for expressivists’ is to be justifiable.

## **5. Conclusion**

We have argued that cases of B-type discordance are as familiar as A-type. What’s more, we have shown that the expressivist has a principled reason to think that B-type discordance could explain the inconsistency of utterances expressing the B-type-discordant attitudes. The innovations of Schroeder’s book have expanded the resources of expressivist semantics. And the objections of Zangwill and Van Roojen have pointed to important lacunae in the expressivists’ account of logical relations for normative discourse. Such innovation and criticism is to be welcomed. We see no reason, however, to simultaneously straightjacket the expressivist project with a single way to analyze <inconsistency> of attitude. And we have shown that B-type discordance *can* be utilized to construct an account of logical relations for normative discourse and that B-type discordance is as amenable to explanation as A-type

discordance.

This is not to say that problems like the Frege-Geach are trivial for the B-type expressivist—they are not. But we need to correctly understand the problem. It is the problem of constructing an extensionally adequate compositional semantics of expression which predicts correct patterns of truth-preservation in the minimalist/disquotational sense of truth we've adopted above. This is a typical research project for many distinct areas of contemporary semantics. We see no reason to think that there is any deep tension in developing the appropriate illocutionary account of expression and specifying attitude-theoretic functions for the logical operators. Nor do we see any trouble in motivating the notion of B-type discordance itself.