Expressivism and Relativism about Normativity

Seminar, Fall 2013

Stew Cohen
Juan Comesaña

Seminar description
In this seminar we will examine topics that lie at the intersection of philosophy of language, meta-ethics and meta-epistemology. The first three-quarters (approximately) will be devoted to expressivism, with special emphasis on the Frege-Geach problem (and, more particularly, the negation problem). The remainder of the seminar will deal with relativism as an account of normative thought and speech.

Requirements
You should come to class having read the texts and ready to participate. You should also prepare weekly critical comments on that week’s readings. These should be very short (around 1-2 double-spaced pages) and you should email them to us (cohens@email.arizona.edu and comesana@arizona.edu) by Tuesday night. We will not grade these weeklies, but we may ask you to talk about them to the rest of the class. There is a final paper due at the end of the term. Consult with us about it.

Tentative schedule
The following list is tentative and will probably change. The final two weeks are reserved for spillover or additions.

August 28: General Introduction.
- No readings.

September 4: Expressivism’s pre-history.

September 11: The early Gibbard.

September 18: The early Gibbard, cont.
- Optional: Stalnaker, Inquiry, chapters 1 and 4.

September 25: Does Minimalism about truth help?
Expressivism and Relativism about Normativity

October 2: The wishful thinking problem for expressivism.

October 9: Unwin on the negation problem

October 16: The later Gibbard on Frege-Geach and the negation problem
- Gibbard, Thinking How to Live, chapters 4 and 5.

October 23: The negation problem, cont.
- Yalcin, “Comments on Schroeder, Being For”.
- Optional: Schroeder, Being For, chapters 3-6.

October 30: Some guys from down on the hall on the negation problem.

November 6: The circularity problem for global expressivism.

November 13: Relativism, MacFarlane style

November 20: Relativism and expressivism
- Dreier, “Relativism (and Expressivism) and the Problem of Disagreement,” Philosophical Perspectives, 23 (2009), pp. 79-110.

November 27: Epistemic relativism
- Boghossian, Fear of Knowledge, chapter 6.

December 4: The class before the final class.

December 11: Final class.