Handout for Week 9

<u>Argument for *pragmatic metalinguistic expressivism* about the *use* of alethic modal expressions</u>:
1. Description, as opposed to mere labeling, requires situation in a space of implications.
2. The implications involved are subjunctively robust.
3. These are what are appealed to in explanation, which is why description and explanation "go hand in hand."
4. The distinctive expressive job of modal vocabulary is to make explicit those subjunctively robust inferential connections: the ones that underwrite explanations of the applicability (or nonapplicability) of some descriptive vocabulary in terms of the (non)applicability of others.
5. So use of modal vocabulary is *explicative of* (X) something implicit in the use of OED vocabulary.
6. And use of modal vocabulary can be *elaborated from* (L) the ability to use OED vocabulary.

This last is the "Kant-Sellars thesis about modality":
a) in being able to use non-modal, empirical-descriptive vocabulary, one already knows how to do everything one needs to know how to do in order to deploy modal vocabulary,
b) which should be understood as making explicit structural features—letting us *say* what they are—that are always already implicit in what one *does* in describing.

<u>Declarativism about Describing</u>:
The "iron triangle of discursiveness" relates:
a) *Declarative sentences*, on the side of *syntax*, or vocabulary kinds,
b) *Asserting*, on the side of *pragmatics*, or use of vocabulary, and
c) *Propositions*, on the side of *semantics*, or the *content* expressed by using vocabulary.
   (The sense of "proposition" in the last claim is just whatever can play the role both of *premise* and of *conclusion* in relations of *implication*.)
1. Asserting in this declarativist sense is *one* sense of "fact-stating."
And propositions in this sense, when *true*, are *facts*, in *one* sense of "fact."
For being descriptive or fact-stating in *this* inferential-declarative sense is sufficient for
   α) embedding as antecedent of conditionals and
   β) embedding in propositional attitude ascriptions.
This is what is required to respond to the Frege-Geach objection to expressivist analyses, which triggered the move from first-wave to second-wave expressivisms in metaethics.
2. But it is too broad to be a candidate for reconciling ME and MR. For it applies also to prescriptive normative talk about what one ought, or is obliged, or permitted to do.
Reconciling these claims requires specifying an intermediate, "Goldilocks" sense of "describing" or "empirical fact-stating" that is at once narrower than the *declarativist* sense and broader than that applicable to the primary use of OED vocabulary (to acknowledge the fact that no vocabulary
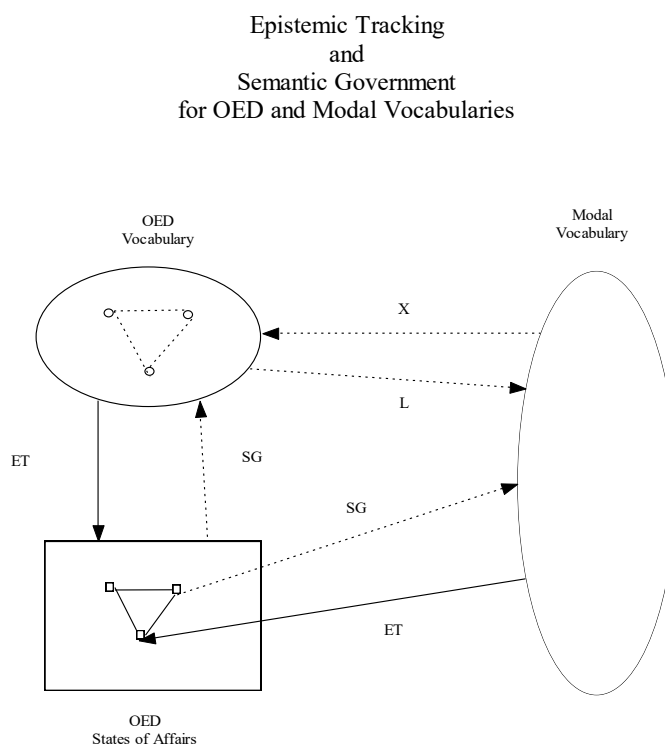
stands to the OED vocabulary in the sort of metalinguistic relation that modal vocabulary stands in to OED vocabulary), but still sufficiently akin to it that the broader sense applicable to modal claims and the narrower sense applicable show up as species of a recognizably descriptive genus.

A Narrower Conception of Describing (ET + SG):

- i) The declarativist "location in a space of subjunctively robust material implications" criterion, plus:
- ii) (ET) *Epistemic tracking* of objective facts by normative statuses, and
- iii) (SG) *Semantic government* of normative statuses by objective facts.

1. ET is an objective *dispositional-nomological* matter, of the sort made explicit by subjunctive conditionals and other alethic modal locutions.*If* the items described or represented *were* different, the describing or representing of them *would be* different.

It is a matter of the subjunctive and counterfactual robustness of the conceptual content correspondence between facts and claims. The tracking condition holds just insofar as the subjunctive conditional "If the fact were (or had been) different, the claiming would be (or would have been) correspondingly different," is true. Insofar as this condition holds, there is a *reliable* correspondence between the contents of facts and the contents of claimings. That is to say that the inference from a claim about the content of a claiming to the content of the corresponding fact is in general a good one.

2. SG is a *normative* matter, of the sort made explicit by the use of deontic normative vocabulary. Semantic governance expresses Kant's insight that intentionality, reference, and representation essentially include a *normative* dimension of *authority* of representings over representeds, or, equivalently, *responsibility* of representings to representeds.

3. A key claim is that **the two dimensions of (alethic) modal epistemic tracking and deontic normative semantic government are different, and equally essential**. They do different jobs, and cannot substitute for one another.

4. Two challenge of appealing *only* to subjunctive conditionals codifying epistemic tracking:
   a) Vertically, it has trouble picking out *distal* elements of the causal chain of reliably covarying events relating what is described or represented to the act of describing or representing.
   b) Horizontally, it suffers from *disjunctivitis*. If I am disposed to respond to echidnas as well as porcupines with the term "porcupine," do I really mean "porcupine or echidna"? And what if my responses are too narrow, in that I only recognize adult porcupines, or ones seen in daylight?

5. "Semantic government" means that descriptive claims are subject to a distinctive kind of ought-to-be. It ought to be the case that the content of a descriptive claiming stands in a special relation, which we might as well call "correspondence," to a modal fact, which it accordingly purports to state (and in case there is such a fact, succeeds in stating). In virtue of that semantic norm, claimings are answerable for their correctness (accord with that norm) to facts.

Modal Vocabulary's Descriptive/Representational Role:

1.   Modal vocabulary both epistemically tracks and is semantically governed by objective relations of consequence and incompatibility among items described/represented by OED vocabulary. These relations are expressed by subjunctive conditionals relating OED vocabulary.

2.   Accordingly, modal vocabulary plays a descriptive/representational role, in the intermediate ("Goldilocks") sense defined by ET+SG.

3.   The relations of epistemic tracking of and semantic governance by facts statable (describable/representable) using OED vocabulary are induced by the composition of the expressive relations between OED vocabulary and those facts, to begin with, and the expressive relation between the *use* of OED vocabulary and what is *stated about* that use by modal vocabulary.

4.   The use of OED vocabulary epistemically tracks and is semantically governed by objective empirical facts. The use of modal vocabulary is *elaborated from* and *explicative of* (LX for) the use of OED vocabulary.

Epistemic Tracking
and
Semantic Government
for OED and Modal Vocabularies

Solid lines indicate alethic modal relations. Dotted lines indicate deontic normative relations.

5.   Claim: the horizontal ET and SG relations at the bottom are induced by and deducible from (so in some sense are an aspect of the composition of) the vertical ET and SG relations and the horizontal LX relations.