Relativism and Expressivism

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To appear in Kusch (ed.), *Routledge Handbook to Relativism*

Abstract

Relativism and expressivism offer two different semantic frameworks for grappling with a similar cluster of issues. What is the difference between these two frameworks? Should they be viewed as rivals? If so, how should we choose between them? This chapter sheds light on these questions. After providing an overview of relativism and expressivism I discuss three potential choice points: their relation to truth conditional semantics, their pictures of belief and communication, and their explanations of disagreement.

1   Introduction

The last couple of decades have seen an explosion of work on relativism and expressivism. However, the exact relationship between these two frameworks remains unclear. This chapter aims to shed some light on this murky state of affairs.

Both relativism and expressivism have been put forward in response to the perceived shortcomings of a contextualist semantics. This chapter starts by briefly reviewing both contextualism (§2) and a major source of dissatisfaction with the contextualist framework (§3). Next, it outlines how relativists (§4) and expressivists (§5) try to improve on contextualism. The rest of the chapter canvasses potential choice points for deciding between relativism and expressivism. I focus on their relation to truth conditional semantics (§6), their conceptions of belief and communication (§7), and their strategies for explaining disagreement (§8).

2   Contextualism

Contextualists about some expression e maintain that the truth-values of sentences containing e are partially dependent on features of the context of utterance. A particularly clear illustration comes from sentences containing indexicals, e.g.:

(1)   I am hungry now.

The truth-value of (1) depends on who is speaking, as well as the time of utterance:

Contextualist Semantics for Indexicals (1) is true, as uttered in a context c and evaluated at a world w, iff the speaker in c is hungry at w at the time of c.

While contextualism about indexicals is widely accepted, there is vigorous debate about which other expressions should get a contextualist treatment. Here I'll focus on two controversial cases: moral discourse and epistemic modals.

First up: moral discourse. Consider a claim such as:

(2)   Stealing is wrong.

One simple (some might say cartoonishly so) contextualist semantics holds that moral claims are about the speaker's attitudes, e.g.:

Speaker Contextualist Semantics for Moral Discourse (2) is true, as uttered in a context c and evaluated at a world w, iff the speaker in c disapproves of stealing at w.

While few today would defend this particular semantics, more sophisticated contextualist approaches to moral discourse have been defended by numerous philosophers.[1] For our purposes, this simple semantics is enough to highlight the key contextualist idea, which is that utterances of moral sentences express different propositions—and consequently vary in truth-value—depending on who is speaking.

Next up: epistemic modals—i.e., uses of modal language (e.g., *might*, *must*, *possibly*) to convey some distinctly epistemic species of possibility or necessity. According to contextualism, epistemic modals communicate whether some embedded proposition is consistent with—or entailed by—some body of information determined by the context of utterance. To illustrate consider:

(3)   It might be snowing.

Contextualists maintain:

Contextualist Semantics for Epistemic Modals (3) is true, as uttered in a context c and evaluated at a world w, iff the proposition ⟨It is snowing⟩ is compatible with the c-determined information at w.

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[1]See, a.o., Dreier (1990); Silk (2016); Khoo and Knobe (2018).

In the simplest case, the c-determined information is just the speaker's. In other cases, it might be that of some speaker-inclusive group, or that of some contextually salient agent.[2]

This just scratches the surface. Contextualist semantics have been proposed for a wide range of expressions, including gradable adjectives, conditionals, and knowledge ascriptions. Rather than discuss these applications in detail, I now turn to a common misgiving about contextualism—a misgiving that is often used to motivate a shift to relativism or expressivism.

3   The Problem of Lost Disagreement

A common objection to contextualism is that it has trouble accounting for disagreements.[3] To introduce this concern, it is helpful to start once again with indexicals. Suppose Aliya utters (1) (*I'm hungry now*) on June 4, 2019. Suppose Bruno overhears her. It would be very odd for Bruno to disagree with her merely on the grounds that he (Bruno) isn't hungry.

Contextualism has a nice story about why there's no disagreement here. According to contextualism, different utterances of (1) express different propositions in different contexts of utterance. When Aliya utters (1), she asserts the proposition, ⟨Aliya is hungry on June 4, 2019⟩. And Bruno does not disagree with this proposition.

But while this is a mark in favor of contextualism about indexicals, some have argued that it is a liability for contextualism about other domains. Suppose Aliya asserts (2) (*Stealing is wrong*). Suppose Bruno does not disapprove of stealing. It would be natural for Bruno to disagree with Aliya's claim by saying something like:

(4)   a.   No [/that's not true],
       b.   stealing isn't wrong.

But why is this disagreement any more genuine than in the indexical case? After all, on the Speaker Contextualist Semantics, Aliya's utterance of (2) expresses the proposition that *she* disapproves of stealing. But presumably Bruno does not disagree with *this* proposition. Following MacFarlane (2014), call this 'the problem of lost disagreement.'

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[2]Contextualism about epistemic modals is defended by DeRose (1991); Dowell (2011); Mandelkern (forthcoming), a.o. The canonical contextualist semantics for modals more generally comes from Kratzer (1981).

[3]See, e.g., Lasersohn (2005); Stephenson (2007); Egan (2007); MacFarlane (2011, 2014).

This problem extends to other domains. Suppose that Aliya asserts (3) (*It might be snowing*). And suppose Bruno overhears Aliya's remark, having just come in from the brilliant sunshine. It would be natural for Bruno to disagree with Aliya. In doing so, Bruno need not disagree with the proposition that Aliya's information leaves open the possibility of snow.

The argument from lost disagreement is controversial. Some object that it relies on naive assumptions about the disagreement data, or about how to set the contextual parameters, or about the nature of disagreement.[4] For present purposes, I won't take a stand on the merits of this argument. What's important is that this argument has been used to motivate a shift to an alternative semantic framework, such as relativism or expressivism. Let's take relativism first.

4 Relativism

According to relativism, some sentences are *assessment-sensitive*. Even when one fixes the context of utterance and the world of evaluation, one has not thereby fixed the truth-value of the sentence. Rather, there is room for further variation in truth-value depending on who is assessing the sentence for truth or falsity.[5]

To develop this thought, let an *assessor* be any agent who is evaluating an utterance for truth or falsity. Let a *context of assessment* be any situation where an assessor is making some such evaluation. For many purposes, it is convenient to model a context of assessment as a centered world: an ordered pair of a world w and an assessor a. Then we can give our Speaker Contextualist Semantics for Moral Expressions a relativist twist:

Relativist Semantics for Moral Expressions (2) is true, as uttered in a context c and evaluated at a context of assessment $\langle w, a \rangle$, iff a disapproves of stealing at w.[6]

Let's see how this applies to our moral dispute. According to relativism, when Aliya utters (2), the content of her utterance is a *centered proposition*: a set of centered worlds. What is distinctive about this sort of content is that it can be true for one person and false for another. It is true for *her*, since she disapproves of stealing. But it is false for Bruno, since he does not disapprove of stealing. And this, relativists claim, is why they disagree. (More on this in §8.)

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[4]For arguments that contextualists can make sense of the relevant disagreement data, see, a.o., Dowell (2011); Plunkett and Sundell (2013).

[5]For a wide-ranging overview and defense of relativism, see MacFarlane (2014).

[6]Cf. Egan (2012).

A similar diagnosis applies to modal disputes. Relativists agree with contextualists that the truth conditions of modal utterances depend on some body of information. However, relativists claim this information is determined by the context of assessment rather than the context of utterance:

Relativist Semantics for Epistemic Modals (3) is true, as uttered in a context of utterance c and evaluated at a context of assessment $\langle w, a \rangle$, iff the proposition $\langle$It is snowing$\rangle$ is compatible with the $\langle w, a \rangle$-determined information at w.[7]

On this view, when Aliya asserts (3), she asserts a proposition that is true for her (since her information leaves open the possibility of snow), but false for Bruno (since his information does not). Hence they disagree.

5 Expressivism

Another response to the problem of lost disagreement is to go expressivist. According to expressivists about some sentence ϕ, the conventional function of uttering ϕ is to express some mental state m of the speaker. This is typically paired with the idea that the meaning of ϕ just is m; or, at the very least, that the semantics and pragmatics of ϕ cannot be understood without reference to m.[8]

To flesh this out, start with moral discourse. On a simple expressivist analysis, the meaning of (2) is some mental attitude towards stealing. What sort of attitude? Historically, expressivism has gone hand-in-hand with noncognitivism. According to noncognitivism, moral beliefs do not aim to represent the world in the same way that ordinary descriptive beliefs do. Rather, moral beliefs are conative attitudes: desires, preferences, plans, states of approval/disapproval, etc. Thus a simple expressivist analysis of (2) might go like this:

Simple Expressivist Analysis of Moral Discourse The meaning of (2) is the mental state: DISAPPROVAL OF STEALING.

How does expressivism help with the problem of lost disagreement? Typically, expressivists adopt a 'mind-first' picture of disagreement: disagreements between speakers are explained in terms of disagreements between the mental states that these speakers express.

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[7] Relativist semantics for epistemic modals are defended in Egan et al. (2005); Egan (2007); Stephenson (2007); MacFarlane (2011, 2014); Beddor and Egan (2018).

[8] Expressivism traces its roots back to the emotivism of Ayer (1936). Influential developments include Stevenson (1944); Blackburn (1993, 1998); Gibbard (1990, 2003); Schroeder (2008a).

The idea that mental states can stand in disagreement relations is clearest when it comes to factual beliefs. If Aliya believes that Singapore is to the south of Kuala Lumpur, whereas Bruno believes that Singapore is to the north of KL, then their beliefs disagree. More controversially, expressivists claim that there are 'disagreements in attitude': disagreements between desire-like attitudes. As Stevenson puts it:

> Suppose that two people have decided to dine together. One suggests a restaurant where there is music; another expresses his disinclination to hear music and suggests some other restaurant. . . . The disagreement springs more from divergent preferences than from divergent beliefs, and will end when they both *wish* to go to the same place. . . (1944: 3)

Applied to our moral dispute: when Aliya utters (2) she expresses disapproval of stealing. Bruno holds a different conative attitude towards stealing: he tolerates it. This mental state disagrees with Aliya's disapproval.

Not all moral expressivists equate meanings with mental states. Gibbard (2003) takes the meaning of a moral claim to be a formal object that represents the content of a conative attitude (more precisely: the content of some combination of representational and conative attitudes). On Gibbard's view, moral claims express plans to adopt reactive attitudes, such as blame and outrage. But the content of (2) is not itself a plan, but rather a set of *world, hyperplan* pairs. (Here a 'hyperplan' is a formal device representing the content of a special sort of plan. It's a plan that, for any possible situation and any possible course of action, takes a stand on whether to pursue that course of action in that situation.) This gives us:

Gibbardian Semantics for Moral Discourse The meaning of (2) is a set of world, hyperplan pairs, e.g.:

$$\{\langle w, h \rangle \mid h \text{ specifies a plan to blame those who steal at } w\}.$$

The difference between the Simple Expressivist Semantics and Gibbardian Semantics will be important when it comes to evaluating whether expressivism is compatible with truth conditional semantics (§6).

What about epistemic modals? Expressivists about epistemic modals claim that when one utters a sentence such as (3), one is expressing a *credal state*. Specifically, (3) expresses a credal state that leaves open the possibility that it is snowing.

The most thorough semantic implementation of expressivism about epistemic modals is due to Yalcin (2007). Yalcin's semantics closely parallels Gibbardian Semantics. Like Gibbard, Yalcin adopts a modest extension of a possible worlds semantics. Rather than taking the contents of sentences to be sets of world,

hyperplan pairs, Yalcin takes them to be sets of world, *information state* pairs. An information state s is a formal representation of a credal state. Simplifying slightly, it is a set of worlds representing live doxastic possibilities. This yields:

Credal Expressivist Semantics for Epistemic Modals The meaning of (3) is a set of world, information state pairs, specifically:

$$\{\langle w, s\rangle \mid s \text{ includes at least one possible world where it is snowing}\}.$$

On this view, the semantic content of (3) is not itself a credal state. But it can be thought of as representing a property of a credal state: roughly, the property of assigning some positive credence to worlds where it is snowing.[9]

We have now laid out some of the key ideas behind relativism and expressivism. How should we decide between these two semantic frameworks? In what follows, I consider three potential choice points.

6   Truth Conditional Semantics and the Frege Geach Problem

According to semantic orthodoxy, the meaning of a sentence is its truth conditions. One advantage of this view is that it provides a constructive recipe for assigning meanings to logically complex sentences on the basis of the meanings of their parts. The truth conditions of $\ulcorner \phi \ or \ \psi \urcorner$ are a function of the truth conditions of ϕ, together with the truth conditions of ψ. So if meanings are truth conditions, we have a nice story about how the meaning of a disjunction is a function of the meanings of its disjuncts.

Relativism is perfectly consistent with truth conditional semantics. Of course, relativists think truth conditions sometimes depend on the context of assessment. But assessment-sensitive truth conditions are still truth conditions. As a result, relativists have no difficulty handling logically complex sentences, e.g.:

(5)   Stealing is wrong or stealing is harmless.

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[9]This approach bears important affinities to dynamic semantics for modals, for example, update semantics (Veltman 1996). According to a dynamic semantics, the meaning of a sentence is its context change potential: its ability to make a difference in the information of speakers and listeners. Epistemic modals function as 'tests' on the context (modeled as a set of worlds). In particular, $\ulcorner Might \ \phi \urcorner$ tests to see whether the context contains at least one world where ϕ holds. There is an interesting question as to whether update semantics should be classified as a type of expressivism.

By contrast, many have thought that expressivism is inconsistent with truth conditional semantics. To see why, recall that at least our Simple Expressivist Semantics identified meanings with mental states. Such a 'psychologistic' semantics is naturally construed as an alternative to truth conditional semantics.

If this is right, Simple Expressivism cannot use the standard truth conditional strategy for explaining the meanings of logically complex sentences in terms of the meanings of their parts. This is what gives rise to the notorious Frege-Geach Problem: the problem of providing a plausible and principled expressivist semantics for logically complex sentences such as (5).[10] And this suggests a reason for preferring relativism to Simple Expressivism. Since relativism is consistent with truth conditional semantics, it avoids the Frege-Geach problem.

But before we place too much weight on this argument, we should bear in mind that there are other semantic implementations of expressivism. Recall Gibbardian Semantics, which identifies the meanings of moral sentences with sets of world, hyperplan pairs. As Yalcin (2012) observes, we can convert this into a truth conditional semantics. All that's needed is to take our circumstances of evaluation to be world, hyperplan pairs. This gives us:

Gibbardian Truth Conditions (2) is true at some $\langle w, h \rangle$ iff h includes a plan to blame those who steal at w.

Similarly, Yalcin (2007) formulates his semantics for epistemic modals in truth conditional terms, where truth is relativized to world, information state pairs.

Since our Gibbardian expressivist can assign truth conditions to moral sentences, they can use the standard truth conditional strategy for explaining the meanings of logically complex sentences. For example, they can say that (5) is true at some $\langle w, h \rangle$ iff either *stealing is wrong* is true at $\langle w, h \rangle$ or *stealing causes harm* is true at $\langle w, h \rangle$.

From a formal perspective, Gibbardian truth conditions and relativism have much in common. Both define truth and falsity not just relative to worlds, but relative to ordered pairs of a world and something else. For Gibbard, this something else is a hyperplan. For the relativist, it's an assessor. It's natural to wonder: is this a difference without a difference? Are the two frameworks notational variants?

Let me close this section by mentioning one way of trying to locate a genuine difference. Even if both relativists and Gibbardian expressivists adopt similar formalisms, there may be important differences in how the formalism is interpreted. For Gibbard a set of world, hyperplan pairs represents the content of a 'plan-laden' state of mind: a combination of planning states and representational beliefs.

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[10]The *locus classicus* of the problem is Geach (1965). For an overview of work on the problem, see Schroeder (2008b).

Schroeder (2008a: 9, 2010: 131-133) questions whether the Gibbardian expressivist can provide a systematic story about which plan-laden states of mind map onto arbitrary sets of world, hyperplan pairs. An example: the content *stealing is wrong* is a set of w, h pairs that maps onto a planning state (a plan to blame thieves). The content of *stealing causes harm* is a set of w, h pairs that maps onto a representational belief (the belief that stealing causes harm). But what about the content of their disjunction? Gibbard has a recipe for associating this sentence with a set of w, h pairs. But, the objection runs, he hasn't told us how to make intuitive sense of the state of mind that corresponds to this set.

By contrast, it is less clear that relativists face this problem. First, relativists need not say that sentences express states of mind at all. Moreover, if they do say this, it would be natural for them to hold that all declarative sentences express representational mental states. When it comes to assessment-sensitive sentences, a natural option is to conceive of the relevant representational states as *de se* beliefs. This is particularly tempting for those relativists—such as Egan (2007, 2012) and Stephenson (2007)—who follow Lewis (1979) in modeling the contents of *de se* attitudes with centered propositions.

On this view, the state of mind expressed by (2) might be the *de se* belief that one disapproves of stealing. And the state of mind expressed by (5) might be the *de se* belief that either one disapproves of stealing or one inhabits a world where stealing is harmless. This would allow relativists to avoid the burden of making sense of disjunctions of representational mental states and conative attitudes.

This difference is related to the issue of how relativists and expressivists should understand beliefs on moral/modal matters, to which we now turn.

7   Belief and Communication

Consider the following belief reports:

(6)   Aliya believes stealing is wrong.

(7)   Aliya believes it might be snowing.

What sort of mental states do these reports ascribe to Aliya?

As standardly developed, relativism and expressivism yield different answers. Start with relativism. On the most straightforward way of developing relativism, (6) and (7) ascribe beliefs in centered propositions. As noted in §6, one natural option is to think of this as a sort of *de se* belief. On this interpretation, (6) says Aliya has a *de se* belief that she herself disapproves of stealing. And (7) says she has a *de se* belief that her information is compatible with the possibility of snow.

Thus developed, relativism construes moral and modal beliefs as beliefs *about* one's own mental states (states of disapproval or states of information). In the terminology of Yalcin (2011), this makes moral and modal beliefs into *second-order* states.

By contrast, expressivists typically adopt a *first-order* conception of the relevant beliefs. According to moral expressivists, (6) is true just in case Aliya disapproves of stealing (or plans to blame thieves, etc.). On this view, moral beliefs are not *about* conative attitudes. Rather, they *are* conative attitudes. Similarly, expressivists about epistemic modals maintain that (7) is true just in case Aliya's belief state leaves open the possibility that it's snowing. To have a modal belief, on this view, is not to have a belief *about* one's information state. Rather, it's just to *be* in a certain information state.

These two pictures of belief are naturally paired with two different pictures of communication. Suppose we follow Stalnaker (1978) in holding that the goal of making an assertion is to get one's interlocutors to believe its content. Then the relativist says that the goal of asserting some moral or modal claim is to get your audience to share your second-order, *de se* belief. For example, the goal of asserting (2) is to get your listener to believe that *they* disapprove of stealing. By contrast, the expressivist says that the goal of asserting some moral or modal claim is to get your interlocutors to share your first-order mental state.

Which of these conceptions of belief—first-order or second-order—is more plausible? Different considerations pull in different directions. We've already noted (§6) that the first-order conception of moral belief faces the question of how to make sense of combinations of representational and conative attitudes, whereas the second-order conception avoids this issue. Another challenge facing first-order theorists is to make sense of *degrees of belief* on moral/modal matters. What is it, to have, say, .7 credence that stealing is wrong, if moral belief is just a conative state? By contrast, the second-order theorist has a comparatively easy time here: just plug in your preferred theory of *de se* credences and you'll get a theory of moral/modal credences.

At the same time, other considerations motivate the first-order conception. Suppose the psychological tests are in: turns out you disapprove of stealing. Does this fact provide a reason for you to believe that stealing is wrong? The second-order approach says 'Yes.' But this seems counterintuitive. The first-order conception fares better here: while the test results show you *do* disapprove of stealing, they do not show you *should* disapprove of it.[11]

Another argument in favor of the first-order conception comes from moti-

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[11]For similar arguments in favor of a first-order conception of modal belief, see Yalcin (2011); Moss (2013).

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vational internalism: the idea that moral beliefs directly motivate actions in a manner similar to desires. If moral beliefs are conative attitudes, then we have a simple explanation for how moral beliefs exert their motivational magnetism.[12] By contrast, it's less clear whether the second-order conception explains this. To see why, suppose that (6) is true. According to the second-order conception, this means Aliya believes that she disapproves of stealing. But presumably she could be mistaken about this. If she is mistaken, why should we expect her to be motivated to avoid stealing? Of course, motivational internalism is controversial. But those sympathetic to it may regard it as counting in favor of the first-order conception.

This suggests one important avenue for future research: compare the difficulties facing the first-order conception with those afflicting the second-order conception, and see which batch of problems proves more tractable.

But would settling this issue completely settle the relativism/expressivism debate? Here we should proceed with care. While relativists often embrace a second-order conception of moral/modal belief, it's not clear that this is forced; we might be able to develop a version of relativism that delivers a first-order conception. Here's a sketch of how this might go. One way to compositionally implement our relativist semantics for *wrong* is to use a contextual parameter supplying a function from contexts of assessment to the actions the assessor holds in disapproval.[13] We could then propose that the attitude verb *believes* shifts this parameter to a function from contexts of assessment to whatever actions the believer holds in disapproval. This would predict that (6) is true, as uttered in a context of utterance c and evaluated at a context of assessment $\langle w, a \rangle$, iff Aliya disapproves of stealing at w.[14] For a structurally similar modification to the semantics of *believes* designed to predict that (7) ascribes a first-order state, see Ninan (2018).

Taking stock: there are significant differences between the standard relativist account of moral/modal belief and the standard expressivist account. However, it would be hasty to conclude that this reveals an essential difference between the two frameworks. By combining relativism with a non-standard semantics for belief reports, relativists may be able go a long way towards closing the gap

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[12]See e.g., Blackburn (1998); Gibbard (2003): chp.7.

[13]A bit more precisely: let g be a function from a centered world to the set of things the center holds in disapproval at the world. Then our relativist lexical entry for *wrong* might go like this:

$[\![\text{is wrong}]\!]^{c,g,\langle w,a \rangle} = \lambda x . x \in g(w, a).$

[14]A toy implementation: let g_S^w be a constant function from centered worlds to the set of things that S holds in disapproval at w. And let dox be a function from a centered world $\langle w, a \rangle$ to the set of centered worlds compatible with what a believes at w. Then our semantics for *believes* might go like this:

$[\![S \text{ believes } \phi]\!]^{c,g,\langle w,a \rangle} = 1 \text{ iff } \forall \langle w', x \rangle \in dox(S, w) : [\![\phi]\!]^{c,g_S^w,\langle w',x \rangle} = 1.$

between the two views.

8   Explaining Disagreement

A further choice point between relativism and expressivism concerns their accounts of disagreement. As we saw in §5, expressivists usually explain disagreements about some domain in terms of disagreements in the mental states expressed. When it comes to moral disputes, this will be a disagreement in conative attitudes. Call this the 'disagreement in attitude strategy.'

Relativists typically take a different approach. On a relativist semantics, the content of Aliya's utterance of (2) is inconsistent with the content of Bruno's utterance of (4b) (*Stealing isn't wrong*). They are inconsistent in the sense that there is no context of assessment where both are true. (Likewise, *mutatis mutandis*, in the modal case.) A natural thought is that we can leverage this fact to explain why their assertions constitute a disagreement. Call this the 'discursive disagreement strategy':

Discursive Disagreement   Two assertions disagree with one another iff they have inconsistent contents.[15]

Which strategy for explaining disagreement should we prefer? Unfortunately, both face difficulties. Start with the disagreement in attitude strategy. Proponents of this strategy face the question: how should we understand disagreement in attitude? Without some account, there is a worry that the expressivists are simply helping themselves to a phenomenon that they should be in the business of explaining.

One option is to explain disagreement in attitude in terms of what MacFarlane (2014) calls 'noncotenability': two attitudes disagree iff it's not possible to hold both at the same time. One worry for this account is that it risks overpredicting disagreements among *de se* desires. Suppose Aliya wants the last slice of cake. Suppose Bruno desires **not** to receive the last slice. If we adopt Lewis' view of the *de se*, the content of Aliya's desire is the centered proposition: $\{\langle w, x \rangle \mid x$ gets the last slice at $w\}$. (Or, to put it another way, what she desires is to have the property: *getting the last slice*.) And the content of Bruno's desire is the centered proposition: $\{\langle w, x \rangle \mid x$ does not get the last slice at $w\}$. (Equivalently, what he desires is to have the property: *not getting the last slice*.) Given this way of thinking

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[15]See Egan (2007, 2012); Stephenson (2007). Note that Discursive Disagreement is also available to certain expressivists. For example, while Gibbard himself pursues the disagreement in attitude strategy, Gibbardian Semantics agrees with the relativist that (2) and (4b) have inconsistent contents: there is no $\langle w, h \rangle$ where both are true.

about *de se* desires, their desires are noncotenable. But, intuitively, there's no disagreement here.

While Aliya and Bruno's cake-related desires are not cotenable, they are still jointly satisfiable: there's a way for both Aliya and Bruno to get what they want. Perhaps then, we could say that two attitudes disagree iff they cannot be jointly satisfied. This is a more promising approach, but it still raises a number of questions. First, what are the satisfaction conditions of the conative attitudes that constitute moral judgment? Second, does this story generalize to handle disagreements involving epistemic modals? (Do credences even have satisfaction conditions?) If not, there is a worry that the disagreement in attitude strategy does not encompass the full range of disagreement data.

Turn next to the discursive disagreement strategy. This strategy also faces its share of challenges. For example, it faces a challenge accounting for what Beddor (forthcoming) calls 'speechless disagreements': cases where two parties disagree on some matter even though they never converse about it. (For example, Aliya believes stealing is wrong, Bruno believes it isn't, but they never talk about the matter.)

To account for such cases, it seems that relativists, much like expressivists, need to make sense of disagreements in mental states. Indeed, relativists might explore analogues of the expressivist accounts of disagreement in attitude. For example, they might propose that two beliefs disagree with one another provided they are noncotenable. However, this proposal will run into an analogous worry: it overgenerates disagreements in ordinary *de se* beliefs (e.g., Aliya believes she is hungry, and Bruno believes he isn't).

Alternatively, relativists might suggest that two beliefs disagree iff they cannot be jointly accurate, where a belief is 'accurate' just in case it is true relative to the believer's context of assessment (cf. MacFarlane 2014). But then they face the worry of securing *enough* disagreement. Assume that relativists stick with the picture of moral belief as a second-order, *de se* belief (§7). Then Aliya's belief that stealing is wrong is accurate just in case she disapproves of stealing. And Bruno's belief that stealing isn't wrong is accurate just in case he doesn't disapprove of stealing. Since these beliefs can be jointly accurate, the proposal under discussion predicts that they do not disagree after all. It thus proves challenging for the relativist to avoid either overgenerating or undergenerating speechless disagreements.[16]

In summary, both expressivists and relativists face a number of difficulties when it comes to explaining disagreement. This should be troubling, given that disagreement data was one of the main motivations for abandoning contextualism

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[16]See Dreier (2009) for development of these concerns. For a proposed solution, see Beddor (forthcoming).

in the first place! An important area for further research is to explore whether these difficulties can be solved, and—if so—whether the solution works equally well in a relativist or an expressivist setting.

9   Conclusion

In this chapter we've examined different ways of developing relativism and expressivism, and considered various choice points.[17] Along the way, we've found that while there are important differences between certain ways of developing relativism and certain ways of developing expressivism, it is much harder to identify points on which all expressivists and relativists disagree.

This suggests that in order to make progress, we should go one of two routes. First, we could try to develop a more rigorous characterization of both relativism and expressivism: we could lay down necessary and sufficient conditions for both. We could then try to prove an impossibility result of the form: 'No relativist view can satisfy all of the conditions for being an expressivist view.'

Alternatively, we could give up the assumption that there are important questions that distinguish all forms of relativism from all forms of expressivism. Rather than asking: 'What are the reasons for preferring relativism to expressivism, or *vice versa*?', we should instead ask, 'What are the reasons for preferring this particular version of relativism to this particular version of expressivism, or *vice versa*?'

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[17]I have focused on general choice points that arise in both the moral and modal domains. Another strategy is to argue for expressivism or relativism about a particular domain using domain-specific empirical considerations. For example, Yalcin (2007) argues for expressivism about epistemic modals on the grounds that it explains the infelicity of embedded 'epistemic contradictions' (e.g., *Suppose it's raining and it might not be*). For a relativist discussion of epistemic contradictions, see MacFarlane (2014: chp.10.5).

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