The most interesting and credible version of normative anti-realism is still the expressivism so ably articulated and defended in Allan Gibbard’s earlier book *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*¹ and in the writings over many years now of Simon Blackburn. According to expressivists, a core aspect of what normative language expresses is not belief in certain facts but rather attitudes of some kind significantly distinct from beliefs. Such expressivist views encounter two main kinds of philosophical criticism. One alleges that there could not be a language of the sort expressivists envisage, or at least not one comparable to our actual normative language in allowing for good sense to be made of such operations as negation, embedding within conditionals and the familiar roles these play in structuring logically valid and invalid argument forms. The second kind of criticism might allow for the possibility that there could be such a language but urges that close attention to our own practice with our own normative concepts supports the conclusion that we do not speak it.

In this important new book, Gibbard neatly separates these questions. In the early chapters he describes a possible language that expresses thoughts about what to do. These are what he calls states of contingency planning and he makes a telling case that such a language can be coherently characterized and understood. He then argues that it is indeed plausible to take this description as applicable to our own normative talk, that our familiar normative and

* I am grateful to Fabian Freyenhagen for inviting this review and so patiently tolerating my tardy delivery of it; to Jules Holroyd for many discussions that helped me in my efforts to understand Gibbard’s book and to Aisling Crean for finding one of what may be many howlers.

evaluative language is indeed expressive of what he calls *plan-laden judgements*. The resulting theory shares something with intuitionism: it takes normative concepts to be irreducible to naturalistic concepts. It also shares something with naturalism: it takes normative concepts to be realized by natural properties. But it is superior to both these rivals.

Both intuitionists and expressivists reject any proposal that we might offer a *straight* analysis of normative concepts. But expressivism scores higher marks for explanatory adequacy in offering an *oblique* analysis that demystifies these concepts by describing the states of mind in which they feature. A straight analysis of ‘rational’, say, tells us very directly what it is to *be* rational. An oblique analysis tells us what it is to *think* something rational and then explains the meaning of ‘rational’ by characterizing it as the term we employ to express just such thoughts.

Naturalism captures the intimacy between normative concepts and the natural properties on which they supervene. The meaning of what I say, for Gibbard, is to be understood in terms of that which what I say places me in disagreement with. If I think that only pleasure is good then, for me, the term ‘good’ signifies the *property* of being pleasurable but the *concept* it expresses is distinct from the descriptive concept of being pleasurable. So when you, who think that only what is desired is good, deny that only what is pleasurable is desired, I do not disagree with you. But when you deny that only the pleasurable is good, I do. Normative concepts such as ‘good’ are the concepts we deploy in expressing our thoughts about what to do and no naturalistic concept settles this.

2. Logic

The Frege-Geach problem challenges expressivists to explain how normative language understood as expressive of nondescriptive concepts can be subject to the same logical norms and relations as straightforwardly descriptive language. Gibbard agrees with James Dreier that the problem is real: simply going minimalist about truth doesn’t put it to bed.2 At the heart of the problem is how we are to understand embeddings of normative utterances in disjunctions, conditionals and negations. Perhaps in particular negation: if by ‘conditionals’ we understand material conditionals, widely familiar adequacy results for propositional logic show that we are home and dry if we can make sense of conjunction and negation and nobody thinks conjunction much of a problem. But what is it to negate a normative, planning, thought? Negating a descriptive thought is relatively easy to understand: it is to deny its truth. But what is it to negate a normative thought expressivistically construed? Unwin has captured the problem elegantly in terms of Blackburn’s notorious ‘hooray’ operator, ‘H!’. We may know what ‘H!p’ means. And if we know that we can very