

Cognitive Expressivism, Faultless Disagreement, and Absolute but Non-Objective Truth

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§0 Introduction

I offer a new solution to the puzzle of faultless disagreement. My solution is neither a theory of content relativity or relativism about truth. Its essence is that truth for some domains of sentences is absolute but non-objective: so the objectivity of truth can come apart from the absoluteness of truth. I take the puzzle of faultless disagreement to be the following phenomenon, illustrated by statements of taste. Smith asserts V below, savouring a salty dollop of black paste, and Jones denies V , shrinking from a proffered smearing:

V : Vegemite is tasty.

Assuming that both assert sincerely, and clear-headedly in the light of their food preferences is either Smith or Jones in error here? I think we can say that neither is in error. No epistemic principle is violated, no one has insufficient evidence for their claim, no norm governing assertion is flouted, such as asserting what is false. Furthermore, it seems that Smith and Jones are not confused in arguing with each other. Nothing was epistemically, logically, etc, wrong with their debate about taste. Thus neither is in error, confused, or at fault in arguing for, and asserting, their respective sentences. There is faultless disagreement.

This phenomenon is puzzling for the following reasons. The faultlessness seems to imply that there is no objective fact of the matter whether V is true or not. In other words, our claim that there is no fault, requires that we refrain from affirming bivalence for V :

BV : Either V is true or false.¹

¹ I am not assuming that we affirm that V suffers a truth-value.

But, if bivalence fails, how could Smith and Jones's engagement in debate not be an error, since to debate is to assume that there is a fact of the matter?

Currently, there are two very well known and discussed solutions to the puzzle: content relativism and relativity of truth.² Although these are considered to be promising approaches, I don't think they work: both fail to preserve disagreement or faultlessness. I am going to try and establish that claim here, however. Instead, I want to explore what I take to be an as yet unexplored route. Its essence, as I announced above, is that truth for some domains of sentences is non-objective but absolute. This view is linked to an idea about assertion and truth-aptness.

Assertion, I shall argue, can come in two modes: *objective* and *non-objective*. The distinction between objective and non-objective assertion is not an epistemic one—it is not a question of different epistemic standards. Rather the distinction pertains to a modal property of assertions pertaining to *disputative persistence*. Assertion in the objective mode always involves the expression of mental states we are willing to defend, come what may—even if only to ourselves. By *defending a mental state* I mean, very roughly for now, a disposition to provide reasons for the state. Assertion in the non-objective mode involves states that we can be quite happy to opt out from defending under argumentative pressure. Taste-statements are examples of assertion in this mode. That opting out can happen even if no new evidence is presented to us, and no shift of epistemic standards occurs. We simply stop defending the state, even to ourselves. Assertions in both modes are real assertions. The difference resides simply in this modal feature of a tendency to opt out of defence. In opting out, we move from non-objective to objective mode, and the result is that the sentences, V and its negation, judged truth-apt in the non-objective mode, are judged non-truth-apt in the objective mode.

This conception of mode of assertion leads to a solution to the paradox of faultless disagreement. Smith and Jones' assertions about taste performed in the course of their debate about vegemite are in the non-objective mode. They assert, or at least are disposed to assert, in the non-objective mode, that there is a fact of the matter about the tastiness of vegemite,

² Content relativism is discussed in Koelbel (2002), Lasersohn, (2005). Truth-relativists include Koelbel (2002) and MacFarlane (2005), and Lasersohn (2005).

and so assert bivalence for V , that is, BV . All these assertions are, as assertions in the non-objective mode, perfectly legitimate. Now suppose Smith and Jones opt out of their debate. This *renunciation* amounts to a move to the objective mode of assertion. An audience watching their debate, and not engaged in it, can also be in the objective-mode. In the objective mode, Smith, Jones, and the disengaged onlooker refrain from asserting BV . We refrain from asserting that there is a fact of the matter about Vegemite's tastiness. Yet, in the objective mode, we can assert that the non-objective mode of assertion is perfectly legitimate, and we can say, no error has occurred in Smith and Jones's debate and in their (non-objective mode) assertions and denials of V . Furthermore, we can say they are in genuine disagreement *about how things are*, since, within the non-objective mode, they are engaged in genuine disagreement about how things are. Note, that our statement that Smith and Jones disagree about how things are, made in the objective mode, does not require us to believe, within that mode, there is a fact of the matter about Vegemite's tastiness, that is, assertion of BV . The term *how things are* is within the scope of an intentional operator *disagreeing about*. We describe its character below.

In sum, the claim that Smith and Jones faultlessly disagree is an assertion in the objective mode about assertion in the non-objective mode. I am not assuming that speakers conceptualize matters in these terms. The distinction objective/non-objective mode is theoretical, and describes patterns of practice unconsciously engaged in by speakers. On this conception, truth-ascriptions are always absolute. It is not that V is true relative to the non-objective mode, and not true relative to the objective mode. Smith rightly asserts V is true in the non-objective mode, and Jones rightly asserts V is false, in the non-objective mode, given their respective taste-preferences. In the objective mode, V has no definite truth-value. What's relative to modes is truth-aptness. We can also say that assertability is relative to mode, in the sense that, given their preferences, V is assertable for Smith, and V 's negation is assertable for Jones, in the non-objective mode, but not in the objective mode.

The key to understanding this solution is clarifying the idea of modes of assertion and its relation to truth-aptness. I shall argue that we need a specific conceptual framework to

realize these ideas. I call it *cognitivist expressivism*.³ *Cognitivist expressivism* accepts that statements of taste are truth-apt, at least relative to the objective mode, and capable of appearing in genuine assertions, manifesting real beliefs, and appearing in logical arguments. On the other hand, it is expressivist because it denies that representational states with state-to-world direction of fit, have an explanatory role in the analysis of assertion. The present paper represents one argument for this framework.⁴

§1 Cognitivist Expressivism

The contention is that assertion comes in modes. Mode relates to the dialectical character of assertion. Roughly—we qualify this below—a person making an assertion is directing themselves towards manifesting a disposition to provide reasons for a mental state.⁵ That's what I called *defending* the state. Modes come about because, for some states, Π , you can turn off your disposition to defend Π . Thus the shift from the non-objective mode to the objective mode involves one's turning off the disposition to defend Π , and indeed, turning off the disposition to defend the states associated with any logical compound of S or of $\langle S \rangle$ *is true*. So, one turns off the disposition to defend the states underpinning: S , *not-S*, $\langle S \rangle$ *is true*, $\langle S \rangle$ *is not true*, *either S or not-S*, *either $\langle S \rangle$ is true or $\langle S \rangle$ is not true*, and so on. This means that in the objective mode, S ceases to be truth-apt: one refrains from asserting any of the above sentences. In short, one can go from an assertoric orientation in which S is truth-apt to one in which S is not truth-apt through turning off dispositions to defend the states underpinning S and related sentences. We have a dynamic, fluctuating orientation to truth-aptness and thus bivalence—truth-aptness is not a static feature of sentences. Call this *the dynamic conception* (of truth-aptness).

First problem with developing this theory: What kind of state is the state that a speaker defends in an assertion of S such that turning off the disposition to defend that state

³ See Barker (2004, 2005, 2007, 2007a) for various stages of development of this framework.

⁴ I do not analyse all faultless disagreement in terms of modes. Faultless disagreement featuring epistemic modals and adverbials is explained by other features of cognitivist expressivism. See Barker (2004).

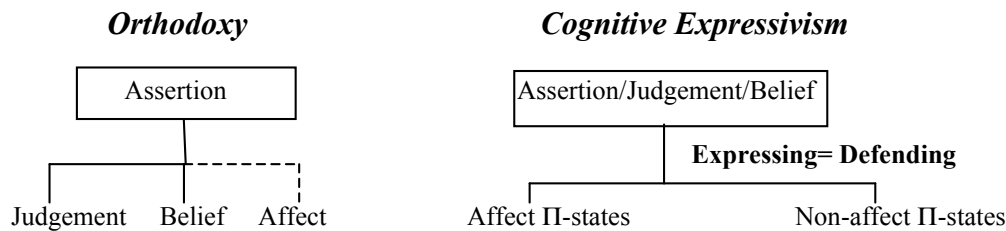
⁵ This is reminiscent of Brandom 1983.

and related states, could lead to the non-truth-aptness of S ? The orthodox idea is that the state expressed in assertion is a belief or knowledge state. This is the idea that the truth-aptness of an assertion, its word-to-world direction of fit, is inherited from the state expressed in the assertion. But a truth-apt state, such as belief, cannot be the state Π that we defend in assertion if the dynamic conception is to be maintained. Suppose one does defend a belief state in an assertion or denial of V . After speakers turn off their defensive stance in relation to their respective belief states, the belief that vegemite is tasty in Smith, that it is not tasty, in Jones, the states would still be present. Since these are truth-apt states, we could still say that Smith's belief that vegemite is tasty is true or false and likewise for Jones's belief. But then how could the truth-aptness of V and its negation have disappeared? It would be very odd—perhaps Moorishly paradoxical—to assert that V is not truth-apt yet the belief that vegemite is tasty is either true or false.

If the dynamic conception of truth-aptness is to be maintained, we have to propose, that the states defended in assertions are not truth-apt in themselves, but truth-aptness emerges from the defensive orientation to the states concerned. It must be that what's truth-apt is S used with a defensive stance. The state defended, in other words, is not itself truth-apt. If that is right, turning off the defensive stance can lead to a failure of bivalence. V without any defensive stance will cease to be bivalent, since all defensive stances to the associated state are turned off, and no belief-state is there to embarrass our denial of its truth-aptness.

Note what we have just said. The state expressed or defended, in assertion is not a truth-apt doxastic (belief) state. It is something else. The idea of reminiscent of a family of views you should be familiar with: *expressivism*. Moral expressivists hold that in asserting *Bob is good* a speaker is expressing an attitude to Bob. The mental state underpinning the assertion is not a belief-state, it lacks itself state-to-world direction of fit. Similarly, we suppose that in producing V , Smith expresses a gustatory preference state. That state is not truth-apt. It lacks the state-to-world direction of fit. Some people think that means expressivists must deny that value-sentences are truth-apt. These people are assuming that assertions inherit their truth-aptness, their direction of fit, from the state they express. That is

exactly what I am denying. We represent the structure of the view—*Cognitive Expressivism*—we must maintain, in contrast to orthodoxy, thus:



On the left, *Orthodoxy*, we find the proposal of the standard, view: assertion is a surface phenomenon underpinned by some special relation to belief (and maybe judgement.)

Assertion is the manifestation and outer form of belief. Assertion gets its truth-aptness from the underlying state. That's why the idea that the mental element behind an assertion is motivation makes no sense for the orthodox vision. The alternative I offer, see *Cognitivist Expressivism*, is that assertion, judgment, and belief, are all phenomena constituted in a not totally dissimilar way by dispositions to defend pre-doxastic states, or Π -states as I call them. (I use that term *Π -states* because it has no folk connotation; Π -states are not beliefs or judgements.) The idea then is that sentences don't get their truth-aptness from the states that are expressed, but through the nature of the expressing, which I have called *defending*. It because a sentence is associated with a potential defence of a state, Π , that it is truth-apt. It's not truth-apt because it is associated with a state that is already truth-apt.

Cognitivist expressivism implies that all assertions, both value- and non-value-assertions involve the expression, defence, of pre-doxastic states. You might want to resist this and hold that non-value assertions involve defence of doxastic states, beliefs, with state-to-world direction of fit. This idea is objectionable for several reasons. Here's one. Value-beliefs cannot be the things defended in value-assertions, since what's defended is a non-belief state—an affect state. So value-beliefs must emerge somehow from the speakers' dispositions to defend the state: assertion and belief emerge together. But if belief is this kind of state, then it must be this kind of state in the case of non-value-assertions. But then we are proposing two quite distinct roles for belief: (a) the state defended in such assertions; (b) something that emerges from a defensive orientation to states. That's unattractive.

I propose that beliefs, and truth-apt states generally, have no explanatory role in the account of what assertion is.⁶ All assertions, value and non-value, are activities in which predoxastic, non-truth-apt, states are defended. What then is belief? We might say that beliefs are dispositions to defend Π -states, actually possessed. The defence does not have to be public. This is one option, perhaps not the most attractive. It is however the simplest and the one I shall stick with here.⁷ It serves the purpose for the exposition of the view.

There are then two kinds of Π -states, those connected to motivation and those not—see diagram above. What are these other kinds of states? Consider identity-statements. One hypothesis is that they express a disposition to substitute the terms flanking the identity sign in all transparent contexts. That disposition is not a belief state, but not a motivational state either. This proposal does not mean that identity-statements are metalinguistic or *about* dispositions to use terms any more than values statements are *about* motivations. We are not offering a theory of truth-conditions. Identity statements express dispositions to substitution, but they are *about* identity. This hypothesis explains what we take away after being informed by an identity-statement—a disposition to use terms in a certain way.

Identity-statements look manageable, but other cases less so. For example, when someone says that a flag is red, they might be expressing a perceptual state, say, if they are perceiving a flag. But statements about colour can also be asserted through testimony, in the absence of any perception. So what would be expressed in an assertion about a flag's being red under these circumstances?

More Sophistication

To answer this question we need to introduce another feature of the apparatus of cognitive expressivism. The basic expressivist holds that in uttering a moral statement a person expresses a motivational state. But there are strong reasons to think this is false. Psychopath Frank has gained some moral knowledge, he knows that what he is doing is wrong, but he lacks the motivation state that we, non-psychopaths express, when we say

⁶ Some who believe in Minimalist Semantics, and the disciplined syntacticism of Wright (1992) will think that truth-aptness is a syntactic property, and furthermore, a minimal assertion and belief can be defined. See Blackburn 1998. I deny this view works—see Barker 2007a.

⁷ In fact, my preferred view is expressivism about belief.

something is wrong. Let's say it's a kind of disapproval state. Frank knows that murder is wrong not on the basis of reflection on feeling (in the context of other beliefs)—he lacks the required feelings—rather he knows the truth purely on the basis of testimony. His assertions that murder is wrong are not expressions of motivational states. Furthermore, he is perfectly sincere. How does the expressivist deal with this? The response I urge is that Frank is expressing a pre-doxastic state, it's just not a motivational state. It is, rather, a state that, canonically, is caused by certain feelings, but in Frank's case he lacks the feelings. Nevertheless he is able to token the state through another path. The path through which he tokens it is testimony. It is through other speakers reporting things to him that he is able to taken the Π -state through a non-canonical case, which state he can then defend in his sincere assertions of *Murder is wrong*.⁸

This idea then is that Π -states are not so much states like motivation, but states whose canonical causes are these more familiar kinds of states. Π -states themselves have a relatively abstract functional character. This idea is adopted generally in cognitivist expressivism. Let's see how it works in other cases. In asserting a colour-sentence the speaker expresses a state that has its ultimate origin in perceptual states. But in asserting, *The flag is red*, I am not expressing a perceptual state—I am not in one. I may never have seen the flag. I am like psychopath Frank vis-à-vis moral disapproval. I am expressing a state whose canonical cause is a perceptual state, but the state I'm expressing has not been caused by one (in me at least). The reason for my tokening the state may be testimony—someone told me the flag was red. My understanding of their utterance and belief in its truth involves my tokening of this state whose canonical cognitive cause is a perceptual state.⁹

This abstract-functionalist conception of Π -states works very well for a centrally important class of sentences: truth-ascriptions. Take the case of asserting that something is true. What am I expressing when I assert: *What X said is true*? The simple expressivist might have said: you are expressing a disposition to assert the sentence. But that will not do—I may

⁸ So technically, cognitivist expressivism is externalist about the relation between motivation and value judgment.

⁹ Perceptual states are not representational as such. The states they give rise to, like beliefs or propositional attitudes about seemings are representational.

not know what sentence was asserted by X , so I cannot have that disposition. Here's the thought, following the model described above. What I express is a state whose canonical cause is a disposition to assert a sentence. The state is one that is constituted by a referential element, picking out the sentence concerned, and a cognitive element corresponding to the truth-predicate. The cognitive element corresponding the truth-predicate has the functional role: being the kind of state which combines with cognitive elements underpinning referring terms for sentences, where the combination of such elements are canonically caused by disposition to assert the sentence, to which the speaker refers.

Assertions of Validity and Entailment

Another important class of utterances are those about validity and entailment. Take modus ponens (MP). We find modus ponens right, with the appropriate priming and education. MP 's rightness for us remains stable fact about us, unless we go senile or suffer some mental trauma. What underpins our grasp of its rightness if it is not a kind of noetic *seeing* of normative fact? Human minds at some level are computational systems. At the sub-doxastic level, U 's mind contains a sub-system that processes Π -states. Its processing involves extracting causal consequences from given tokened states. That is how it carries out its computations. It is not so much a syntactically driven system as a causally-structurally driven one. Call a *C-law* a functional regularity in U 's cognitive system: $\Phi \Rightarrow \Gamma$ means that Γ is extractable as a causal consequence given the intrinsic structural and causal powers of Φ and Γ . The canonical cause for the Π -states of validity and entailment claims are such C-laws. So the C-law that explains the stability of the intuition for MP is as below, where $\Pi[x]$ denotes the Π -state corresponding to x in the speaker's system:

$$\Pi-[S], \Pi-[If S, R] \Rightarrow \Pi-[R].$$

This C-law is the fact that the Π -states of S and *if* S, R generate as an intrinsic causal consequence the Π -state of R . The Π -state that is expressed by claims of validity is a state whose canonical ground is a C-law, or better still the activation of an internal system that is

directed towards detecting C-laws. Speakers are not perfect logical reasoners. So that system can be activated, but not have detected a C-law.¹⁰

Cognitive expressivism offers no theory about validity, just as it offers no theory of truth. Since, there is no claim that value-sentences, or any other declarative sentences, are inherently non-truth-apt, we could just accept the standard account of validity. This is not very deep, however. Depth is achieved when we turn away from the question of what validity is and return to the question of what goes on when you assert that a sentence is valid. The answer is that you defend a Π -state whose canonical cause is output from the system that detects C-laws.

Logical Compounds

Negation is usually held up as a serious problem for expressivists. Here's what I have to say about it. In asserting *Not-S*, a speaker defends *rejection* of Π -[*S*]. Rejection is a kind of Π -state. It is not a speech-act, but a kind of functional state. Let's say that the speaker's system *excludes* tokening of Π just in case it is constrained from tokening Π -[*S*]. To illustrate this consider doubt. Doubt about *S* occurs when U's system will not token Π -[*S*] because there is no Π -state, or canonical cause, that can causally ground Π -[*S*] through C-laws. That corresponds on the phenomenal level to lack of evidence for *S*. Rejection also involves a state of exclusion. The difference from doubt is simply that there are Π -state or canonical causes of Π -states that causally ground the exclusion of Π -[*S*]. The state expressed in uttering *Not-S* is simply the state of tokening Π -states or canonical causes, which we would express through claims of evidence, causing the exclusion of Π -[*S*]. Nothing I have said implies that in asserting *not-S* the speaking is saying that they reject Π -[*S*]. We are not providing a theory of truth-conditions for *not-S*. We are just claiming what goes on in production of *Not-S* in assertions.

This theory is not a theory of meaning about negation: it does not give you truth-conditions for negation. It does not assume any primitive incompatibility between contents as part of how *not* functions. Rather, it explains aspects of logical intuition and use: why

¹⁰ The idea of a C-law needs some refinement. See Barker 2007a.

speakers find dual assertion of, say, *Vegemite is tasty* and *Vegemite is not tasty* cognitively intolerable; why they are inclined to undertake inferences like: *S. Therefore not-not-S*. And so on.

Logical compounds, like disjunctions, conjunctions, *if*-sentences, and so on, are treated in a similar way. Assertions of a compound involve defence of states that are compound Π -states formed from the Π -states of the sentences embedded in the compound. I will not explore, speculatively, what these compound Π -states are here. Our purposes do not require that kind of detail.

§2 Meaning, Asserting, and Embedding

The emerging picture of cognitive expressivism is of a theory of production of speech-acts by individuals and their mental antecedents in those individuals. We have been concentrating on assertion and the Π -states, as I have called them, defended in these speech acts. Several questions loom. How does meaning come into the story? What is defending? What goes on when sentences are embedded in logical compounds? I deal with these issues in turn.

The states expressed by assertions, Π -states, are non-representational, non-truth-apt, states. They do not have propositional content. If propositional contents emerge, they emerge at the level of sentences. But now you might wonder: what determines that we mean the same by our sentences, given facts about the Π -states we express? Cognitive Expressivism does not answer that question. No theory of meaning is going to be offered. Expressivists ought not to embark on any such project. Cognitivist expressivism treats statements about meaning as on a par with any other statement, say, like, value-statements or validity-statements. Just as it gives no theory of value, or validity, it gives no theory of meaning. It simply asks: what kinds of Π -states do we express in statements of meaning, and what kind of mental sub-system governs input for these states? That's where the action is.

The right answer is that the states expressed are linked to the states that must be in play when you attempt to understand someone's speech. I suggest that it is the work of a specific mental module, which I shall call, for want of a better term, the *L-processing*

module. (After all, understanding is an involuntary sub-doxastic process.) Statements of meaning are statements in which the Π -states expressed are ones whose canonical causes are outputs from the L-processing system. If a speaker U produces *That's red* partially caused by U's state, Φ , and H understands U, then H's L-processing system will produce a state, that corresponds to a potential assertion that H might make. The output of the L-processing system will be activation of the kinds of cognitive elements that would enter into an assertion, principally, a Π -state. This Π -state will not necessarily be tokened by H's system. Rather the L-processing system will select some possible tokenable Π -state, Γ , which H may or may not token, and link it to a sentence, in the expressing relation. H's system will not issue an assertion featuring production of *R (That's red)* expressing Γ , she will simulate that assertion, in a way, that could be called, offline.

You might wonder: what constitutes getting the right interpretation. Won't H interpreting U correctly be constituted by the functional identity or similarity of the Π -states in U and H? The answer is no. There may be many common features to the respective states, but sameness of meaning has no reduction to functional character. Cognitivist expressivism moves away from asking what constitutes correct interpretation, in reductive terms, to asking how the process governing L-processing outputs works. This is a speculative and quite theoretical matter. I won't enter into these speculations here.

Assertion

An assertion is an act of producing a sentence where a speaker defends a Π -state. I suggested that defending was signalling a disposition to provide *reasons* for the state. But we really don't want to say this, since Π -states are pre-doxastic and don't enter into relations of reason. Instead assertion should be analysed in terms of the mental antecedents of reason-statements and our intuitions about them. The mental antecedents here are C-law relations between Π -states and canonical causes. So here is roughly the official view:

Assertion: U performs an assertion iff U produces a sentence *S* signalling a disposition the C-law grounding architecture of a Π -state Ψ .

The Π -state Ψ is the one correlated in her system with S . The grounding architecture is the network of other Π -states and canonical causes linked by C-laws to Ψ . This architecture, which is internal, can be manifested by pointings, or other assertions, that, at the phenomenal level, we would say, provide reasons. But reason and inference, as such, do not have an explanatory role in the account. Obviously, we should say more about what *signalling* is. That must be left for another occasion—see Barker 2007a.

Embedding

So much for assertion. We want to say something briefly about embedding. Take the sentences below where tokens of V appear twice:

VA : Vegemite is tasty. If Vegemite is tasty, so is Marmite. So Marmite is tasty.

The first token of V is asserted, but the second, in the antecedent of the *if*-sentence isn't. The challenge is to find a common speech act that allows us to speak of a shared propositional content. According to cognitive expressivism, the common speech-act is what I call a *proto-assertion*. Proto-assertion is the core speech-act behind all uses of declarative sentences—see Barker (2004, 2005, 2007, 2007a).

Proto-assertion is tied to the systematicity and compositionality of language. The Π -state that may be associated with a given sentence, S , is not one-off. There is dispositional regularity, I call this a *repertoire disposition*, that links S to an underlying state. A very basic repertoire disposition that links Ψ to S is a disposition of the form:

If the speaker's system is directed towards producing a symbol caused by a disposition to signal the C-law grounding architecture of Ψ , then that system may produce S .

The *may* here is not normative, it's epistemic. There can be no question of normativity and rules at this level since we are not dealing with anything public or contentful. The *being directed towards* I invoke is not the formation of an intention. Agent control that underpins production of symbols is undoubtedly complex and distinguishes speech-acts from mere reflexes but we do not have to discern full-fledged intentions. We can give a compositional

account of how repertoire dispositions are derived from more generic ones that pertain to word-constituents of sentences. Repertoire disposition are what we express, when we make claims about rules governing use of words or sentences.¹¹

So here is the basic idea. A repertoire disposition for a Π -state, which may or may not be tokened, is always a causal factor in the production of any declarative sentence, in embedded state or in assertion. So the common speech-act in the tokens of V above is the production of a sentence caused by such a repertoire disposition. My cognitivist expressivism will not provide you with a theory of propositional content. What it does is provide you with a theory of what goes on when a speaker says that some sentence conveys a proposition. When a speaker U says that V in the two positions above means the same, U defends a disposition to L-process the two tokens of V with the same repertoire disposition.

§3 A Tale of Two Modes of Assertion Again

That's enough about cognitive expressivism for our purposes. I want to show how it supports the solution to the puzzle of faultless disagreement sketched in §0. Assertion is an act requiring two features of cognitive life. It requires a cognitive substructure—a network of Π -states and other states in C-law relations—and a superstructure which is the defence of this grounding architecture. Both belief and assertion are at this superstructure level: both are tied to inner or outer voicings of the grounding architecture of Π -states. Deception (or confusion) occurs when speakers have the superstructure without relevant parts of the substructure. We are interested in the opposite situation where speakers have the substructure but lack the superstructure of expressing. There are two cases to consider. One case is shift in epistemic standards. If a recognition of change in epistemic standards and retraction of assertion of S occurs, in GE's terms, then the speaker goes from defending Ψ to ceasing to defend Ψ , since, at some level, there is a registration by the speaker's system that some threshold for defence fails to be met. Just how this works need not concern us here. In epistemic retraction, all that happens is that the Π -state of S , Ψ , ceases to be defended by U . It is not that U ceases to

¹¹ See Barker (2004, 2007a) for detailed description of compositionality and systematicity outside the truth-conditional paradigm.

defend all compound states. Thus, under epistemic retraction, speakers maintain bivalence and a commitment to truth-aptness.

Contrast this with the move from the non-objective-mode to the objective mode, which I call *renunciation*. This move is one in which, for a speaker U, the Π -states and C-law grounding relations all remain. What changes is U's disposition to defend states. It disappears not simply for Ψ , but for all Π -states of logical compounds of S and $\langle S \rangle$ is true. So, in particular, the dispositions to defend the Π -states for *either S or not- S* and *either $\langle S \rangle$ is true or $\langle S \rangle$ is false* go. So, in the objective mode, U refrains from asserting bivalence for S . Since Π -states are non-truth apt, there is no embarrassment of the kind that would arise if Π -state were beliefs and thus truth-apt.

For a given speaker U, there are those Π -states they are willing to renounce, call these *optional* states, and those they are not willing to renounce, call them *non-optional*. Optional states for U tend to cluster in groups, those underpinning taste-statements, for example. Say a cluster of Π -properties are optional for U and U tokens Ψ in the group, expressed by S , then:

- (a) Engages frequently in assertion of S (if only to themselves).
- (b) Does not view disagreement in asserting S as a danger to the cognitive, physical, or psychological life of themselves or others;
- (c) May disapprove of dispute about assertion of S if pursued to great lengths.
- (d) Will renounce defence if argumentatively pushed.

What I have been calling *non-objective assertion* is the kind of assertive practice that has these characteristics.

Taste-assertions are paradigm instances of non-objective assertion. We should also really talk of non-objective belief. With my salt-free friends, in the non-objective mode, I believe that Vegemite is tasty, but in renouncing in a bitter debate over Vegemite, and conceding, in the objective mode, that it is only a matter of taste, I cannot at the moment be said to *believe* that Vegemite is tasty. In conceding that there is no real issue about the tastiness of Vegemite, one is conceding that one cannot clear-headily assert with conviction:

Vegemite is tasty. There is a form of Moorean paradoxicality in saying *I cannot say that it is true that Vegemite is tasty, but I believe it is*.¹²

The non-optional Π -states for a speaker after often those defended in judgements about the physical world, scientific claims, or claims about mathematics, and so on. The two modes of assertion, objective and non-objective, both involve the same activity of defending Π -states. So both really are assertions—it is not that non-objective assertions are only apparent or quasi assertions. We should not necessarily affirm that only value-claims are in the domain that might exhibit optionality. For example, Putnam (1987) suggests that there are two basic, but distinct, conceptual schemes about the structure of spacetime. In one conceptual scheme, spacetime is made up of points as concrete entities, in the other, points are abstractions, and non-zero extensions are the only concrete entities. Putnam argues that there is no objective fact of the matter about which one is right, and thinks this is relativity of truth. The possibility I prefer is that the respective assertions, *Points are concrete* and *Points are abstract*, are in the non-objective mode. We can renounce the states defended under argumentative pressure.

The claim that it is objectively true that *S* expresses a disposition to assert $\langle S \rangle$ is true in the objective mode. What is or is not objective is itself open to dispute. There may even be faultless disagreement about that. But now you may be wondering. Why are a speaker's Π -states divided into optional and non-optional? I deny that this reflects some muted sense of a distinction between the non-representational and representational parts of their language, or those that make contact with reality and those that don't. If contact with, or representation of, reality is to make a difference, that reality has to be determinate. But a commitment to determinacy in reality amounts to a commitment to bivalence. But it is the shifting commitment to bivalence we are attempting to explain.

¹² Under such circumstances of renunciation, we do say things like *Vegemite is tasty for me*. The *for-me* locution is just that device we use to convey our disposition to (non-objectively) assert that Vegemite is tasty, and also to convey that one does not believe it objectively.

§4 Expressivism, Semantics, and Faultless Disagreement

So now we can put this all together. Judgements of faultless disagreement are made in the objective mode of assertion. Relative to this mode, V , and its negation, are not truth-apt, and bivalence for V fails. So, one must refrain from saying that there is a fact of the matter concerning the tastiness of Vegemite in this domain. If so, we cannot say that either Smith or Jones has said something false or not true. On the other hand, they were not wrong to engage in debate, despite this failure of bivalence. That is because their debate is carried out in the non-objective mode. Colloquially, we say that they have a dispute of mere taste. From the objective mode, we cannot speak of a how-things-are with respect to the tastiness of Vegemite, yet we can say that Smith and Jones disagree about how things are (regarding Vegemite.) That's because we can say, in the objective mode, AT :

AT : Smith and Jones are directed towards making claims about how things are absolutely. They aim at absolute truth.

In AT , *how things are*, is in an intentional context. Assertion of AT in the objective mode does not commit us to affirming bivalence for V . What grounds assertion of AT is the fact that Smith and Jones really are performing assertions.

So that's it: Smith and Jones genuinely disagree about how things are but there is no fault. This claim is unproblematic if we accept the mode of assertion view and the dynamic conception of truth-aptness. This solution to the problem is not content relativity or truth-relativity. It uses the idea that truth is absolute, but sometimes non-objective. Smith rightly asserts that V is true, his claim is absolute, but it is non-objective. The fact that truth is not inherently objective does not mean there are two kinds of truth. There are, rather, two kinds of assertion about truth, objective and non-objective.

But there is the cost. The dynamic conception of truth-aptness, the centrepiece of the solution, undermines certain ideas we have about meaning. It undermines the idea the truth-aptness is constituted by possessing representational content. The orthodox idea is that for a sentence to be bivalence is for it to have truth-conditions specified in representational terms,

that is, in terms of the referential properties of its constituent terms. But that idea is dropped in this solution. We have given up the whole idea of representational playing an explanatory role in the account of truth-aptness. From my perspective, that amounts to an attack on semantics. Indeed, I suggest that the puzzle of faultless disagreement is an artefact of the idea that meaning is constituted by truth-conditions.

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