

syntactic and inferential properties. This is not to deny premiss (2), that truths must be possible objects of belief; for one may suppose rather that not all beliefs need be capable of playing the psychological role in deliberation that Smith regards as essential. Moreover, since we do in fact speak quite happily of 'moral opinions' and 'moral assertions which are true or false', then on the face of it, minimalism does a good job of accommodating our actual concepts of belief, assertion, and truth.

Second, a minimalist need not, however, conclude that expressivism is false. For expressivism may, I think, should be located, not in the thesis that evaluations don't express beliefs and can't be true, but rather in the thesis that evaluative utterances express desires. After all, this is the heart of the doctrine – that which offers solutions to the epistemological, motivational, and metaphysical puzzles that afflict 'realism'. Thus, no matter which view one takes on the issue of whether beliefs are to be identified via their psychological role or via syntactic and inferential properties, it is nevertheless possible to be an expressivist. A virtue of the minimalist option (in my view) is that it shows how the expressivist insight may be separated from the implausible theses about truth and belief that have been traditionally associated with it.

Finally, I question claim (7): Smith's assumption, widely held, that 'expressivists must explain how it is that a sentence that is typically used to express a desire can yet have to many of the features of an assertion' – especially, its role in inference. It seems to me, on the contrary, that expressivists should maintain that 'right' is defined by means of a combination of two, independent rules of use: very roughly speaking (a) that 'X is right' expresses a desire, and (b) that 'right' functions logically as a predicate (so that, for example, one may infer 'X is right or snow is white' from 'X is right'). Therefore the real issue is not whether the second of these rules can be explained on the basis of the first (why should it be?) or whether they are consistent with one another (why shouldn't they be?); but whether the two together suffice to account for our entire practice with the term.

*Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, MA 02139, USA*

Minimalism, Truth-aptitude and Belief

MICHAEL SMITH

John Divers and Alex Miller [2] and Paul Horwich [3] agree that, even on a minimalist theory of truth-aptitude, a sentence is to count as truth-apt only if it has the appropriate syntax and only if it can be used to give the content of a belief: specifically, the belief of someone who sincerely utters the sentence. They also agree that if belief and desire are distinct existences – if no belief *is* a desire; or if, as I would prefer to say, there are no 'besires' [1], [9] (from here on, I will put my own terminological preference to one side) – then it may be impossible to reconcile the claim that moral sentences are truth-apt with the claim that moral judgement has a necessary connection of sorts with the will.

As I see it, this is enough to show that they are wrong when they say that minimalism about truth aptitude immediately precludes the distinctive expressivist claim that moral judgements are not truth-apt. For, in these terms, what the expressivists are saying is just that, even though the sentences we utter when we make moral judgements have the appropriate syntax, they do not express beliefs. Why? Because, by the expressivist's lights, moral judgements have a connection with the will that they could not have if they were expressions of beliefs. Thus, according to these expressivists, moral judgements express our desires and not our beliefs; moral sentences are therefore not truth-apt.

As such, expressivism relies on a premiss about the relationship between belief and desire. In short, expressivists think that Hume was right: belief and desire are distinct existences. Anti-Humean theorists of motivation reject this premiss. They argue that human beings are capable of enjoying beliefs-that-are-desires, and, accordingly, they insist that moral judgements express these hybrid psychological states. Since moral judgements therefore do have an appropriate connection with beliefs the anti-Humeans conclude that, notwithstanding the connection between moral judgement and the will, moral sentences are truth-apt after all.

Note that as I have so far characterized these two parties to the traditional debate in meta-ethics – the expressivists and the anti-Humean theorists of motivation – both sides accept the minimalist's theory of truth-aptitude. What they disagree about is not this, but rather whether or not moral sentences are truth-apt by the lights of the minimalist's theory. As I see it, this is a disagreement within the minimalist camp as to how to construct a philosophy of mind; a disagreement about whether there are any beliefs-that-are-desires. And this is precisely what John Divers and

Alex Miller and Paul Horwich all want to deny. As they see it, no such disagreement is possible within the minimalist camp. Let me consider their more specific replies in turn.

Divers and Miller argue that the debate in philosophy of mind arises only if we make some additional assumptions about truth-aptitude; assumptions beyond the merely minimal. Thus, as they put it, 'commitment to such a substantial psychological thesis' as that belief and desire are distinct existences 'marks the harbouring of a conception of belief which is metaphysically more portentous than that which is constrained by the platitudinous extensions of the platitudes linking belief with assertion'. Since a minimal theory of truth-aptitude requires us to eschew such metaphysical commitments, Divers and Miller attempt to construct a theory of belief out of metaphysically more innocent assumptions.

They therefore suggest that what the minimalist means when he says that truth-apt sentences express beliefs is that they express 'minimal beliefs', states which, Divers and Miller tell us, can be 'intrinsically motivational in character'. It is obscure to me just how this is supposed to follow from metaphysically innocent assumptions, but none the less, the upshot is supposed to be that a minimalist conception of truth-aptitude thus somehow favours the anti-Humean's view that there are beliefs-that-are-desires, and so precludes the debate I envisaged in philosophy of mind between Humeans and anti-Humeans from ever arising between minimalists.

Divers and Miller's argument depends crucially on the claim that the Humean theorist of motivation makes some more-than-minimal assumption about truth-aptitude; that only so could he think that belief and desire are distinct existences. Unfortunately, however, the only argument they give for this claim is that the debate in philosophy of mind between Humeans and anti-Humeans is *controversial*. But it does not follow from the claim that a debate is controversial that one or other party to the debate is smuggling in something 'metaphysically portentous'; still less that it is the Humean who is doing the smuggling. Worse still, once we take a look at the details of the debate between Humean and anti-Humeans in philosophy of mind, it emerges that Divers and Miller are wrong to suppose that that debate is metaphysically loaded in any sense that they should find troubling. If we want to have any account of belief at all, there is no alternative but to engage in this debate, and to choose a side. Let me briefly explain why.

The Humean theorist of motivation claims that belief and desire are distinct existences, and what he means by this is that we can always pull belief and desire apart *modally* [8], [9]. Thus, consider someone who judges it right to, say, give to famine relief, and assume, for the sake of the argument, that this judgement expresses a belief. With this assumption in place, we can ask whether it is plausible to suppose that an agent who

makes such a judgement is in a single, unitary psychological state – that is, whether she has a belief that it is right to give to famine relief that is necessarily connected to a desire to give to famine relief – as she would have to be if her judgement were the expression of a belief-that-is-a-desire, or whether she is in a belief state that can exist even in the absence of her desire.

Note that, if her belief and desire were necessarily connected then it would have to be impossible for her to keep on believing that it is right to give to famine relief while no longer desiring to give to famine relief. For if the psychological state is unitary, then no longer having the desire would entail that she no longer has the belief. Humean theorists of motivation therefore point to phenomena like weakness of will and suggest that what such phenomena show is that it is perfectly possible for a subject still to believe that it is right to give to famine relief while no longer desiring to do so; that the fault may be on the side of desire, not on the side of judgement [7], [9], [10]. And, for their part, anti-Humean theorists of motivation respond with their own interpretation of weakness of will. They tell us that weakness of will simultaneously blurs the subject's appreciation of the facts – the rightness of giving to famine relief – and saps her motivation [5], [6]. When an agent suffers from weakness of will, anti-Humeans thus insist that she no longer really has the belief that it is right to give to famine relief at all; she no longer really grasps this proposition. As John McDowell puts it, 'we should say that the relevant conceptions are not so much as possessed except by those whose wills are influenced appropriately' ([5], p.23). In this way, the anti-Humeans deny that phenomena like weakness of will require us to conceive of ourselves as creatures who enjoy beliefs and desires, where these are distinct existences, as opposed to beliefs-that-are-desires.

With this brief description of the debate in philosophy of mind before us the crucial point emerges quite clearly. Contrary to Divers and Miller, in giving his argument the Humean makes no non-minimal assumptions about the nature of truth-aptitude. Rather, he argues for the view that belief and desire are distinct existences on the basis of his own preferred interpretation of weakness of will. And the anti-Humean, for his part, counters by offering us an alternative interpretation. As such, the debate between them should, and presumably will, be decided in the court of folk psychology. What we have to decide is whether our folk understanding of phenomena like weakness of will requires us to think that those who suffer from weakness fail always on the side of belief and judgement, or whether our folk understanding allows us to think that those who are weak may sometimes keep their beliefs and judgements intact and fail just on the side of desire. Divers and Miller are therefore wrong to suppose that the Humean's commitment to the claim that belief and desire are distinct existences 'marks the harbouring of a conception of belief which is metaphysi-

cally... portentous'. It simply harbours a commitment to finding a conception of belief that, as they see it, is true to the psychological phenomena that we use our concept of belief to describe: weakness of will and the like. Moreover this is a commitment they share with their anti-Humean rivals. It is hard to see how a conception of belief that remains neutral on such questions could be a conception of belief at all. (I therefore reject their distinction between 'minimal' and 'robust' belief.)

Once this is understood it becomes clear that, even by Divers and Miller's own lights, the argument I gave in 'Why expressivists ...' can run its original course. For we have now established that minimalists can indeed hold that belief and desire are distinct existences. And we then have to ask these minimalists whether they agree that there is a necessary connection of sorts between moral judgement and the will, and, if so, how they are going to explain it. True enough, the argument from weakness of will shows that these minimalists can at best think that that connection is defeasible. But common sense tells us that the connection is not altogether fortuitous and contingent either, as many expressivists think it would have to be if moral judgements expressed beliefs, given that belief and desire are distinct existences. Minimalists who think that belief and desire are distinct existences may therefore find themselves agreeing with the expressivists on this score. They might end up thinking that the best explanation of the connection between moral judgement and the will requires the assumption that moral judgements are expressions of desires – second-order desires, perhaps; or complex dispositions to have first-order desires – and not beliefs. Minimalism about truth-aptitude thus does not preclude expressivism after all.

Divers and Miller take issue with my claim that minimalism about truth-aptitude isn't really as minimal as minimalists think. They quote with approval Frank Jackson's useful suggestion that minimalism is a 'common ground' theory [4]. I too approve of Jackson's suggestion, but the reason both he and I think that minimalism is a common ground theory is because theorists who embrace quite different philosophies of mind – Humeans and anti-Humeans alike – can all accept it. However in order to use a minimalist theory of truth-aptitude to figure out which sentences *are* truth-apt, these different theorists need to 'plug in' their own favourite philosophy of mind – a Humean or an anti-Humean theory, for example – and, depending on which theory they plug in, they will end up thinking that quite different sentences are truth-apt. Without such a philosophy of mind, the minimalist does not have a theory that tells us which sentences are truth-apt at all; he is like a cook who has a recipe but no ingredients. This is what I meant when I said that minimalism is not so minimal as minimalists think. Divers and Miller have not convinced me that I was wrong.

Paul Horwich's reply has much in common with Divers and Miller's. He too complains that I define belief in terms of its psychological role, and that in so defining it I assume a conception of belief that minimalists will not accept. He too thinks that minimalists should say that there are beliefs-that-are-desires. But in fact I didn't say anything much about the psychological role of belief. All I said was that, however we define belief, we will at the very least have to define it in such a way as to ensure that beliefs are psychological states whose aim is to fit the world. So much follows from the fact that beliefs aim to be true. Unfortunately, however, there are two ways in which we can do this. We can define beliefs in such a way as to preclude the existence of beliefs-that-are-desires. This is what the Humean does when he defines belief and desire as distinct existences. Or we can define belief in such a way as to leave it open whether there are any beliefs-that-are-desires. This is what the anti-Humean does. My point was simply that minimalists are not committed to giving one rather than the other definition. Like Divers and Miller, Horwich denies this. He thinks that minimalists are committed to giving the second, anti-Humean, definition of belief. But why should the minimalist be so committed?

True enough, if the minimalist defines belief in the second way, he will have no problem justifying the claim that moral sentences are truth-apt. But he pays a price. For he then has to think of weakness of will as a failure always on the side of belief and judgement; that someone who says 'It is right to give to famine relief', and yet who does not desire to do so, does not *really* believe that it is right to give to famine relief. Defining belief in the first way allows the minimalist to avoid paying this price. For he can then say that weakness of will is sometimes a failure just on the side of desire, not on the side of belief and judgement. However the minimalist who chooses the first definition pays a different price. For, as Horwich acknowledges, if we add in the assumption that there is a necessary connection of some sort between moral judgement and the will, it may then be difficult for the minimalist who thinks that belief and desire are distinct existences to hold on to the idea that moral judgements express beliefs at all. He may have to say instead that moral judgements express our desires – our second-order desires; or complex dispositions to have first-order desires – and not our beliefs. And if he does then, for reasons Horwich accepts, he will quite rightly end up denying that moral sentences are truth-apt. I don't see anything in Paul Horwich's reply that would force the minimalist to pay one of these prices rather than the other.

Let me make one final remark about Horwich's terminological preference. As he sees things, the 'essence of expressivism' lies in the claim that moral judgements express desires. He tells us that this is what allows expressivists to solve the 'epistemological, motivational, and metaphysical

puzzles that afflict "realism". But, as he points out, if moral judgements express beliefs-that-are-desires, then they do express desires. He therefore concludes that it is not essential to expressivism that moral judgements do not express beliefs and are not truth-apt.

I disagree with Horwich. One remarkable feature of expressivism, historically, is that the expressivists all held by the Humean view of belief and desire as distinct existences. Indeed, it was *because* they held by this view that they thought the epistemological, motivational and metaphysical puzzles that afflict 'realism' arose in the first place. They wanted to solve these puzzles all right, but they wanted to do so without having to give up the Humean psychology they knew and loved. As such, it seems to me historically more faithful to say that the expressivist's distinctive claim is that, because moral judgements express desires and not beliefs, so moral sentences are not apt for truth and falsehood at all.

However let it not be thought that I want to insist on this terminological point at all costs. Provided we advertise our use in advance, as Horwich does, we are of course free to use the term 'expressivist' in whichever way we please.¹

Monash University
Clayton, Victoria 3168, Australia
msmith@arts.cc.monash.edu.au

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In Defence of Fictionalism about Possible Worlds

PETER MENZIES & PHILIP PETTIT

1. Introduction

If you utter the sentence 'There were blue swans on the lake' in telling a story, you are not understood as committing yourself to the existence of blue swans. Rather your utterance is considered as an elliptical expression of the sentence 'In the story, there were blue swans on the lake'. Clearly, quantification within the scope of such a story operator does not carry serious ontological commitment. By analogy, Gideon Rosen [9] suggests that talk about possible worlds should be understood as talk within the scope of a story operator. Thus, if you assert 'There are possible worlds at which blue swans exist', Rosen holds that your assertion is best understood along the lines of 'According to the fiction of many possible worlds, there are worlds at which blue swans exist'.

Under Rosen's theory, the fiction is that there are possible worlds in the sense envisaged in Lewis's [5] modal realism and we shall go along here with this general conception of modal fictionalism.¹ There is more to Rosen's theory, however, than that conception of the fiction involved in modal talk. Specifically – and, as we shall see, contentiously – he advocates a simple *prefixing strategy* for fictionalizing Lewis's possible worlds analyses of modal propositions. Let P be any modal proposition and let P^* be the possible worlds translation of P (the translation that Lewis would endorse). Then, Rosen argues, the fictionalist should endorse the following translational schema:

- (1) P iff according to the hypothesis of the plurality of worlds (PW), P^* .

Some examples of this fictionalist schema of translation are: necessarily p iff according to PW, at all worlds, p ; and possibly p iff according to PW, at some world, p .

For all the appeal of this prefixing strategy of translation, its ultimate tenability has been questioned by Stuart Brock [2] and, in a later article in ANALYSIS [10], by Rosen himself.² Independently of each other, they have advanced a common objection which shows that the prefixing strategy cannot serve fictionalist purposes. Our aim in this paper is to demonstrate

¹ For a different version of fictionalism see D.M. Armstrong's [1]. For discussion of this kind of fictionalism see Lewis [6] and Rosen [10].

² In response to this objection, Rosen has suggested that we may wish to reconsider the merits of Lewis's modal realism.