Schedule

Wednesday 28 May

9.50-10.00 Welcome
10.00-11.30 Matthew Chrisman, "Alienation from Normativity (and Logic?)"
11.30-11.50 COFFEE BREAK
11.50-13.00 Matthew Simpson, "Inferences and Dispositions"
13.00-14.00 LUNCH BREAK
14.00-15.30 Amie Thomasson, "Yeah to Truth, or: The Functions of Truth Talk"
15.30-15.50 COFFEE BREAK
15.50-17.20 Luca Incurvati, "Imperatives and deontic modality: an inferential expressivist perspective"

Thursday 29 May

10.00-11.30 Christine Tiefensee, "*Ought* and *Good*"
11.30-11.50 COFFEE BREAK
11.50-13.00 Sofia Bokros, "Meaning-Constitutive Inference and Semantic Competence"
13.00-14.00 LUNCH BREAK
14.00-15.10 Arvid Båve, "The function of nominalizations"
15.15-16.25 Niklas Dahl, "Some Necessary Revisions: From Belief Revision to Modality"
16.30-17.40 Carmela Vieites Figueiras, Ana Rosa López Rodríguez, and Andrea Rodríguez Gómez: "The Swiss Knife"
19.30- DINNER

Friday 30 May

10.00-11.30 John Cantwell, "A meaning theoretical framework for expressivism"
11.30-11.50 COFFEE BREAK
11.50-13.00 Herman Veluwenkamp, "Designing Concepts: A Normative Framework for Conceptual Ethics"
13.00-14.10 LUNCH BREAK
14.10-15.40 Joshua Gert, "Inferentialism, Meaning, and Rules"
15.40-16.00 COFFEE BREAK
16.00-17.30 Julian Schlöder (videolink), "Semantic Crises"

Abstracts

Sofia Bokros: ***Meaning-Constitutive Inference and Semantic Competence***

The motivations for accepting the existence of meaning-constitutive inferences or sentences are varied. For at least some proponents of meaning-constitutivity, a common motivation is to explain why semantically competent speakers are disposed to accept particular claims. However, Williamson (2003, 2006, 2007) has forcefully argued against the existence of such so-called Understanding-Assent Links, which if correct, would seem to undermine the ability

of meaning-constitutivity to explain doxastic dispositions. A challenge for the proponent of meaning-constitutivity is thus to articulate what, exactly, the relation between semantically competent speakers and meaning-constitutive inferences or sentences is, such that semantic competence can indeed explain the doxastic dispositions in question. In this paper I explore how the proponent of meaning-constitutivity can meet this challenge. Firstly, I consider extant dispositionalist and normativist proposals, and argue that they fail to meet Williamson's challenge. Secondly, I propose that a more promising account of the cognitive relation that holds between semantically competent speakers and meaning-constitutive inferences appeals to knowledge-how, in addition to a general linguistic disposition to treat meaning-constitutive inference rules as truth-preserving. Although this does not result in any necessary Understanding-Assent Links, I argue that this provides a robust enough link to explain particular doxastic dispositions by appeal to semantic competence.

Arvid Båve: ***The Function of Nominalizations***

Having first presented a general idea about what it is for a word/concept to have a function, I define the notion of expressive strengthening which I take to be the main kind of (non-representational) function of such concepts as *true*, *property*, etc. I also point to a reason to take concepts, rather than expressions, to be the bearers of these functions. I next tackle the cases of 'true' and 'property' and argue that, while we seemed to have a neat account of their non-representational functions, to the effect that the former replaces propositional quantification and the latter replaces predicational quantification, it is easy to see that this must be wrong. To get the story right, we need to focus more on the function of nominalizations, i.e., singular terms formed from non-singular terms, the way 'that'-clauses are formed from sentences. I note some attractive commonalities between several different examples, notably, nominalizations of sentences and predicates, and then go on to offer an analogous account of 'way' talk. I note that the latter account seems to fail because of the absence of a certain kind of nominalization on adverbs in our language, but propose that the problem can be solved if instead we take the relevant functions to characterize concepts, rather than words. On such a view, we can say that we do have the needed device in the form of a concept, albeit one that is not expressed by any linguistic expression.

John Cantwell: ***A meaning theoretical framework for expressivism***

A meaning theoretical framework is outlined. Its basic components are the norms that govern linguistically competent acceptance and rejection of sentences, stated in terms of cognitive states and capacities. One grasps the content of an expression if one takes one's cognitive state to be subject to the norms that govern them.

It is argued that two generic cognitive capacities---beyond bilateral acceptance and rejection---are sufficient to grasp the content of an expression of arbitrary first-order logical complexity. The capacity to \emph{simulate} mental states like acceptance and rejection (sufficient for propositional logic), and the capacity for a generic representation of objects (sufficient for first-order quantification). The framework is completely general and is well suited to support various

forms of expressivism, effectively resolving Frege-Geach issues. In the talk I will present the operators that make this happen as well as a `semantics' for them.

Matthew Chrisman: ***Alienation from Normativity (and Logic?)***

Robust realists and quasirealist expressivists have both been accused, in different ways, of being committed to an alienated stance towards fundamental oughts, reasons, and values. Either normative facts obtain completely independently of our cares and concerns, in which case, why do we care about them as much as we do? Or their reality is something more like a projection from or construction out of our ways of normative thinking, in which case why should we care about them as much as we do? Sometimes this looks like philosophical bedrock in metaethics. But in this paper I want to explore the possibility that inferentialism offers a way past the impasse. In the first instance, this is by suggesting that normative terms can be viewed analogously to logical terms in getting their meaning neither from what they refer to nor from what attitudes they primarily serve to convey. But I also want to propose a way of thinking of normative/logical facts and normative/logical thinking as reciprocally related to each other in a way that rejects both the realist's commitment to the explanatory independence of normative/logical facts from normative/logical thinking and the expressivist's commitment to starting our explanation of normative/logical facts with an account of normative/logical thinking.

Niklas Dahl: ***Some Necessary Revisions: From Belief Revision to Modality***

My goal in this talk is to sketch an account of how alethic modal claims can be understood in terms of belief revision; the process of changing our beliefs as a result of encountering new information. This process is also one which we can simulate. When we consider hypothetical cases, such as supposing that P were the case, then we move to a belief-state where we have come to accept P and consider what else we accept there. The motivating idea of the framework I propose is this: if we look to how we normally evaluate an alethic modal claim, then we can see how such modal notions relate to hypothetical belief revision. What we normally do when we consider what's possible is to see if there is some change in belief which would lead us to accept the claim under consideration. And the changes in belief which underwrite such evaluations are simulations of exactly the same process by which we change our beliefs in response to new information.

One of the main upshots of this approach is that we can use the Modal Ramsey Tests together with a characterisation of the norms governing belief revision to construct a formal semantics for well-known modal logics. This allows us to study how axioms of modal logic correspond to specific norms of belief revision. Further, it shows how we can explain different types of alethic modality in terms of what restrictions are placed on belief revision. All in all, it provides a replacement for possible worlds suitable to normativists and logical expressivists alike. Finally, the framework fits with and extends modal normativism by providing a way to explain an ideational function of modal vocabulary which fits with the interpersonal function discussed by Thomasson.

Joshua Gert: ***Inferentialism, Meaning, and Rules***

A number of anti-representationalist views have arisen in the last thirty years or so. Advocates of some such views call themselves inferentialists. Others call themselves neopragmatists or global expressivists. Inferentialists – as I will stipulatively be using the term – offer us what Arvid Båve calls 'meaning-constitution claims': claims as to what the meanings of words are constituted by. And their distinctive claim is that the meaning of a word is constituted by a certain set of rules of inference involving the word. But this gives rise to a problem. If we explain the meaning of a word in terms of the rules of a practice in which it figures, we are placing theoretical weight on the notion of a rule. And, philosophically, rules are as tricky a notion as representation.

It is the purpose of this paper to demotivate the inferentialist's characteristic meaning-constituting claim, and to clarify the role that rules should play in an adequate anti-representationalist view. I will argue that there is indeed a naturalistic way to understand rules. But, so understood, they do not characterize the shared public meanings of words. In the relevant sense of 'rule', two people might be using different rules when they use the same word with a univocal meaning. My more general conclusion will be that there is no need to assume, for any given word, that using it correctly is matter of using it in accord with a certain set of rules. Such talk is the product of a picture as seductive, and as misleading, as the picture of words tied to things via a relation of reference.

Luca Incurvati: ***Imperatives and deontic modality: an inferential expressivist perspective***

In the first part of the talk, I will defend a non-cognitivist account of imperatives, starting from Paul Portner's idea that imperatives serve to manage speakers' to-do lists. I show that, once we recognize the multiplicity of operations that can be performed on a to-do list, the account has the resources to deal with weak uses of imperatives without postulating an additional list alongside it. In the second part of the talk, I present a logical framework which integrates weak and strong forms of assertion, rejection and imperatives. I use this framework to inferentially explain the meaning of deontic modals such as *must* in terms of imperatives. The resulting inferential expressivist account has the resources to explain performative uses of *must* and hitherto unaccounted for data about their occurrence pattern. I will end by outlining a number of outstanding issues and directions for future work.

Julian Schlöder: ***Semantic Crises***

The world can get ahead of our terms for it, for instance when a new technology requires us to make new distinctions. In extremal cases I call "semantic crises", this renders a prior semantic practice indeterminate. Using an example from the history of physics, I show that semantic crises also occur in the sciences and that the resulting picture of the course of science is contrary to the predictions made by standard referentialist semantics. Inferentialism, by contrast, can maintain that an expression may license inferences that never came into conflict until a change in the world brought them into conflict. The way out of the crisis is a sharpening of inferential role. This makes the correct predictions about science.

Matthew Simpson: ***Inferences and Dispositions***

In this paper I discuss an account of our beliefs in logically complex propositions that appeals to inferential dispositions, dispositions to change one's beliefs in response to various stimuli. I explore what an account that puts dispositions at its centre might look like, some important challenges it needs to overcome, and how such an account could be used in non-representationalist accounts of belief and meaning in general.

Amie Thomasson: ***Yeah to Truth, or: The Functions of Truth Talk***

Why do we have, or would we want, the predicate 'is true' or the noun 'truth' in our language? Traditional descriptivists have long assumed that the predicate serves to describe a particularly desirable property, which propositions possess if they correspond to the right sort of facts in the world. Pragmatists and deflationists have suggested instead that the truth predicate plays useful roles in our lives, such as encouraging debate and friction, or enabling us to form generalizations—and that these roles can be fulfilled without thinking that the term tracks some property of being true. This paper argues that we can get help in addressing questions about the function of the truth predicate (and the noun 'truth') by appealing to work in empirical linguistics. Systemic functional linguistics provides the basis for a step-by-step multilayered account of the functions served by having practices of acceptance and rejection of propositions, by introducing a truth predicate, and finally by introducing a noun for 'truth'. The resulting picture gives us a way of justifying some prior pragmatic and deflationary suggestions, while also showing that their views about the function of truth talk are compatible, and may form different parts of a more complete, step-by-step approach. It also gives us reason to think that we can fully account for the presence of truth-talk in our lives and theories, without the need to 'posit' some property we are tracking, which requires a kind of worldly 'explanation'.

Christine Tiefensee: ***Ought*** **and** ***Good***

Normative language is commonly divided into deontic expressions, such as 'ought' and 'permissible', and evaluative notions, such as 'good' and 'bad'. Both categories are central to normative discourse. At the same time, they come with different subject matters, logics and semantic characteristics. Possibly most strikingly, 'ought' and 'permissible' are typically treated as dual modal operators, whereas 'good' and 'bad' take the form of gradable adjectives. While evaluative expressions allow for expressions such as 'neutral' and 'indifferent', the family of deontic notions knows no such in-between expressions. Whereas evaluative notions can be used predicatively and attributively, no such uses apply in the deontic domain. Finally, although there appear to be important conceptual ties between deontic and evaluative terms, neither seems to be conceptually reducible to the other. Observations such as these suggest that the meanings of deontic and evaluative concept families require separate explanations. This paper makes first steps towards providing such explanations by developing an inferentialist account of both deontic and evaluative expressions that captures their differences while accounting for their conceptual ties.

Herman Veluwenkamp: ***Designing Concepts: A Normative Framework for Conceptual Ethics***

This paper develops a framework for evaluating the normative reasons that guide our choice of concepts in conceptual ethics. We identify three problems in existing work. First, some accounts treat conceptual ethics as special, requiring a special kind of internalism about reasons. Second, many conceptual functionalists define functions descriptively, which fails to explain why these functions should matter normatively. Third, viewing function as the only factor neglects other important ethical concerns. To address these issues, we defend a qualified, normative account of *conceptual functionalism*. Within this framework, the criteria for adopting or retaining a concept are not exhausted solely by its function. At the same time, the account is normative in that it understands a concept's function as those effects that give us normative reason to deploy it. Finally, we respond to criticisms from instrumentalists who argue that conceptual ethics should proceed solely in terms of goals or concerns.

Carmela Vieites Figueiras, Ana Rosa López Rodríguez, and Andrea Rodríguez Gómez: ***The Swiss Knife: Can Global Expressivism distinguish between descriptive and evaluative uses of language?***

In this paper, we evaluate the capacity of Huw Price's Global Expressivism to accommodate the distinction between descriptive and evaluative uses of language (Bifurcation Thesis, BT). We begin by highlighting the importance of making this distinction, particularly in politically relevant cases that demonstrate how BT can explain various types of disagreements. Descriptive uses typically convey factual information about states of affairs, while evaluative uses express the speaker's values, preferences, and are linked to action. By examining these types of uses, we underscore their significance in understanding the function of language in political discourse. Next, we introduce Global Expressivism and focus on Price's characterization of i-representation and e-representation, which he uses to explain the role of descriptive notions within his broader framework. We then assess whether this bifurcation between i-representation and e-representation successfully accounts for the distinction between descriptive and evaluative uses without undermining inferentialist commitments. We argue that this approach faces a crucial dilemma: either e-representation is irrelevant to semantics, which would lead to the collapse of the bifurcation thesis in its updated form, or e-representation is explanatory for semantics, in which case inferentialism is compromised. This dilemma raises significant questions about the coherence of Price's theory and its ability to handle the complexities of linguistic use in both everyday and politically charged contexts.