Moon, Andrew (2018). “A new puzzle about belief and credence,” in: *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*. https://doi.org/10.1080/00455091.2018.1503028

Q: How to understand the semantics of epistemic modals

modals (*M*): ‘(im)probably’, ‘very probably’, ‘might’, ‘definitely’… *p*

epistemic: *expressed by some S* true/false relative to what S knows/S’s evidence…

credal expressivism regarding epistemic modals:
A) $Bel_S(Mp)$ iff *S* has [*M*-related credence](*p*)
B) *M* not part of the content of *p*; expressive of suitable credence

contrasts with

S has a modal belief that *p* iff S has some credence that *p*

descriptivism regarding epistemic modals: *M* part of content of *p*

overintellectualizing?

contrast with:
metaphysical modals
“I could fly if I wanted to.”
statistical probabilities
“With my cards, it is 89% probable I win.”
[true/false independent of what S knows]

$cr(p_{bone}) \neq 0$

Intuitive case: Fido thinks I might give him a bone.

A*

inconsistent!

Assume a case that establishes ~BEM.

As per BEC, $cr_S(p) \neq 0$.
As per A* and contra ~BEM, *S* **has** a modal belief that *p*.

BEC

~BEM

S could believe that *p* and have no modal belief that *p*.

case 1

1) MUST he have modal beliefs? (e.g. “Probably, the cat is there.”)

S believes that *p* only if S has some credence that *p*. Belief entails credence.

‘believes’ works like ‘thinks’
- folk notion
- neutral regarding theories of belief

philosophers’ notion (differs from ordinary English) like ‘confidence’

Non-trivial, yet uncontested modal metaphysical thesis on how two kinds of mental states are related: Any subject with some belief, e.g. that *p*, **must** have some credence in the belief’s content, e.g. in p.

entails

Threshold view: To believe *p* is to have a credence of $cr(p) \geq d$ for some d.

entails

Pretty much every other view!

???

Drop A*?

Bye, bye, credal expressivism!

Drop ~BEM?

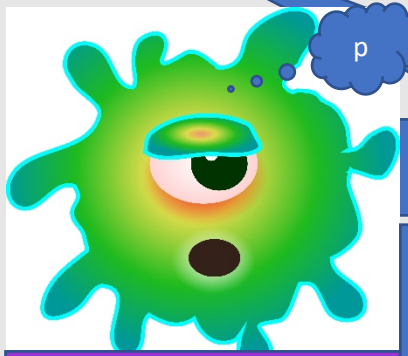
Hello MOX! Bye, bye, descriptivism ?

Drop BEC?

Moon: best! Beliefs may come without credences.

Belief doesn’t entail modal belief.

My intuitions: 1. no; 2. not on all dispositionalist theories of belief, 3. quite unclear



case 2: Organism

2) MUST he be disposed to affirm “The cat is *probably* there,” if asked? Must he have had the corresponding belief prior to being asked?

3) Do the behavioral dispositions associated with “The cat is there” include those associated with “The cat is probably there”?

idea: behavioral dispositions suffice for attribution of modal belief.

MUST Organism, a creature just complex enough to have beliefs, have a modal belief that p? Why?

Why should we believe MODAL BELIEF EXPLOSION (MOX), i.e. that for every belief *p* and every creature o, for o to have *p* entails having some modal belief?