Boo *Because*

Expressivists understand moral statements as simply expressions of attitude. On this account, moral *differences* seem to fall short of *disagreement*. But because moral disagreement is a widespread phenomenon, this presents a problem for expressivism. To help expressivists make sense of disagreement, Alan Gibbard reconceptualizes moral disagreement as disagreement in plan. Because we cannot enact two different plans, differences in plan remain genuine disagreements while not involving truth-apt claims—an expression of plan cannot be true or false. In response, I first step back from public disagreement, examining the experience of private deliberation: choosing a plan for *oneself*. I argue that planning inexorably involves overtly truth-apt claims. I then return to public debate, arguing that the same truth-apt claims undergird interpersonal moral disagreement. While Gibbard's reconceptualization is insightful, he unwittingly provided the means to recognize that planning essentially involves truth-apt claims about reasons. We must therefore abandon expressivist noncognitivism to fully understand the nature of moral disagreement.

When you and I disagree about moral questions, what is it that we are doing? Are we simply expressing our attitudes and feelings? Or do we intend to make claims that could be objectively right or wrong? What, after all, is at *stake* in moral disputes?

Alan Gibbard traces this concern back to G.E. Moore, coining the 'What's at Issue?' question (2002, 71). The expressivist answer is simple: people merely *express* their attitudes and feelings when engaging in moral talk.[1] Expressivism is a form of metaethical noncognitivism, maintaining that moral claims are not truth-apt; they are not statements which could be objectively true or false. For an expressivist, the statement 'Murder is wrong!' is an elaborate expression of the more basic sentiment, 'I don't like murder!'

But if moral claims are merely expressions of attitude, then moral differences seem to be just that—*differences*. You dislike theft and I like it—these claims don't amount to genuine disagreement because they are not obviously incompatible. But this account fails to make sense of the robust and widespread phenomenon of moral disagreement. We don't simply express our moral differences and call it a day; we *disagree*. You say theft is impermissible. I disagree, arguing that it is permissible. The conflict is obvious; there's something to hash out between us. Hence, the problem for expressivists: their theory—that ethical disputes can be understood simply in terms of

[1] See Stevenson (1941), Ayer (1936), and Carnap (1937). Beyond the descriptive language claim that moral statements are not truth-apt, expressivists tend to make the bolder claim that moral statement are not best understood as truth-apt claims, regardless of what people intend.

expressions of attitudes and feelings—fails to make sense of genuine moral disagreement. The expressivist theory appears not to fit the facts of moral disputes.

Enter Alan Gibbard. In several of his works, Gibbard aims to help expressivists face the problem of disagreement (2002, 72).[2] (I'll follow Gibbard in using the term 'expressivism' to describe the "broad strategy at work" in all attitude-based noncognitivist views [2002, 73]).[3]

Gibbard aims to reconceptualize moral disagreements as disagreements in *plan*. Since moral claims seem to be essentially action-guiding, we can look at moral statements as statements about hypothetical or actual plans of action.[4] Moral disagreement as disagreement in plan thus solves our initial puzzle: what's at stake is *which* plan we adopt. However, this reconceptualization is expressivist-friendly because both parties are merely expressing their preferred plan, and an expression of plan is not obviously truth-apt. But because two plans can't both be chosen, differences in plan count as genuine disagreement without falling into a cognitivist metaethical framework (the position that moral statements are intended to be the type of claim that could be objectively right or wrong).

In this article, my aim is to subversively leverage Gibbard's reconceptualization against the very position which he hoped to defend.[5] While his reconceptualization is insightful, I'll suggest that he has unwittingly increased, not decreased, the pressure on expressivists to give up their noncognitivism. I'll argue that while Gibbard's reconceptualization of moral disagreement as disagreement in plan is correct, it points *away* from metaethical noncognitivism.

In section 1, I lay out the details of Gibbard's reconceptualization. In section 2, I take a step back. Interpersonal disagreement is messy; confounding variables abound. Before directly examining the nature of interpersonal disagreement, I first examine what it is like to choose a plan for *oneself*: to deliberate between contingency plans within one's own mind. I suggest that selecting a plan for oneself involves overtly truth-apt claims. In section 3, I broaden the scope, returning to an examination of interpersonal disagreement. I argue that the same truth-apt claims undergird statements made in public, interpersonal disagreement. In section 4, I consider and reject an attempt to disagree in plan without disagreeing in a cognitivist manner. I argue that while Gibbard's reconceptualization is quite sensible, he incidentally illuminated normative planning's reliance on truth-apt claims. Lurking just beneath the surface of expressions of plan are truth-apt

[2] The 'problem of disagreement' is different from the 'argument from disagreement,' put forth by the moral error theorist J.L. Mackie (1977).

[3] While, in the texts I focus on here, Gibbard never explicitly signs up for straightforward expressivism, an examination of his larger work seems to squarely place him within these noncognitive, attitude-based metaethical views. But the nature of Gibbard's position (much less what we decide to brand Gibbard himself) is not the focus of this article. Rather, I aim to subvert a maneuver put forth by Gibbard to aid a broadly expressivist understanding of moral disputes.

[4] Moore uses the word 'conduct' rather than 'action,' but refers to the same essentially action-guiding nature of moral claims (1903, 465).

[5] I won't address metaethical questions concerning whether moral facts are indeed objectively true or false. My investigation is restricted to the first-order level of how ordinary moral disputes are best understood: in my view, as involving truth-apt claims about reasons. Thus, my conclusion is friendly to both realists and error theorists alike.

claims about reasons. Subsequently, one must adopt a cognitivist perspective to fully understand the nature of moral disagreement.

Section 1

First, we should get clear on Gibbard's reconceptualization. It's a brief but elegant argument: the cognitivism/noncognitivism metaethical debate is concerned with the nature of first-order *moral* claims. But we can broaden the scope of the discussion to include normativity at large, since moral claims are just a subset of normative claims more generally. So when we ask moral questions, we're asking questions about what we ought to do from the point of view of a specific normative dimension: morality (Gibbard 2002, 72-73).[6] And because the answers we express in response to ought questions are essentially action-guiding, questions of what we (morally) ought to do are questions about what plan of action to adopt (Gibbard 2008, 14-15). Thus, our central question arises: "What kind of state of mind do *ought* claims express?" (Gibbard 2002, 73).

Gibbard maintains that ought claims like 'theft is wrong' or 'it's impermissible to lie' are best understood as expressions of moral contingency plans (2002, 73-74; 2008, 19). Expressions like these are clearly more than a descriptive prediction of what will happen if someone is given the chance to lie, and they are clearly more than a claim about what *I* or *you* should do: expressions of moral plan are "what to do if placed as a given person in a given plight" (Gibbard 2003, 270). On Gibbard's reconceptualization, we're not merely expressing the simple sentiment 'Yay X' or 'Boo X;' we're expressing a normative plan. When I say, 'it's impermissible to lie,' I'm expressing a universalizable plan of action: 'if you're in a situation where you could lie, do not lie!'[7]

This reconceptualization seems correct, not only in the moral domain, but in many plausibly normative domains. When I wonder about how I ought to inquire if I want to reach true beliefs, I seem to be wondering about an *epistemic* plan. When I disagree with you about how we should plan our errands, I'm expressing a *prudential* plan of action that conflicts with yours (Bratman 2008, 95). When I struggle to create a seating plan for my wedding that minimizes awkwardness, I'm struggling to decide on a *social* plan. Likewise, if I wonder whether it's morally permissible to cheat on my wife, I'm deliberating over a hypothetical *moral* plan of action. And if my wife and I disagree on how we should raise our children, we're disagreeing over an eventual moral plan.[8] When we consider and discuss normative questions, what we're doing is best understood as considering and expressing "contingency planning for living" (Gibbard 2002, 75).

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[6] Gibbard's broadening of normative scope aligns with Scanlon's and Kagan's focus on normativity in general (Scanlon 2014, 1-2; Kagan 2023, 77-78 & 342-353) and with Scanlon's reasons fundamentalism (1998, Ch1).

[7] Perhaps the best formulation of this generalizability comes from Gibbard (2003): "The chief reason, then, to adopt the stance of an adviser…may not be actually to advise the person who is in that situation, but to put our heads together in working out more generally how to live" (276).

[8] There's a shallow way in which these questions are simply empirical ones about our language. But I take Gibbard's reconceptualization to make a deeper theoretical point: normative deliberations and debates are *best* understood,

But why is this reconceptualization friendly to the expressivist? Notice that expressing a plan is not the same as reporting one's state of mind about that plan. 'Boo lying' and 'I'm against lying' are not identical statements, even though they might typically convey the same meaning in everyday speech. If you disagree with the statement 'I'm against lying,' you're disagreeing with my report that I am against lying. If you disagree with my statement, 'Boo lying,' you're disagreeing with the sentiment or attitude I have expressed—you're saying, 'Yay lying' (Gibbard 2002, 73). The difference is crucial because disagreeing with a report of one's state of mind is a truth-apt claim; one either does or does not have that state of mind. But 'Yay' and 'Boo' lying are not truth-apt claims; there's nothing which could be true or false about either statement.

So when we express a contingency plan, we're expressing something that isn't truth-apt; a plan can't be true or false. On Gibbard's view, when you and I disagree about what we should do if our son gets expelled from school, we're genuinely disagreeing while not making truth-apt claims. You say he should be sent to the military academy, and I say he should be homeschooled. According to Gibbard, when I disagree about which plan we should hypothetically adopt, I'm essentially expressing "Yay my plan" and "Boo your plan." That might sound crude and overly simplistic, but in the expressivist scheme, that is essentially what's going on. Of course, we dress up our sentiments in more sophisticated language, but moral disagreement is, at its core, an expression of imperatives for and against different plans. 'This plan over that one!' or 'No! Not your plan!' Thus, for Gibbard, differences in plan are still genuine disagreements, but what's being expressed isn't something that (i) either party intends to be objectively right or wrong or (ii) could in fact be right or wrong.

But why exactly does a difference in plan count as genuine disagreement? Gibbard's answer is less than fully explanatory. He offers the following:

> Still, why treat [differences in plan] as something you and I can discuss and agree on or disagree on? That, I say, is because we need to be able to put our heads together. Often we need to think cooperatively, treating each other's thoughts like thoughts that occur to oneself, to be considered and supported or refuted, to be accepted or rejected. It is not always good for a person to think alone (2002, 74).

This remains fairly ambiguous. I would imagine the more straightforward answer is that planning is essentially zero-sum between possible plans; since only one plan can be chosen, any difference in plan is inherently a disagreement. In his later Tanner Lectures, Gibbard concludes something quite similar: "if there's more than one thing I equally and most prefer from among my alternatives, I pick one—not out of preference, but out of the necessity to choose if I'm not to be like Buridan's ass." (2008, 19).

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descriptively and theoretically, as weighing the sum of reasons for one plan of action over another. It's not that we all express disagreement as conflict in moral plan and are somehow deeply theoretically *wrong* to do so.

This explanation seems right—I can't sign up for more than one plan if there are any differences between the possible plans, so I must choose just one. But why would I select one plan over any other? And does the experience of private deliberation between possible plans map onto public disagreement? When we drill on the details, we'll discover that while Gibbard is correct about his reconceptualization, he is wrong to think this aids the expressivist cause.

Section 2

Consider Gibbard's claim that "we need to think cooperatively, treating each other's thoughts like thoughts that occur to oneself" (2002, 74). This suggestion follows Scanlon's focus on how reasoning appears privately to oneself, rather than publicly in interpersonal dialogue (2014, 11-15). Because public disagreement is rife with confounding variables that cloud our investigation, a retreat to the inner sanctum may shed brighter light on the nature of moral disagreement.[9] After all, what plan one expresses in public tends to be first determined in private consideration. So let us examine what internal deliberation—disagreement about plans within one's own mind—is like.[10]

I began this section with only part of Gibbard's statement; the second half continued, speaking of thoughts about plans "to be considered and supported or refuted, to be accepted or rejected." But what would this look like? Say you have a number of different contingency plans in mind, but, of course, you can only choose one to enact. How does one go about choosing?

The obvious answer is that one chooses a plan over any number of alternatives because one has *reasons* for picking that plan.[11] Deliberating alone and in a genuinely open-ended manner is the experience of searching for and eventually recognizing the reasons which present themselves for or against a particular plan. Deliberating is the experience of *discovering* which plan is supported by which reasons; selecting one plan from the pack is the experience of discovering which plan is best or most supported by the relevant reasons.[12] In many ways, this recognition of reasons is akin to a type of perceptual recognition. Galen Strawson suggests that "one does not really act at all, in reasoning. Rather one 'sees'—one realizes—that *this* follows from *that*. Reasoning is more like sensation (or perception) than action" (1993, footnote 14, emphasis added). However, because reasons appear to ground the selection of one plan over its alternatives, and

[9] Variables like incentive structures to believe or perform in certain ways, the way moral talk is distorted for rhetorical purposes, how one's intended speech is understood by an interlocutor or bystander, etc. For a nice overview of how these pressures may affect even the individual deliberative process, see Vavova (2018).
[10] Gibbard later mimics this same retreat inward in *Thinking How to Live* (2003, 270-274).
[11] This seems true regardless of whether, as Kagan discusses, one takes reasons to be a causal force in behavior or merely a justifying force (2023, 358-359). Even if reasons merely justify actions, the belief that one has reasons to act one way over another is what guides that action.
[12] Of course, we will often think that others are *wrong* about which reasons support which plan or which plan is supported by the greatest weight of all reasons—but that's exactly the point; one takes oneself (and therefore others) to deliberate (and thus disagree) through truth-apt claims about reasons.

because claims about reasons are straightforwardly truth-apt, private moral planning appears to be best understood in cognitivist terms.

It's hard to imagine how else one could decide between plans. What would it mean to choose one plan among a variety of alternatives without taking oneself to have *reasons* for doing so? The possibilities seem bleak; one could select a plan wantonly, without any desires about which plan one should choose (Frankfurt 1971). But this does not seem to fit the experience of intentional, active contingency planning; we don't select plans on mere whim.[13]

Perhaps, then, one could select a plan on the basis of mere preference. But this too does not seem to fit the experience of contingency planning.[14] I pick the plan I have most *reason* for. Of course, my own preferences will often factor into my reasons-weighing-process.[15] Notice, however, that selecting a plan based on preference is still choosing for a *reason*—a reason that happens to be based on or involving one's preference.[16] If I select one plan over another because that plan secures my preferences, I am still acting on what I take to be a genuine reason: that *that* plan secures my preferences. The possibility of choosing a plan without taking oneself to have reason(s) for doing so seems bleak.

This again seems true, not only in the moral domain, but across all normativity. Because inquiring open-mindedly aids in reaching true beliefs and avoiding false ones, I take myself to have a reason to inquire open-mindedly. When planning several consecutive errands, I take myself to have a reason to reduce unnecessary driving. When coordinating the seating arrangements at my wedding, minimizing social discontent appears as a reason to plan one way over another. And in moral planning, the fact that cheating on my wife betrays my promise of fidelity seems to be a robust reason against cheating.

Retreating inward to examine private deliberation reveals that plans are selected because one takes oneself to have *reason(s)* for that plan (and possibly against its competitors). When we choose a plan, we base that choice on truth-apt claims about reasons themselves. The claims that 'plan X is supported by reason Y,' that 'reason E points away from plan F,' or that 'plan H is supported by the greatest weight of all reasons' are straightforwardly truth-apt.[17] Thus, when we

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[13] Even if we decide between plans quickly, we take ourselves to have readily accessible reasons for doing so.
[14] Even Gibbard implies that preference alone doesn't seem to be why we choose one plan over another (2008, 19).
[15] It is still true that selecting moral plans based purely on preference is an infrequent occurrence.
[16] I will return to his point in the next section when I widen the scope to cover interpersonal disagreement.
[17] I should note that the central focus of my argument has been on demonstrating that normative planning involves reasons claims. I am presupposing for this article that reasons claims themselves are best understood in straightforwardly truth-apt terms. Thus, my aim is simply to show that planning necessarily involves reasons claims. Of course, many expressivists may demur; Gibbard believes that reasons themselves are simply expressions of a willingness to support one's plan with what we tend to call normative reasons (1990 & 2003 188-191). This too seems inaccurate and misfitting the facts of our ordinary normative talk. Scanlon, to my eye, satisfactorily addresses Gibbard's expressivist take on reasons themselves being mere expressions of attitude (Scanlon 1998, 58-64). I am taking as given, for the purposes of this paper, that if I can demonstrate normative planning involves claims about reasons, then I have shown that planning fits a cognitivist framework. In other words, I assume that reasons-statements are plainly truth-apt.

express an imperative to adopt one plan over another (even privately to ourselves), we do so because we take that plan to be supported by reasons. Cognitivist claims about reasons lurk just below the surface of normative contingency planning.

Section 3

Perhaps expressivists will put their hopes in a disconnect between the private and public domains. Perhaps there is something unique about public moral disagreement that is disanalogous to private deliberation, and perhaps through this disanalogy, the expressivist can demonstrate that disagreements over moral plan are not directly grounded in truth-apt claims about reasons.

However, when we examine interpersonal moral disagreement, we again see that moral plans are grounded in truth-apt claims about reasons. When you express your plan and I demur, expressing my own, we are clearly in disagreement; two different plans cannot both be adopted (even hypothetically). Gibbard embraces this point but maintains that the story stops there; expressions of plan are simply imperatives about hypothetical action. However, the moment we inquired as to how and why a plan is chosen, we saw that truth-apt claims about reasons are causally responsible. I think my plan is better than yours because I take my plan to be better supported by reasons.

Consider how interpersonal moral debate proceeds once a disagreement has been discovered. I say our son should be homeschooled and you say he should be sent to the military academy. We've both expressed our plans. Does the conversation end there? Of course not. 'Boo your plan' and 'Yay my plan' do not make sense on their own; we offer explanations for either sentiment.[18] But the explanations never take the form 'Boo because boo!' Disagreements in plan

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There is a widely accepted, though not universal, consensus that reasons are claims which can be objectively true (see Alvarez 2017, Raz 1975 & 1999, Scanlon 1998, Darwall 1983, Smith 1994). Of course, this is a second-order claim about the objective status of reasons themselves; for my purposes, I only need to rely on the more conservative consensus that reasons claims are ordinarily issued as the type of statement intended to be objectively true (regardless of whether they are indeed true). All those who believe normative reasons can be true should naturally align with the idea that our ordinary use of reasons statements is truth-apt. For my purposes, if I can show that normative planning involves reasons claims, I believe that this alone is enough to put pressure on expressivism, as it is widely (not universally) understood that reasons statements are intended to be truth-apt.
Even many of those who disagree that some reasons can be objectively true align on people's widespread use of reasons claims as truth-apt. Mackie (1977) denies the existence of objectively true normative reasons in defending his metaethical error theory. He agrees, however, that the ordinary use of reasons statements is truth-apt (hence, for Mackie, we are in widespread error about our moral claims).

[18] This holds regardless of whether non-rational emotions drive rational claims or vice versa. Haidt maintains that emotional intuition drives a post- or ad-hoc rational explanation for adopting moral plans which is chased out in reasons-claims (2001). But even if this is true, such an account supports a cognitivist understanding of what's going on in moral disagreement. Even if claims about reasons are driven by purely emotional intuitions, those claims for or against moral plans remain truth-apt.

proceed by way of discussing the *reasons* supporting or opposing either plan—in other words, we disagree by saying 'Boo because… [truth-apt claim about reasons].'

Disagreement proceeds by hashing out claims about reasons themselves. And while this stage takes many forms, it seems to squarely involve truth-apt reasons statements. For instance, I might deny that your given reason is in fact a genuine one. I might deny that sending our son to military school so that he can learn to be a trained killer is a genuine reason.[19] Second, I could deny that a genuine reason supports the plan you believe it does. I might agree that our son needs to improve his aggressive behavior but argue that sending him to military school will only increase his aggression, working against the genuine reason we both seek to secure. Finally, I might admit that your reason is genuine and does support your plan but deny that it outweighs the sum of reasons against your plan (or *for* an alternative plan). I might agree that military school would create a change in environment for our son, which would help change his behavior, but argue that same reason can support any plan which changes his environment and aligns with other reasons your plan lacks.

But notice that these reasons-statements are straightforwardly truth-apt; they are best understood as claims intended to be objectively right or wrong.[20] Asserting these claims is to assert their objective truth; disagreeing entails believing they are objectively false. If I disagree with the claim 'plan X is supported by reason Y,' I am disagreeing that reason Y points towards the adoption of plan X in plainly truth-apt terms; I am saying that statement about a reason is false.

So far, I've admitted that, following Gibbard, moral claims are best understood as expressions of contingency plans. But I should also admit that Gibbard was right to highlight how moral disagreement often contains classically expressivist elements; we often express moral plans and, following Stevenson and Ayer, we often simultaneously express our attitudes and feelings about those plans. Even Kagan, a staunch moral realist, admits that "expressing attitudes is at least *one* of the things that we are doing when we make such claims" (2023, 82). However, neither individual deliberation nor collective disagreement is best understood in *solely* these terms; there remains a fundamentally truth-apt bedrock.

In fact, truth-apt beliefs about reasons are precisely what explain the presence of these expressive elements in moral disagreement. Philosophers working in blame and responsibility attribute the presence of blaming emotions like anger and resentment directly to the (cognitivist) belief that someone violated a normative requirement and the desire that they had not done so (Sher 2006, 94-95). On Sher's account, blame's expressive elements are only intelligible because they are grounded in beliefs about moral reasons and desires that others adhere to what reason demands. Wallace also intimates an inseparable connection between the belief that someone acted against (moral) reason and typical expressivist responses: "holding people responsible involves a

[19] Recall enacting a plan on mere whim or preference. Hearing that someone chose a plan on a whim means they had *no reason* for picking that plan; you therefore don't take it seriously. The same goes for preference; the securement of preferences is only respected as cause to pick one plan over others if it constitutes a *genuine reason* to do so.
[20] These three forms of disagreement about reasons seem to follow for all normative domains as well.

susceptibility to a range of reactive emotions, so that to blame a person is to be subject to one of these reactive emotions, *because* of what the person has done" (1994, 75, emphasis added). The cognitive elements of moral appraisal also explain why expressive elements of moral talk fluctuate; my anger towards you will depend in direct proportion to my belief about the strength of the moral reasons you violated. If you violated many reasons or extremely strong reasons, I tend to experience (and thus express) stronger negative emotions towards you. But a lacuna remains in purely expressivist accounts of moral disagreement; if moral thought does not involve truth-apt reasons-claims, we are left without an explanation for the varying severity of moral disapprobation.

In an interested move, Gibbard has attempted to run his same expressivist-friendly maneuver on even the reaction emotions. On his account, reactive attitudes themselves resist a cognitivist framework because they too are simply plans—not of action, but of emotion:

> My resentment is unwarranted, I judge, when you finish the cake. How does a concept like warrant work?...I plan, as it were, under what circumstances to resent people for things they do. This talk of plans for feelings sounds artificial, I admit, but when we judge that resentment would be unwarranted in my situation, the judgment acts much as would a plan, for my situation, not to resent you (2008, 16).

This reconceptualization seems plausible enough. But it too appears open to a similar line of rebuttal when we ask what renders an emotion warranted or fitting (as we commonly do when two people feel differently about a fraught moral situation). Consider a common philosophical debate: does intentional wrongdoing warrant anger and resentment? Christopher Franklin, for instance, argues that anger is a fitting response to wrongdoing because it demonstrates value for the wronged party (2013). But notice that Franklin has, without stating it in such obvious terms, offered us a *reason* for taking anger to be a fitting reaction to injustice. And his stated reason is straightforwardly truth-apt. We are left to accept or reject his reason or to explain why it is overridden by other reasons. So even planning about reactive emotions themselves seems to involve truth-apt claims about reasons. Gibbard's reconceptualization, even here, requires a cognitivist framework to fully understand the mechanics of reactive attitudes.

Perhaps non-normative differences illustrate where the expressivist position is most accurate—where their theory best maps onto the facts. When I don a green shirt and you don a blue one, we wear our differences on our sleeves, but there is nothing to disagree about. My distaste for your shirt and your distaste for mine only amount to expressions of attitudes or feelings. To see the dissimilarity between normative and non-normative differences, image how you would react upon being asked why you don't like green (or why you don't like chocolate ice cream).[21] There's really nothing more to say. I might express shock or surprise that you prefer vanilla to rocky road, but there's nothing more to disagree about. But, of course, we do not follow this pattern in any

[21] While you might offer a reason qua explanation (you were forced to eat chocolate ice cream by the bucket as child), this would be a descriptive account of how you arrived at a preference, not a genuine normative reason supporting your preference. In Kagan's locution, this is the difference between 'motivating reasons' and 'normative reasons' (2023, 280-283). Scanlon uses the phrase "reasons in the 'standard normative sense'" (1998, 19).

normative domain. When I ask you why you disagree with my moral, prudential, social, or epistemic plan, you are quick to provide *reasons* for your disagreement.[22]

It seems, then, that both in the private and public domain, expressions of plan are essentially bound up with (truth-apt) claims about reasons. *Reasons* explain why one would privately choose a plan over its alternatives, why one would bother to publicly disagree with another's plan, and where the disagreement moves once it has been discovered.

Section 4

We should consider one final attempt to escape the cognitivist specter. Perhaps there is a way to disagree in collective moral planning without disagreeing about reasons (and thus not disagree in an overtly cognitivist manner). Perhaps cases of impasse highlight this possibility. When confronted with an impasse, people simply move on and *do* different things—they enact different plans—but perhaps don't necessarily disagree in cognitivist terms.

The idea goes like this: if you and I are at an impasse, we're in disagreement about what to do, but if I simply proceed with my plan, perhaps we are disagreeing in plan without disagreeing about reasons for or against those plans. Perhaps we can, in this way, "put our heads together" without having to treat others' thoughts as our own—to be accepted or rejected, proven right or wrong—as Gibbard suggested earlier. Gibbard provides the seeds of this idea:

> Suppose, though, I just find you unhelpful and hindering. [In other words, you find yourself at an impasse.] Then I can respond in at least two different ways. I can simply disagree with much of what you say, rejecting it and trying not to let it influence my thoughts. [This avenue clearly collapses into truth-apt disagreement about reasons.] Alternatively, I may not treat you as even voicing thoughts that I can accept or reject. You have your plans and I have mine, and difference in plans is no kind of disagreement (2003, 280).

It's strange that Gibbard is willing to say that a difference in plans is "no kind of disagreement." In his 2002 article, Gibbard wanted to preserve the robustness of moral disagreement so that his expressivist-friendly theory fits the everyday facts. The key for Gibbard was to preserve disagreement in a way that resists a cognitivist framework. So let's assume that differences in plan still count as genuine disagreement and explore if this can be done without disagreeing in overtly

[22] In some sense, I am following a version of P.F. Strawson's insistence on an unshakable human tendency to view moral attitudes and practices in certain ways (1962; 1985, Ch2). While Strawson focused on our inescapable practice of holding each other responsible through the moral reactive attitudes, I am suggesting that the human condition is to see moral claims as grounded in truth-apt claims about reasons (and thus to inhabit a cognitivist metaethical position).

truth-apt terms.[23] One way to attempt this maneuver would be to embrace a type of what Gibbard calls *judgement individualism*:

> On this individualist picture, [two people] may still profit from sharing their plans with each other. Each stands as an island of judgment as to what to do, but each can use the other in limited ways: as a source of testimony, as a proposer of thought experiments, and as a sourcebook of arguments to contemplate and accept or reject. Neither, though, is to treat the other's judgments as his own (2003, 272).

Can we coherently move forward from an impasse, enacting our own plan, without disagreeing in truth-apt terms? I cannot see how to make sense of this idea. Even if we grant that the act of moving past an impasse can be done without involving truth-apt claims, the impasse is only the beginning of the story. For it is clearly cognitivist disagreement about the relevant *reasons* which explains the presence of the impasse itself.

Consider how an impasse is created. Two people are discussing contingency plans, and there is a disagreement in which plan should be enacted. So when one party decides to move past the other, enacting their own plan in spite of the disagreement, they do so in response to their view of the other's given reasons against their plan. In other words, when I move past an impasse with you, I do so because I take my plan to be better or more directly supported by reasons than yours. And as I previously argued, deliberation of this kind clearly involves truth-apt claims about reasons. How an impasse is created sheds light on why one party simply moves past it.

The plans in question need not be strictly collective for this pattern to hold. Consider two examples: one moral and one practical. In the first, a friend advises me not to continue with a romantic relationship. He volunteers his reasons: the dynamic is unhealthy; neither party is happy; attempts at repair have previously failed. In the second, a friend advises me not to place a wager on the upcoming football game, again providing his reasons: the opposing defense is too strong; that player hasn't scored a goal in three months and is nursing an ankle injury. In either case, even though the plans are not collective, "when I ask you for advice…I try to get you to help me with my thinking, to join with me in thinking what to do" (Gibbard 2003, 275). And if I disagree with my friend, I do so because I take something about his stated reasons to be unsound or invalid. If my friend views my own response in the same terms, we've reached an impasse. Both parties advocate for incompatible plans. However, to conclude that moving forward alone is to disagree in plan without disagreeing in truth-apt terms makes little sense. For if I were asked *why* I moved forward alone, I would explain my decision by explaining how I viewed the contest between my

[23] This question is framed nicely by Michael Bratman in his commentary on Gibbard's Tanner Lectures. To close his reply, Bratman asks the following rhetorical question: "Suppose you think you are at an impasse with another person and for that reason opt out of shared thinking with that person about how to live. Can and should Gibbard's theory nevertheless make room for your thought that, despite this impasse, you ought to act in a certain way and that, in this normative judgment, you are disagreeing—and not merely differing—with that other person?" (2008, 99-100). This question need not remain rhetorical. We can answer it with a resounding *yes*: Gibbard's theory must make room for disagreement even at moral impasse.

reasons and my friend's. And as we previously examined, doing so is a truth-apt story about reasons.

Conclusion

The expressivist may finally point out that, in a sense, their thesis remains safe: I have only argued that expressions of plan are grounded in truth-apt beliefs about reasons, *not* that expressions of plan *are* truth-apt claims. 'Don't murder!' remains non-truth-apt even if its expression is grounded in truth-apt claims about reasons. And there is a narrow sense in which this is correct. However, the force of Gibbard's reconceptualization rested on a hope that moral disagreement need not involve truth-apt claims. Admitting that truth-apt claims about reasons are at the heart of normative planning deflates the expressivist project.

Recall Gibbard's central question: "What kind of state of mind do *ought* claims express?" From early expressivists like Stevenson and Ayer, we saw that ought claims (often) express attitudes, feelings, and emotions. Gibbard goes beyond this first stage of expressivism, arguing that ought claims can be reconceptualized as expressions of plan (still not truth-apt claims!). I do not deny that ought claims express a plan, and might often do so with emotional affect. But this is not *all* they express.

Because both the experience of privately selecting a plan and publicly defending a plan are inseparably bound up with claims about reasons, and because claims about reasons are straightforwardly truth-apt, ought expressions of plan are best understood as truth-apt. The expression 'This plan over that one!' becomes a claim about which plan is best supported by the relevant reasons, itself dependent on the various truth-apt claims about each reason involved. The expression 'This plan over that one!' is simple way to express the underlying statement: "You, I, or anyone in our position *should* choose this plan over that one!' But when we examine the nature of *should* or *ought* claims, we discover their truth-apt nature. When we examine the nature of expressing a plan more clearly, we see that Gibbard's reconceptualization points away from, not towards, metaethical noncognitivism. 'Boo because boo' is not the way we disagree. 'Boo because...' is a story of truth-apt claims about reasons.

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