Predicates of Personal Taste and Perspective Dependence

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Abstract

Judgments of personal taste such as "Haggis is delicious" are puzzling. On the one hand they express the speaker's personal taste. On the other hand it is normal to disagree about the truth of such judgments. Giving semantics for predicates of taste that can accommodate both intuitions has proven challenging. Let us call the phenomenon that the truth of judgments of taste depends on variable tastes *perspective dependence.*

The thesis discusses two most popular semantic accounts for predicates of taste. Contextualists hold that the speaker's perspective is an element of the content of predicates of taste. However, the view has trouble explaining what disagreements of taste are about if speakers in fact make compatible judgments. Semantic relativism is a recent framework which is motivated by its alleged ability to explain both perspective dependence and disagreements. Relativists hold that whereas the content of a judgment of taste doesn't refer to a perspective, it gets a truth-value only when evaluated relative to a perspective.

I argue that neither account is successful, and their fundamental mistake is to hold that people know that judgments of taste are perspective-dependent. I argue that majority of speakers take judgments of taste to be true or false irrespective of their personal preferences. If such "folk objectivism" is true, perspective-independent semantics for predicates of taste becomes a plausible view. However, a metaphysical presupposition that all the theorists agree on is that taste properties are perspective-dependent. Therefore a perspective-independent semantics will be committed to an error theory. I question the metasemantics behind the error theory and conclude that we should adopt a more externalist metasemantics. That allows us to explain how predicates of taste can be perspective-dependent despite of folk objectivism. The resulting *perspectivist* view can thus account both for perspective dependence and for why people disagree about taste.

Contents

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Introduction

> Some traditional discussions of taste and the variability of taste
> have centred primarily on such questions as fashionable preferences,
> or personal likes and dislikes. These are of relatively low philosophic
> interest. – Frank Sibley (2001a), "About Taste"

Judgments of personal taste such as "Anchovies are delicious" pose the following
problem. On the one hand the truth of judgments of taste seems to depend on
our personal tastes, or *perspectives* as we will call them. On the other hand
we disagree over the truth of those judgments as if there were perspective-
independent truths about the matter. Recently there has been a lively debate
concerning the correct semantics for predicates of taste whose paradigmatic
examples are *delicious, tasty, fun* and *disgusting*.

This thesis discusses contextualist, semantic relativist and error theoretic
accounts, concludes that none of them is satisfactory and develops a new *per-
spectivist* approach. The starting point for the recent theories of predicates of
taste are the following three intuitions. First, there is variation in the perspect-
ives that make judgments of taste true. In other words, the truth of judgments
of taste doesn't merely depend on e.g. the tastes of the ideal judges. Second,
when a speaker makes a sincere judgment of personal taste they are judging
correctly. For example, if anchovies taste horrible to you it seems that you can
truly judge "Anchovies are disgusting". Third, people disagree about matters of
taste. The contemporary accounts try to accommodate each of these intuitions
at least to some extent.

Contextualists hold that the semantic values of predicates of taste depend
on the perspective of the speaker or a relevant group that is determined by the
context. For example, according to speaker-centered contextualism an utterance
of "Anchovies are disgusting" by me can be paraphrased as having the content
"Anchovies are disgusting to Sanna". The basic problem of contextualism is that
it has trouble explaining why people disagree about taste when in an apparent
disagreement of taste their judgments are not in fact contradictory.

Semantic relativism is a novel framework that comes in moderate and rad-
ical forms. The standard Kaplanian formal semantics takes the contents of
utterances to be true or false relative to a circumstance of evaluation which

is normally just a possible world. Relativists argue that we should posit more parameters to the circumstances of evaluation so that contents get a truth-value relative to say, a possible world, time, and a perspective. Distributing elements of truth-conditions from the content to the circumstance of evaluation is supposed to help to explain puzzling linguistic data like disagreements of taste. The relativist idea is that people disagree about taste since they express contradictory contents, but they nevertheless speak the truth since their judgments are true relative to their own perspectives.

The existing contextualist and relativist accounts are all committed to speakers knowing that the truth of judgments of taste depends on various perspectives. Throughout the chapters we will see how that commitment makes it extremely difficult for contextualists and relativists to provide satisfactory accounts of the various linguistic data we consider, including disagreements of taste. The alternatives to contextualism and relativism that I put forward give up the assumption.

An error theory of judgments of taste holds that people's uses of judgments of taste are best explained by taking them to hold an objectivist folk metaphysical view about taste properties. In other words, they believe that taste properties exist independently of any particular perspectives and that their judgments of taste attribute those properties. Therefore they treat judgments of taste as perspective-independent judgments which causes them to disagree over their truth. The error theory holds that since people intend to talk about objective taste properties, the meaning of predicates of taste is consequently perspective-independent. However, there are no perspective-independent properties to make such judgments true which is why the view is an error theory.

The perspectivist view I defend agrees with the error theory regarding people's commitment to folk objectivism. However, I argue that the error theorist is wrong in taking people to intend to talk about objective taste properties. I defend an account which holds that people are not in a privileged position to know their intentions. Instead, we should attribute them the intentions that best explain their actions. Even if people don't realise it they intend to talk about perspective-dependent taste properties since those are what cause and explain their judgments. This metasemantic approach holds that people can systematically refer to some object while having mistaken views about the nature of the thing they are talking about. Thus, perspectivism explains disagreements of taste as a consequence of speakers misinterpreting the contents of their utterances. Nevertheless they speak the truth since they are in fact attributing

perspective-dependent properties.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. The first part presents the relevant background for our discussions. Ch. 1: *Judgments of Personal Taste* illustrates the basic problem of disagreements of taste and lists the expressions that we focus on. I introduce three basic intuitions that theorists of personal taste have relied on: the intuition that the truth of judgments of taste depends on different perspectives, that people who make sincere judgments of taste on the basis of their own taste are faultless, and that there are disagreements of taste. An acceptable theory has to account for those intuitions one way or another. I also illustrate the problem of disagreement by considering *simple subjectivism*, the simplest view that can account for perspective dependence of judgments of taste.

Ch. 2: *The Evaluative Dimension of Judgments of Taste* asks whether predicates of taste attribute value and if they do, what is the nature of that value. The question is interesting first, because of worries related to the existence of values, and second, in order to know whether the evaluation is part of the content of predicates of taste or merely a consequence of pragmatics. We discuss and reject *taste objectivism*, a view which holds that there are perspective-independent taste properties. I conclude that judgments of taste attribute response-dependent values.

Ch. 3: *Gradability and Perspective Dependence* summarises the recently influential scalar analysis of gradable adjectives. Predicates of taste are gradable adjectives so the chapter provides the background of what the semantics of them should minimally be like. We then consider whether the gradability suffices to explain what disagreements of taste are about, concluding that it cannot.

Ch. 4: *Perspective Dependence and Subjective Attitude Verbs* discusses the semantics of *find*. Sæbø has argued that *find* and certain other verbs are *subjective attitude verbs* which can only embed lexically "subjective" predicates. If he is right his arguments would support the idea that there is a distinct category of subjective predicates that are clearly encoded in English and other languages which have subjective attitude verbs. I provide counterexamples to Sæbø's account and present an alternative to explain the felicity patters on *find*.

Ch. 5: *The Grounds of Judgments of Taste* argues that a judgment of taste can normally be felicitously made only if one has been in a *grounding experiential state*. For example, one cannot judge that dancing is fun if one has no experiences of dancing. The role that experiential states play help us understand at least one aspect in which judgments of taste are "subjective". We

then look at cases where someone else's experiential states matter.

The second part of the thesis discusses contextualist accounts. Ch. 6: *Two Contextualist Approaches* shows that contextualism is a *prima facie* promising account to explain the data about the variability of the relevant experiencers discussed in the previous chapter. I distinguish between contextualist accounts that take the context sensitivity to be lexically encoded from accounts which take the context sensitivity to be a consequence of pragmatic mechanisms. Of the two kinds of views the former have been popular, and Ch. 7: *Arguments for Semantics-Based Contextualism* discusses the arguments that have been presented in favour of the view. I conclude that the arguments are not convincing.

Ch. 8: *Flexible Contextualism* looks in detail Glanzberg's semantics-based contextualism which builds on the semantics of gradable adjectives discussed in Ch. 3. I show that the view makes unacceptable predictions in ordinary cases and summarise other problems that have been presented in the literature. Finally we consider whether pragmatics-based contextualism could avoid the problems and conclude that it cannot.

Part Three discusses Semantic relativism. Ch. 9: *Moderate Relativism* presents the moderate relativist semantic framework and the motivation for it that comes from so-called "faultless disagreements". Ch. 10: *A Closer Look at Relativist Accounts* discusses the relativist frameworks of Kölbel, Lasersohn and MacFarlane. The focus is on their accounts of disagreements, and I argue that none of them can show that relativist semantics would help in explaining why people disagree about taste.

Ch. 11: *Relativism and Contents of Thoughts* argues that relativist semantics is not helpful since it has no consequences on the level of thought. Since people think in terms of complete, truth-evaluable propositions, they are able to evaluate the judgments of others from their perspectives. Therefore they have no reasons to disagree. I then consider whether relativists can rely on people's egocentrism as an explanation for disagreements, and argue that it's not a plausible psychological account.

Ch. 12: *Normative Disagreement* discusses whether relativists can explain disagreement in a Gibbardian way as an attempt at coordinating attitudes. I argue that Gibbard's coordination story cannot be applied to discussions about taste. We then consider other accounts which don't take disagreements of taste to be over the truth of propositions but conclude that they are not satisfactory either.

The last part of the thesis presents two accounts which both differ radically from the contextualist and relativist accounts we have discussed. Ch. 13: *An Error Theory for Discourses About Taste* argues that people's use of judgments of taste is best explained by their beliefs in objectivism about taste. If one also accepts a metasemantic account that takes the contents of expressions to be determined by speakers' intentions, one can argue that speakers intend to make perspective-*in*dependent judgments of taste. This allows us to explain their disagreement behaviour as attempts at finding out the truth about matters of taste. However, we have already concluded that taste objectivism is a false metaphysical view. Therefore the perspective-independent semantics leads to an error theory about judgments of taste. I discuss some objections to the view and conclude that it can explain the linguistic data better than contextualism or relativism.

Ch. 14: *Perspectivism* takes up the metasemantics that leads to the perspective-independent error theory. I argue that the error theorist is wrong in attributing speakers intentions on the basis of their folk metaphysics and its accompanying folk semantics. In other words, speakers have mistaken views about the meanings of their words which is why the attribute themselves intentions that they don't actually have. I defend an alternative method which has as a consequence that speakers intend to talk about those things that cause their beliefs. Judgments of taste are caused by perspective-dependent properties, and hence those should be the referents of predicates of taste.

The Appendix discusses surveys by experimental philosophers which aim to find out whether speakers are objectivists or subjectivists about taste.

Part I

Background

1 Judgments of Personal Taste

The aim of this chapter is to provide an intuitive grasp of the problems that a theory of judgments of personal taste has to answer. I begin with a comparison of disagreements of taste to other kinds of disagreements. I then list the predicates that different theorists have taken to be predicates of personal taste, and settle on a brief list of predicates which will be our focus.

In section 1.3 I discuss and give examples of three intuitions that are prominent in the recent literature on predicates of taste: the Intuition of Many Relevant Perspectives, the Intuition of No Fault, and the Intuition of Disagreement. These intuitions form the background of our discussions in the following chapters, where they will be re-examined in more detail. In the last section I discuss a view which I call *simple subjectivism* in order to illustrate what is wrong with the most basic account that could do justice to the idea that judgments of personal taste are expressions of our personal experiences.

1.1 An Illustration: The Quarrelsome Party

Imagine that the following conversations are taking place in a party:

Dialogue 1: The nationality of Jean-Luc Godard

(1)   Anja: Godard is the best Swiss movie director.

(2)   Benoit: What are you talking about, Godard is French!

Dialogue 2: The efficacy of austerity as an economic policy

(3)   Alla: The government's economic policy is just deepening the crisis.
       Bob: No, you're totally wrong about that.

Dialogue 3: The injustice of inheriting property

(4)   Alex: It's unjust that people are allowed to inherit the property of their
       parents.
       Brigitte: There's nothing wrong with that.

Dialogue 4: The deliciousness of horse lasagne

(5)   Ann (Eating horse lasagne that's served at the party): The horse lasagne
       is delicious!
       Benyamin: It's disgusting.

The atmosphere of the party seems less than harmonious since each dialogue
is –at least *prima facie*– a disagreement; the people hold incompatible opin-
ions about the topics they are discussing. However, there are also interesting
dissimilarities between the dialogues and how they might go on. One of the
main differences comes from considerations of evidence for the judgments: what
would count as evidence, whether evidence is available and whether there might
be equally good evidence for both of the opposing judgments.

The first argument on the nationality of Godard can be easily solved by
finding out the relevant facts. The second argument about the economic policies
cannot be solved as easily since the data comes from particular cases of past
policies where many other factors besides austerity have influenced the economy.
There may thus be further disagreements regarding the adequacy of the evidence
that is taken to support the different views.

The third argument is about whether it's just that people can inherit the
property of their parents. Comparing with the previous two dialogues, it's not
clear what counts as evidence. There are many considerations in favour of
both views, and getting more information will hardly play a decisive role in the
argument which may be partly about the notion of *justice*. Even if Alex and
Brigitte agreed on all the relevant information they might hold differing views
on what justice amounts to.

Finally there is Ann and Benyamin's dispute over the deliciousness of the
horse lasagne. As we will see, many philosophers have shown parallels between
discussions of morality and aesthetics, and in the relevant respects judgments
about personal taste are similar to aesthetic judgments. First, judgments in
each of these fields have an *evaluative* dimension; judging something to be mor-
ally wrong, beautiful or delicious typically conveys that the speaker values or

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disvalues the object, event or action. Such judgments may also function as recommendations or condemnations.

Some philosophers have held that disagreements over evaluative matters are hard to solve because agreement over the non-evaluative features leaves open the possibility of contradicting judgments over the evaluative features. Stevenson (1944) defended the view for moral arguments and Foot (2002a) who calls the phenomenon the *breakdown of arguments,* discusses it in connection to judgments of taste. A similar claim was made by Sibley (1959) regarding aesthetic qualities; he held that aesthetic qualities depend on the non-aesthetic qualities but no amount of information regarding the latter would suffice for knowledge about the aesthetic qualities of the object.

Returning to our examples, if we compare the disagreements over inheritance and horse lasagne, both might remain unresolved even when the disputants share their knowledge over the relevant facts. However, in the moral argument there is an abundance of relevant non-moral considerations to take into account. In contrast, in the dispute of taste we face a scarcity of them. There are hardly any non-evaluative qualities in the lasagne that count in favour of either judgment. For example, one might say that it contains cheddar instead of parmesan but that matters only if one thinks that a lasagne ought to contain parmesan, and that is just another way to make the evaluative claim that a lasagne is *better* if it contains parmesan. The arguments that Ann or Benyamin might give –for example that eating horse is disgusting, that the meat is chewy or that the pasta is cooked just right– are simply further judgments of taste.

Now, Ann and Benyamin's further judgments of taste may show how the other perceives the lasagne or its parts (e.g. the meat as chewy) and the speakers may partially agree (e.g. both might hold that the pasta is cooked just right). But eventually their tastes may be too different for them to be able to agree on the core question, namely the deliciousness of the lasagne. Ann happens to really like the lasagne with its cheddar and all, and Ben still finds the taste of the lasagne bad even if he comes to agree that eating horse is not disgusting. What is special with taste is the widespread view that even though people's tastes differ, the variable tastes are equally correct. Hence the recommendation that *de gustibus non est disputandum.* Ann and Benyamin should simply agree to disagree and leave it at that.

However, what gives rise to a lot of philosophical puzzlement is that disagreements of taste are ubiquitous and they often don't end briefly with an agreement to disagree. So despite of the considerations regarding the scarcity of

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non-evaluative reasons for judgments of taste and the apparent acknowledged variability of tastes, disagreements of taste appear to be more than mere expressions of how things are from one's personal point of view.

The last observation has lead to the core problem from the point of view of philosophy of language: what kind of judgment can both be "relative" to the speaker's taste but still allow for disagreements over its truth? Ideally we should provide a theory of the semantics and pragmatics of predicates of taste which does justice to the variability of tastes, holds that persons are equal regarding their epistemological status with respect to matters of taste, and makes sense of disagreements of taste. That is the challenge we take up in the following chapters.

1.2 Examples of Predicates of Personal Taste

By far I have talked broadly of judgments of personal taste. By a judgment of personal taste I mean a judgment which applies a predicate of personal taste to an object (in the broad sense, including events and actions). Here is a list of some expressions or phrases that have been given as examples of predicates of taste in the literature: *spicy, funny, disgusting, fun, delicious, nauseating* (Cappelen and Hawthorne, 2007); *elegant* and *smart* as applied to clothes; *good-looking, fair of face; good, appetising* and *delicious* as applied to foods and drinks, *go well together* when speaking of colours (Foot 2002c; 2002b), *cool, sexy, yucky, handsome* and *attractive* (Richard, 2008).

Some authors include aesthetic judgements like *Picasso is better than Matisse* within judgments of personal taste (Kölbel, 2003). Others explicitly take predicates of personal taste to be a subset of aesthetic predicates (Sundell, 2011) or treat the theories applied to predicates of taste as applicable to aesthetic predicates (Baker, 2012).

Now, few philosophers have tried to offer strict criteria for what makes a predicate a predicate of personal taste. Below we will encounter the core features that are taken to characterise them. However, rather than to expect to find conditions that will infallibly identify a predicate of taste we should at best expect there to be certain prototypical features, shared more or less by different predicates. In Chapter 4: *Perspective Dependence and Subjective Attitude Verbs* we will look at so-called *subjective attitude verbs* that have been claimed to embed only predicates of taste; however, we will show the claim to be false.

In what follows we will proceed with our vague, intuitive understanding

of which predicates are predicates of taste. I will mainly use as examples *fun,*
delicious, tasty and *disgusting* because they are the main examples used by other
theorists, but more importantly because they are genuinely "personal" unlike
e.g. *elegant, fashionable, stylish, good-looking,* or the traditionally aesthetic
predicates like *beautiful* or *good / bad* (as applied to works of art). I take the
difference to come from the grounds of the judgments. Judgments of personal
taste are (in most cases) based only on one's experiential states. In contrast, a
judgment about say, the fashionable or the stylish is mostly dependent on the
norms of the society and the opinions of the experts. The role of the grounds
will be discussed more in Ch. 5: *The Grounds of Judgments of Taste.*

1.3 Intuitions About Judgments of Personal Taste

Let me make some terminological remarks. First, by a *judgment* I refer both
to mental acts of judging and to utterances, except when the context makes it
clear that we are only talking of utterances. The recent theories of semantics
of predicates of personal taste rely strongly on a couple of widely shared "intu-
itions". I call them *intuitions* since the authors who rely on them claim that the
judgments in question are held by ordinary speakers and hence they are not a
result of philosophical theorising.

Consequently the authors who cite the intuitions often offer no further con-
siderations in their support; rather than adopting the intuitions as resulting
from arguments they take them to be part and parcel of the metaphysics that
underlies ordinary language. The task of the philosopher is then taken to be to
provide a semantic theory that matches the contents of judgments of taste to
the metaphysics –supposing that the metaphysics is correct (we will also explore
the possibility that it is not).

There are three core intuitions that have formed the background of the recent
theories of personal taste. In this section we will have a preliminary look at them
as they are expressed in the literature. The aim is to provide the background for
the main approaches to the semantics / pragmatics of predicates of taste which
take accounting for those intuitions as their desideratum. These theories will
be investigated mainly from chapter 6: *Two Contextualist Approaches* onwards,
when we will also explore the intuitions with a more critical eye.

1.3.1   The Intuition of Many Relevant Perspectives

The first intuition which I'll call *The Intuition of Many Relevant Perspectives* presupposes that taste predicates refer to relations between objects or events and individuals or groups. The idea is that whether something is for example fun or tasty always depends on the reactions of one or more people (or other sentient beings). Following the contemporary terminology, let me call the individual or group whose reactions matter for the truth of a judgment of personal taste *a perspective*.[1]

The Intuition of Many Relevant Perspectives holds that the truth of judgments of taste may depend on different perspectives. To illustrate, if two cultures have conflicting views on what kind of food is delicious, the intuition is that both views may be correct since the relevant perspectives differ. Hence, the intuition concerns the *truth values* of judgments of personal taste. Here is a quote from Philippa Foot (2002b) where she states the Intuition of Many Relevant Perspectives.

> I am thinking, for instance, of certain judgements of 'taste', such as those asserting that some people but not others are good-looking, that some food or drink is appetising or delicious, or that certain colours go well together for furnishings or clothes. Here, it seems, *we find wide variations in judgements between different cultures and different generations.* One does not have to go as far as ancient Mexico to find a set of faces that we find ugly while supposing that they were once admired, and while we think Nureyev's a better-looking face than Valentino's there was a time when the verdict would probably have gone the other way. It is obvious that there is the same kind of disagreement about the palatability of food and drink; [...] *The reason why such judgements seem undoubtedly relativistic is not, of course, that a wide variety of opinions exist, but rather that no one set of these opinions appears to have any more claim to truth than any other.* (Foot, 2002b, 22; emphasis added).

She makes two points: that there is a lot of variation in judgments of taste, and that each of these judgments track truth equally well.

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[1]It is equally common to say that the truth of a judgment of taste depends on *a judge*. I don't have any deep reasons for preferring the terminology of perspectives. I take these terms to refer to the same phenomena, and to keep the terminology unified I talk of *a perspective* where some other authors talk of *a judge*.

The claim that truth depends on a person, a group or a culture is what is traditionally known as *relativism* and Foot defends relativism about matters of taste in that sense. As we will see there are many ways to account for the dependence of truth on perspectives. Hence, to accept the Intuition of Many Relevant Perspectives doesn't yet commit a theorist to much. But it does rule out some views. First there's the view which holds that the truth of a judgment of taste doesn't depend on any perspective at all, i.e. properties like deliciousness refer to non-relational properties akin to e.g. the property of being a dog. I don't think that anyone has defended the view for predicates of taste, but we will discuss its problems in section 2.3: *Taste Objectivism*.

The second view that is ruled out is a view that holds that taste properties are relations to perspectives but the relevant perspective is always the same, for example that of the ideal perceiver / judge or an average of aggregating the tastes of all humans. Our focus is on views that accept the intuition of many relevant perspectives, but we will consider views which reject it once we've encountered the problems of perspective-dependent accounts.

1.3.2   The Intuition of No Fault

The second intuition is about the epistemic status of agents who make judgments of taste. It holds that speakers who make sincere judgments of taste on the basis of their own tastes cannot be mistaken (except in certain special cases to be discussed below); let us call it the *Intuition of No Fault*. The intuition holds that speakers are epistemically flawless when they make judgments of taste, even if they make judgments that appear to be contradictory. Exceptions are formed by cases where one is "out of touch with one's taste", for example while sick or in another unusual but temporary state. From now on I'll talk about the *infallibility* of speakers who make judgments of taste, but strictly speaking the intuition holds that they are only near-infallible due to the exceptional cases.

The intuition has been widely appealed to as an argument in favour of speaker relativity, i.e. the view according to which the relevant perspective is typically the speaker's. Below are some expressions of the intuition:

> [The disagreement over the deliciousness of rhubarb] is, we feel—or is likely to be—a disagreement which there is no point in trying to settle, because it concerns no real matter of fact but is merely an expression of different, permissibly idiosyncratic tastes. Nobody's wrong. (Wright, 2006, 38).

Kölbel (2003) follows Wright in claiming that most people have the intuition that disagreements of taste are normally *faultless*: even though the speakers disagree, neither of them has made a mistake or is at fault. Mark Richard also states the conflict between the intuitions of disagreement and faultlessness:

> If Arroyo consistently strikes you as good-looking, that is all that's needed to certify your utterance of 'Arroyo is good-looking'; if he consistently strikes your neighbour as plain and gaunt, that is all that's needed to certify his utterance of 'Arroyo is not good-looking'. Here we have genuine relativity of some sort, for it seems that *both you and your neighbour speak correctly, but you seem to disagree.* (Richard, 2008, 125).

The Intuition of No Fault has been appealed to primarily by semantic relativists including Kölbel, MacFarlane and Richard. Philosophers who take the Intuition of Many Relevant Perspectives seriously but oppose the Intuition of No Fault usually defend a view where the relevant perspective is that of a group or a community. For example Foot doesn't share the intuition, and in contrast she holds that one can easily be in error when making judgments of taste. The above citation by Richard is particularly relevant since Foot's example of a mistaken judgment of taste is of a man who erroneously thinks that his wife is good-looking (Foot, 2002c).

The conflict emphasises the differences between the predicates that are taken to be predicates of *personal* taste and other predicates related to taste. For example the Intuition of No Fault seems much more plausible in the case of e.g. *tasty, delicious* and *fun* than with *fashionable, stylish,* or *good-looking.* That is because the grounds for the judgments are different; whereas judgments of personal taste are made either uniquely or mainly on the basis of one's personal experiences, judgments about the fashionable, stylishness or perhaps good looks depend also on the judgments of the community and its experts. Hence, whereas one can be mistaken on questions of fashion or style since they depend on the views of others, judgments of personal taste are supposed to be infallible because they only depend on one's own taste. Wright expresses the role of experiences in the Intuition of No Fault as follows:

> The rhetoric of 'no fact of the matter' expresses the natural, folk-philosophical view: such disputes are potentially irresolvable, we think, not because the facts in question can transcend our impressions but because *the impressions themselves are in some way*

> *basic and constitutive; so when they conflict, there need be no further*
> *court of appeal.* (Wright, 2006, 41; emphasis added)*.

In Ch. 5: *The Grounds of Judgments of Taste* I will offer arguments to show that the grounds of the judgments of personal taste are one's personal experiences.

1.3.3   The Intuition of Disagreement

The third intuition holds that there at least *seem* to be disagreements of taste. One of the core problems for a theory of predicates of taste is how to accommodate both the Intuition of No Fault and the Intuition of Disagreement. If speakers are near infallible in their judgments of taste, one would expect them not to disagree since everyone is right. Here is a concise expression of the main problem:

> Consider two speakers, Alphie and Betty. Alphie utters sentence
> (1a). Betty utters sentence (1b).
>   1) (a) Eggo Waffle Cereal is delicious.
>   (b) Nuh uh, Eggo Waffle Cereal is not delicious.
> Two intuitive ideas about dialogue (1) are in conflict with each other.
> On the one hand, it seems possible that neither Alphie nor Betty
> is mistaken. On the other hand, it seems that Alphie and Betty
> disagree. (Sundell, 2011, 267-8).

In the beginning of this chapter we contrasted a dispute over the deliciousness of horse lasagne with disputes over questions of justice or economic policies. Most theorists share the intuition that a disagreement of taste at least seems to be a disagreement just like the other disputes. However, it's another question whether they are disagreements in the same sense, and what is it that creates the impression of disagreement in each case. Let us next look at the basic problem that accounting for both the Intuition of No Fault and the Intuition of Disagreement creates.

1.4   Subjectivism and the Problem of Disagreement

Trying to account for all the intuitions about taste seems to preclude the simplest answers to why we disagree over taste. For example, one natural way to account for the Intuition of No Fault is to take the truth of judgments of taste to depend on the speaker's perspective. The dependence can be accounted for by taking

the judgment as referring to that perspective. But if the content of judgments of taste is thus relativised to the speakers, then when two people appear to be disagreeing, their utterances are in fact compatible. The question then becomes: why compatible utterances would create an impression of disagreement? Peter Lasersohn puts the problem in a nutshell:

> This is our central dilemma. It seems intuitively like sentences containing predicates of personal taste could be true relative to one person but false relative to another, but if we analyse them in this way, it appears to force us into claiming that they express different contents for different speakers, and then we no longer seem to be able to explain accurately which utterances contradict each other and which don't. (Lasersohn, 2005, 649-650).

Lasersohn's citation reveals certain theoretical assumptions that will be discussed in the chapters to come:

(i) The dependence of truth on the speaker's perspective has to be accounted for by taking predicates of taste as implicitly referring to the speaker's perspective.

(ii) An impression of disagreement has to be caused by contradicting contents.

Denying one or both of these has been the strategy employed by most theorists. Explaining what goes on in disagreements of taste has been the major concern of theories committed to speaker relativity, and in the coming chapters we will encounter numerous attempts at refuting (ii). In this section we have a closer look at the problems of the simplest view that supposes (i). I call the view "simple subjectivism" since it is modelled on the metaethical view known as "subjectivism".

Above we briefly discussed the role of personal experiences as the grounds of judgments of taste. Let us now elaborate that a bit. We may identify certain experiential states as the grounds for certain judgments of taste, for example to judge that something is fun is to experience having fun, or to judge that something is disgusting is to experience disgust. Call judgments like *I am having fun / bored / disgusted by x / attracted by x* "judgments about grounding experiential states".

Simple subjectivism treats judgments of personal taste as having the same content as judgments about grounding experiential states.[2] Moreover, the view takes speakers to be competently using judgments of taste to state their experiential states, and hearers to competently interpret them as such. Therefore one would expect judgments of personal taste to have pragmatics that is pretty much analogous to judgments that express the speaker's experiential states. In other words, speakers and hearers should treat the two kinds of judgments alike in conversation since their content is known to be the same. Now, we need not expect a perfect analogy since if a language contains two ways of saying the same thing these ways might come to have different uses or even different compositional semantics.[3]

However, in what follows we see that judgments of taste and judgments about experiential states differ regarding the core pragmatic phenomena such as when the judgments can be disputed, judged false, or disagreed with. We also have different intuitions about what information is conveyed by the judgments. Hence the defender of simple subjectivism needs to explain what is the cause for these differences. Let us now look at some examples:

(6)   This movie is fun.

(7)   I like this movie.

The first difference to note is when the judgments can be evaluated as true or false. A hearer can judge (6) as true or false depending on whether she found the movie fun or not. In contrast, the hearer is normally not in a position to say anything about the truth or falsity of (7) except in the rare case where she suspects the speaker of lying.[4] The difference between the truth-value judgments corresponds with what we intuitively take the contents of the judgments to

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[2]A slightly more elaborate theory would treat judgments of taste as asserting that the speaker is generally disposed to be in the relevant experiential state. That would allow for judgments like "surfing is fun" to be true even when the speaker is on a terrible mood and currently not enjoying surfing at all. The criticism presented in this section applies equally to both views.

[3]For example, *round* and *spherical* might seem to have the same lexical meaning, but as pointed out by Lasersohn (1999) *round* allows for more deviation from perfect roundness than does *spherical*, including allowing for degree modifiers like *very*.

[4]*True* is more flexible than *false* in that one can use *true* like *me too* if one shares the mental state of the speaker, but *false* cannot be used to express that one's state is different. Here is an example:

(8)   Akiko: I'm so pleased he could make it in time.
       Brody: True.
       Cathy: *False.

be: (7) is a judgment primarily about the speaker whereas (6) is a judgment primarily about the movie.

If our intuitions about the contents are correct, it explains why it is difficult to agree or disagree with judgments like (7); that would require insight into the speaker's experiential state which only the speaker has direct access to. It is rare that one could expect to know the mental state of another person better than they do and to consequently disagree with their report about their own state. (6) in contrast seems to say that the movie *causes* amusement which is not a property of the speaker but of the movie. Since the judgment is not about the speaker, agreement or disagreement requires no access to the speaker's mind but only to the properties of the movie.

Judgments of personal taste and judgments about psychological states also differ regarding the impressions of disagreement we get. The criticism that subjectivism cannot explain the impression of disagreements goes back to at least Moore (1922) who states the following about moral disagreements:

> Don't people, in fact, sometimes really differ in opinion on a moral question? Certainly all appearances are in favour of the view that they do: and yet, if they do, that can only be if when I think a thing to be wrong, and you think it not to be wrong, I mean by "wrong" the very *same* characteristic which you mean, and am thinking that the action possesses this characteristic while you are thinking it does not. It must be the very *same* characteristic which we both mean; it cannot be, as this view says it is, merely that I am thinking that it has to my feelings the very same relation, which you are thinking that it has not got to yours; since, if this were all, then there would be no difference of opinion between us. (Moore, 1922, 334).

Moore expresses the two core aspects of the problem of disagreement for subjectivism:

(1) There appear to be moral disagreements, and

(2) There can be moral disagreements only if the speakers are expressing contradictory judgments.

As we saw in the beginning of this section, Lasersohn repeats Moore's worry when he formulates the problem of judgments of personal taste.

Now, for the moment we may remain neutral about the truth of (2). Nevertheless, simple subjectivism faces the problem that judgments of taste and

judgments about grounding experiential states differ in the impressions of disagreement that they give. Let me give some examples. Below we have two dialogues:

(9) Alexia: The party was great fun.
     Basil: No it wasn't.

(10) Ana: I had a lot of fun at the party.
      Bebel: I didn't have fun at all.

Only the first dialogue gives an impression of disagreement; it looks like Alexia and Basil are disagreeing over how the party was whereas Ana and Bebel are only saying how they experienced the party.

Now suppose that Alexia's and Ana's judgments do have the same content –as held by simple subjectivism– so that both assert that the they, the speakers, had a lot of fun at the party. What should one say about Basil's and Bebel's responses; do they have the same content too? Simple subjectivism has two alternatives for how to understand Basil's statement "No it wasn't": either he is denying that Alexia had fun, or denying that he himself had fun. We can paraphrase the two options as follows:

(11) Basil: You didn't have fun at all.

or

(12) Basil: I didn't have fun at all.

As was mentioned it is rare that a hearer can question a psychological report of a speaker, so in the normal case Basil's statement should be paraphrased as (12). That would also be reasonable since it makes the two dialogues analogous. But now, look at the following dialogue:

(13) Alexia: The party was great fun.
      Basil: I didn't have fun at all.

Here we don't get an impression of disagreement as we do in dialogue (9). But according to simple subjectivism the two dialogues are supposed to have the same contents, and the speakers know it.

So now we have the following cases to contrast:

(i) A judgment of taste and an apparent negation of it.

(ii) A judgment of an experiential state and a judgment of the contrary experiential state in another person.

(iii) A judgment of taste and a judgment of an experiential state.

If the two kinds of judgments had the same content these three dialogues should appear at least highly similar –but they don't. In contrast, each pair gives different impressions of disagreement. Let us add the final pair: a judgment of an experiential state and a judgment of taste.

(14) Anna: I didn't have fun at the party.
     Boris: The party was great fun.

This dialogue should be analogous to (10) with just the order reversed:

(10) Ana: I had a lot of fun at the party.
     Bebel: I didn't have fun at all.

But again, in (14) we get some impression of disagreement, as if Boris was saying that something was wrong with Anna since she didn't enjoy the fun party. There thus seems to be different degrees of impressions of disagreement: two judgments of contrary experiential states in different people give no impression of disagreement (dialogue (10)); a judgment of taste and a judgment of an experiential state that's incompatible with the grounding experiential state of the judgment of taste gives some impression of disagreement (dialogues (13) and (14)), and two contrary judgments of taste give a strong impression of disagreement (dialogue (9)).

As has been emphasised, simple subjectivism supposes that speakers are competent language users who know the contents of their utterances, and can correctly interpret the utterances of others. Hence, if two dialogues have the same content they should know that that is the case. Since the dialogues differ (a) regarding the possible truth-value judgments, (b) our intuitions about the contents of the dialogues as well as (c) the impressions of disagreement they give, the data speaks *prima facie* against a theory which simply identifies judgments of personal taste with judgments of psychological states.

As we mentioned, there might be a story to tell about why the two kinds of judgments would have such different pragmatics despite of having the same semantic content.[5] Nevertheless, given its problems the view hasn't been taken

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[5]One attempt at explaining the different pragmatics comes from Lopez de Sa (2007; 2008) who defends simple subjectivism for predicates of taste and moral expressions and argues that it can explain disagreements since there is a presupposition that the participants to the conversation share their standards in taste or morality. Baker (2012) shows with convincing amount of detail that judgments of taste have no such presuppositions. Moreover, the pre-

as a serious alternative.

1.5 Summary of Chapter 1

The aim of the first chapter was to provide an intuitive grasp of what are judgments of personal taste and what are the issues they raise in philosophy of language. I brought up some commonly made claims about judgments of taste. First, a disagreement of taste is not supposed to be like a disagreement over whether Godard is Swiss because we cannot likewise cite non-evaluative facts that would settle the disagreement of taste. We will discuss the distinction between evaluative and non-evaluative facts in the next chapter.

Second, a disagreement of taste differs from moral disagreements because in the latter case there is usually an abundance of relevant non-evaluative facts whereas in the case of taste there is a scarcity of them. It thus seems difficult to give arguments for judgments of taste that are not themselves judgments of taste. Third, since judgments of taste are taken to be made on the basis of one's personal taste, disagreements about taste are often taken to be suspicious and not worth having as illustrated by the proverb *De gustibus non est disputandum.* Nevertheless, people at least seem to be disagreeing about taste.

I stated three common intuitions, the Intuition of Many Relevant Perspectives, the Intuition of No Fault, and the Intuition of Disagreement, which are often cited by theorists of taste as truths which ought to be accommodated. We will encounter these intuitions in various forms later. Accommodating the Intuition of No Fault with the Intuition of Disagreement is the problem that has occupied theorists the most.

In the last section of this chapter I illustrated the problems faced by simple subjectivism, a view which identifies the content of judgments of personal taste with the contents of judgments about one's experiential states. Simple subjectivism can account for the Intuition of No Fault, but it is implausible because of the different pragmatics of judgments of taste and judgments about experiential states. I showed that they differ regarding our truth-value intuitions about them, our intuitions about their contents, as well as our impressions of disagreement we get from them.

I also gave a list of predicates that are commonly taken as predicates of personal taste. Many theorists don't distinguish between predicates of personal

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suppositional account could not explain the problems of contextualism we will encounter in ch. 8, e.g. why it's ok to report judgments of taste across different contexts.

taste and aesthetic predicates. It's not easy to give criteria for what makes a predicate a predicate of personal taste, but for the moment we will exclude the prototypical aesthetic predicates and rely on a small list of adjectives that are the most common examples used in the literature on taste, such as *fun, delicious* or *tasty.* Ch. 4: *Perspective Dependence and Subjective Attitude Verbs* discusses one particular criterion that has been suggested as helping to identify predicates of personal taste from other predicates.

2 The Evaluative Dimension of Judgments of Taste

Many philosophers have treated morality and aesthetics alike (See e.g. Hume (1998; 1999; 2000) Ayer (2001), Railton (2003)) both with respect to their metaphysics and philosophy of language. Recently some philosophers have advanced a single view for both moral expressions and predicates of personal taste.[6] The main reasons have to do with metaphysics of value.

Both judgments of taste and moral judgments attribute value to objects or events. A metaethical tradition that dates back at least to Ayer takes facts and values to be of metaphysically different kinds. Ayer's suspicion of values is due to his verificationist commitments that he adopted from logical positivists, but even after logical positivism the status of values has remained questionable. In the last chapter I cited Stevenson (1944) and Foot (2002a) who advocated the view that with moral judgments and judgments of taste agreement on facts does not suffice for agreement on values, and Sibley (1959) held the view for aesthetic qualities. The distinction between facts and values is commonplace.

Once one distinguishes between facts and values, it is natural to wonder what kind of things values are. Many philosophers question the existence of the kind of values that could make moral judgments true. Error theorists like Mackie (1977) and Joyce (2001) have argued that the values that moral judgments presuppose are simply metaphysically too weird to exist. Loeb (2003) in his part argues that given the similarities of moral judgments and evaluative judgments about food or drink, same ontological considerations about value will support either what he calls "realism" or "anti-realism" about both domains. What he means by "realism" is a view which holds that judgments value such as "Genocide is wrong" are true independently of what people believe about the matter.

In this chapter we focus on the evaluativeness of judgments of taste and on the nature of the value they attribute. The chapter has two aims. First, since we are interested in the semantics of predicates of taste it is useful to know whether they have evaluative content or if their evaluativeness is merely a matter of pragmatics. If the evaluative dimension does not come from their content, then we wouldn't have to worry about the nature of the value that judgments of taste attribute since the truth of the attributions would not depend on that. However, I conclude that predicates of taste do have evaluative content.

The second aim is negative. I argue that whether or not there are meta-

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[6]See e.g. Kölbel (2003, 2004) and MacFarlane (2014), who argues for radical Relativism for *tasty* and moral *ought*.

physical worries with respect to the values that moral judgments attribute, judgments of taste are evaluative in a very naturalistic way since the values they attribute are fully dependent on the dispositions of the people. Therefore we may safely proceed with our inquiries into the language of taste without worrying about the metaphysics of value more generally.

2.1   Types of Evaluative Expressions

Let us begin by analysing the ways in which expressions may be evaluative or their uses convey an evaluation. A classic starting point is Williams (1985) who introduced the terminology of *thick* and *thin* terms in his critical discussion of the fact / value distinction in ethics. He distinguishes between terms that have both descriptive and evaluative content –the thick terms– and terms with only evaluative content –the thin terms.

Williams' examples of thick terms include *treachery, brutality* and *courage* which intuitively are factual and evaluative. Hence they put descriptive conditions on how the world or the object must be like and also attribute positive or negative value to it. For example, we may suppose that *treachery* attributes the quality of betraying someone's trust in a way that is bad. Because of the evaluative aspect, the use of a thick term also potentially guides action: if an action A has positive value, then one has a *pro tanto* reason to do A. Examples of thin concepts include moral *good* or *right* which are supposed to merely attribute value without any descriptive content.[7]

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[7]Let me mention some difficulties related to *good* and *bad* so that we don't rely too much on them as examples. Hare (1952) argued that *good* has both a descriptive and evaluative meaning so that e.g. in "He bought a *good car*" *good* attributes the car certain properties which depend on the standards of the goodness of cars at that time, and also commends the car. Hare holds that the evaluative dimension of *good* is it's "primary" meaning, and the descriptive part "secondary", by which he roughly means that any use of *good* is always evaluative whereas the descriptive dimensions may be more or less present and also change with times.

Geach (1956) targeted Hare by arguing that in fact *good* and *bad* do not commend at all. First he emphasised the distinction between predicative and attributive uses of predicates. A predicative use predicates a property, e.g. "He was *right*". An attributive use modifies another predicate, e.g. "he found the *right tool*" or "he bought a *good car*". Some predicates are always attributive, e.g. *small, big, former* etc. so that even when the predicates appears by itself, the modified predicate is provided pragmatically. Geach argued that *good* and *bad* are always attributive so that judging something to be *good* implicitly contains a predicate that *good* modifies. Furthermore, he claimed that attributive uses do not commend or provide reasons for actions.

Williams in his part is discussing a third position since he gives *good* as an example of a thin term that has only evaluative meaning. Given these competing viewpoints we do better avoiding taking a stance on *good* and *bad* altogether since that would take us outside the scope of our topic. However, the issues related to these expressions are worth keeping in mind

Another analysis of the descriptive / evaluative distinction comes from Sibley's (2001b) discussion of aesthetic expressions which complements Williams' distinction. Sibley distinguishes between three kinds of evaluative terms: (a) intrinsically evaluative terms, (b) descriptive merit terms, and (c) evaluation-added terms. Let us look at each category in turn.

Intrinsically evaluative terms. These expressions correspond most closely to thin terms; Sibley's examples are *good, bad, mediocre, nice, nasty, obnoxious, valuable, effective, ineffectual* and *worthless*. Here is how he describes them:

> First, there may be terms the correct application of which to a thing indicates that the thing has some value without it thereby also being asserted that the thing has some particular or specified quality. [...] with explainable exceptions in special contexts, they [intrinsically evaluative terms] will be evaluative (pro or con) whatever the subject-matter they are applied to, and may be applied to any subject to which their application makes sense. (Sibley, 2001b, 92).

Descriptive merit terms. These terms are descriptive terms which attribute a property that is a merit in the object given its usual function. Sibley's examples are *sharp* for razors, *selective* for wireless sets and *spherical* for tennis balls. Their meaning is purely descriptive, and it is contingent that the property attributed by the expression has positive or negative value. Hence being a competent user of the term does not require knowledge of the merit that is typically accompanied by the object that has the property.

Evaluation-added terms. The third category corresponds most closely to thick terms as Williams defines them, although many terms that are often considered thick will in fact come out as descriptive merit terms. Sibley describes evaluation-added terms thus:

> These are terms which are supposed to have both a descriptive and evaluative component: that is, when they are applied to something, not only is a property being attributed to it but an indication is being given that the speaker has a favourable or unfavourable attitude to that property. If there are such terms in the language, it would be a rule of their use that they are so used; they would be both

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since some examples in the literature on predicates of taste use *good*.

descriptive, as indicating that a thing had a quality, P, and evaluat-
ive, in indicating that the speaker values or disvalues the quality P.
(Sibley, 2001b, 92).

Sibley's examples from the aesthetic realm include *tasty, insipid, fragrant, noi-some, cacophonous, brash* and *rancid.*

Once we look at the criteria for descriptive merit terms and evaluation-added terms we see that Sibley's distinction cuts through the class of thick terms. For example, Sibley would count the usual examples of thick terms (*courageous, honest, considerate*) as descriptive merit terms rather than evaluation-added terms. And indeed, we can easily imagine plenty of contexts were *honest* doesn't convey a positive attitude but merely the descriptive content *has a tendency to speak the truth.*

Given Sibley's distinctions, we see that if an apparently evaluative expression turns out to be a descriptive merit term, then the evaluative dimension is not part of the content but merely something its uses may convey –or not, depending on the context.

2.2   The Evaluativeness of Predicates of Taste

Now, the first aim of this chapter is to find out whether predicates of taste have evaluative content. Therefore, let us classify some of the typical predicates of taste within Sibley's tripartite distinction. First, *nice, good, bad* and the other intrinsically evaluative terms listed by Sibley can be all used of the same objects and in the same contexts as the more specific taste predicates like *delicious* can be used; indeed, it's doubtful that there is any difference in meaning between *delicious* and *very good* or *excellent*, or between *tasty* and *nice* as applied to foods. *Delicious* and *tasty* don't have any more descriptive content than *good* or *nice* but their domain is narrower.

However, many other taste predicates seem to have some descriptive content as well. Compare *good-looking* and *attractive*; both attribute positive qualities to persons, but one ascribes a pleasing visual appearance, the other a disposition to attract. *Spicy, salty* and *tasty* are evaluations of the flavour of foods or drinks (*salty* and *spicy* can be either purely descriptive or descriptive and evaluative, meaning *too salty / spicy*), and each attributes other qualities too (too much salt / hotness; *tasty* may attribute a lot of flavour although it is often used to just mean *has a good taste*).

In many of the cases the descriptive content is dispositional; it describes a specific disposition that the object in question has, e.g. a disposition to cause amusement (*fun, funny*), to attract (*attractive*), or to disgust (*disgusting*). So it seems like some predicates of taste are thin / intrinsically evaluative, but others belong either to descriptive merit terms or evaluation-added terms. Since we want to know whether all predicates of taste attribute value we need to look closer at the two last categories.

How can we tell whether a term is one or the other? Sibley's criterion was that when one learns to use evaluation-added terms one learns that they attribute value, whereas to learn to use a descriptive merit term only consists of knowing which descriptive property it attributes. Thus, with evaluation-added terms the evaluation is a necessary part of the use whereas with descriptive merit terms we can imagine cases where the property lacks its usual merit. One of Sibley's examples of descriptive merit terms was *sharp* as applied to razors, and indeed we can imagine contexts where it's not a valuable property of razors that they are sharp. For example, think of a group of artists who are using old razors for an art work; they would take the sharp ones to be the least desirable ones since they accidentally cut themselves with them.

An evaluation-added term in contrast always attributes value. For example, *tasty* seems to attribute the positive value of having a pleasing taste. Therefore, it's not possible to use *tasty* without thereby making a positive evaluation. However, the cases are not always very clear cut. For example, imagine a tribe of people who have such unlucky genetics that anything they consider tasty happens also to be highly unhealthy to them, causing them to immediately gain a lot of weight if they eat it. Consequently in their culture tastiness is always considered bad and dangerous.

The case is similar to the case of the artists who use razors in that tastiness and sharpness are not seeked after by the agents of the cases. However, tastiness hasn't lost its value as being gustatorily pleasurable and therefore valuable; it is simply that the link between tastiness and obesity is an obstacle to enjoying the value of tastiness. In contrast, the value of sharpness seems entirely dependent on the needs for sharp objects, and on the possible value gained by having or using them.

The contrast of the cases above suggests that we can locate the difference between evaluative and descriptive terms to whether the value is intrinsic or extrinsic / instrumental. More importantly, whether a term is evaluation-added or a descriptive merit term can be decided by looking at whether the value of the

property resides in the property (e.g. deliciousness is valuable) or depends on the relation of the property to something else which is valuable (e.g. sometimes the honesty of a person saves one from being tricked, and not being tricked is valuable).

To conclude, it looks like predicates of taste are evaluative by being either thin / intrinsically evaluative terms or evaluation-added terms. Therefore we need to consider what kind of value judgments of taste attribute, and whether the nature of that value poses metaphysical worries.

2.3   Taste Objectivism

Let us again look at those predicates of personal taste which seem to have some descriptive content as well: *funny, fun, attractive, good-looking, tasty* and *disgusting*. I have mentioned before that judgments of taste are made on the grounds of one's experiential state, for example on the grounds of being disgusted by something. There are two ways to see the disgust: as a reaction to some properties of the object which are not in themselves disgusting but which cause disgust to the particular experiencer, or as the object having disgust properties, which cause being disgusted in any accurate perceiver.

The latter view would take the evaluative taste properties as independent of the responses or beliefs of anyone. Let us call the view *taste objectivism*. Thus, disgusting objects would have the disgust properties irrespective of whether anyone experiences them as such. Nevertheless, a person who accurately perceives disgustingness properties would judge the right objects to be disgusting, and have the relevant *pro tanto* reasons for avoiding them. However, the view faces problems. Firstly we may note that it is in conflict with the Intuition of Many Relevant Perceivers and the Intuition of No Fault.

Of course those are mere intuitions and we are open to giving up their verdicts if there does not seem to be a theory that can account for all of them. Nevertheless, from taste objectivism it would follow that there is always a perspective-independent fact of whether something is delicious, fun or disgusting, and therefore people may very well be at fault when judging matters of taste. On the positive side the view can explain disagreements of taste as disagreements of the ordinary kind. Moreover, it does justice to the way we speak about taste including giving arguments in favour of our views, encouraging others to try things we enjoy and so on.

However, taste objectivism is implausible. It presupposes that there are

perspective-independent truths about matters of taste. Regarding experiences of fun, common sense tells us that people are very different regarding what they enjoy. And it just seems way too far-fetched to think that some people might be correctly tracking fun whereas others are unable to, and hence mistakenly think that e.g. their hobbies are fun whereas they are not. The same holds of disgustingness. Some people are disgusted by cockroaches or the sight of infected wounds whereas some are not. But there isn't anything that is disgusting as such. Perhaps humans have tendencies to feel disgust towards particular things for evolutionary reasons, but such convergence rather shows that those things are worth avoiding by humans, not that the things are objectively disgusting.

Regarding experiences of flavour, empirical studies have shown that there is a lot of genetic variation in how foods taste to people. For example, people can be divided into *nontasters*, *tasters*, and *supertasters* regarding how a chemical 6-n-propylthiouracil (PROP) tastes to them. Nontasters don't taste the chemical whereas it tastes mildly bitter to the taster and unpleasantly bitter to the supertaster. The natural relative of the chemical is present in a variety of vegetables and other foodstuff, causing them to taste bitter to the supertaster. (For an overview of genetic differences in taste perception, see Garcia-Bailo et al. (2009).)

The three genetically different groups are estimated to be roughly equally large with some differences in distribution between the genders and around the globe. Flavour perception naturally plays a major role in evaluative judgments. Given that there is no reason to consider any of the groups as being somehow deficient in their ability to taste (in contrast to various forms of colour blindness), it would be arbitrary to claim that one of them has better access to flavour properties than the others, and thereby also have better grasp of the evaluative properties. For example, the flavours and evaluative qualities of wines are often considered to be objectively in the wines, to be discerned by the connoisseurs. However, at least one study found that judgments of a wine's bitterness, astringency and acidity correlated with the subjects' PROP taster status (Pickering et al., 2004).

Not only do humans begin their lives as having different experiences of foods, subsequent experiences also make for a very large differences in later food preferences (Prescott, 2012). Given the roles of both genetic variation and one's eating history in determining one's judgments of taste, it seems rather absurd to think that there might nevertheless be *the* evaluative properties of foods out there to be discovered by the perfect judges. Therefore I suggest that taste

objectivism is not a plausible view about the nature of values attributed by judgments of taste.

2.4 Judgments of Taste Attribute Response-Dependent Values

The approach we will take towards the nature of values attributed by judgments of taste is that the value comes from our positive or negative experiences towards the objects. Hence the values are "subjective": their existence depends on our responses. Hence, values are tied to our valuations of things, or to what *matters* to us as in the following quote by Railton:

> we need to ask whether we can locate a compelling case for saying that subjectivity is essential to value. I believe the best case to be a highly abstract one. According to this case, value enters the picture when *mattering* does. (Nihilists thus have hit on an apt phrase when they say, "Nothing matters.") If we imagine a world without any locus of mattering or concern – say, a world composed entirely of oxygen molecules in random motion – no issues of value would arise internal to that world. Within that stark world it couldn't matter less what happens, because it doesn't matter at all. If to this world we add some beings to whom something matters, then questions of value might have a foothold. (Railton, 2003, 88)

The experiences which underlie our evaluations of objects of taste are numerous. Positive evaluations are grounded in for example, experiences of having fun, in experiences of tasty or delicious food or of perceiving someone attractive or sexy, whereas negative evaluations are grounded in experiencing disgust, lack of intellectual stimulation etc. For example, if something is disgusting to one then it is intrinsically of negative value to that person; seeing, tasting, smelling or touching it makes her experience disgust.

In the previous chapter when we discussed the Intuition of No Fault we saw its link to the idea that people make judgments of personal taste on the basis of their own experiential states. Grounding experiential states depend on sensory modalities. These sense modalities may be directly referred to as well, as when we say that something *tastes* disgusting. However, usually the relevant sensory mode of experience is omitted from judgments of taste. For example, we say that something *is* disgusting even though it might be perfectly nice to touch and to

look at and only disgusting when tasted. Normally it is pragmatics that makes clear which sense modality is intended. We are supposing that judgments of taste basically attribute dispositions to bring about positive or negative sensory experiential states. Therefore the values that judgments of taste attribute are straightforwardly dependent on our responses.

Let us now compare moral and taste judgments. The contrast with moral judgments becomes quite obvious when we consider the role of sensory experiences with respect to matters of taste. Predicates of taste bear an obvious relation to our experiences and normally one cannot make a judgment of taste without having been in the grounding experiential state (this will be argued for in detail in chapter (5)). Nothing like that is true of moral judgments: we can make moral judgments about actions or events without having experienced them. Most people have not experienced say, the burning of humans but nevertheless anyone can felicitously make moral judgments about that.

Secondly, many philosophers hold that morality is "inescapable" as Joyce (2001) puts it. Moral principles must be followed even by the murderous sociopath who wishes for the destruction of everything. Whether that is true of morality or not, probably no one thinks it true of taste. If a person is deficient in a relevant sensory modality they are excluded from the commendatory force of judgments of taste. For example, if a person cannot perceive flavours we don't insist that he should still eat ice cream because it's delicious.

Hence, the values that judgments of taste attribute seem to be firmly grounded in the dispositions of the people and consequently, judgments of taste are less universal in their scope than moral judgments. That is probably related to the fact that morality concerns our relations to others whereas tastes are mostly of private concern. No one is harmed if a person fails to like ice cream whereas a murderous sociopath poses a risk for the others. But whatever the reason is for the more acceptable relativity in the case of taste, that should be reflected in our thoughts and judgments about the two domains.

We have seen that taste objectivism is not plausible, whereas it is plausible to think that the taste-related values depend on our responses to the objects. Therefore there is no reason to worry about the metaphysics of value in the case of taste. I don't pretend to have anything like a full account of the metaphysics of taste, and giving one hasn't been our aim anyway. What matters is that the evaluative dimension of judgments of taste does not pose metaphysical worries.

2.5   Summary of Chapter 2

We have seen that predicates of taste are inherently evaluative. Some philosophers who find values metaphysically suspicious have advanced similar anti-realist arguments for both judgments of morality and of aesthetic judgments and judgments of taste. However, I've argued that the value judgments of taste attribute depends on our sensory experiences. What matters for our purposes is that there is nothing metaphysically suspect about the values attributed by judgments of taste, and hence the anti-realist or non-cognitivist arguments in metaethics that are based on metaphysics have no relevance for the theory of taste.

3 Gradability and Perspective Dependence

In this chapter we turn our focus to the semantics of predicates of personal taste. One of the core semantic features of them is that they are gradable adjectives. I present Kennedy's (1999; 2007) and Kennedy & McNally's (2005) account of the semantics of gradable adjectives which is currently something like the mainstream view. The aim of the chapter is to highlight the characteristics that predicates of taste have in virtue of being gradable adjectives, and also to start addressing issues related to context and perspective dependence more generally.

I then discuss a simple view by Barker (2013) which explains the "faultless disagreements" that judgments of taste give rise to as a consequence of semantic indeterminacy over the relevant contextual standards. Hence he holds that predicates of taste can be given the same non-perspectival semantics as all the other gradable adjectives. One of the questions we face in evaluating the proposals is whether gradability as such is enough to explain all disagreements of taste. I argue that Barker's theory ignores the role of experiential grounds for judgments of taste which makes them stand apart from other gradable adjectives.

I conclude that gradability is important to take into account given its role in creating one kind of faultless disagreement, but in addition we have to posit perspective-dependence for predicates of taste to account for all the intuitions about them.

3.1 The Scalar Analysis of Gradable Adjectives

In this section we look at Kennedy's (1999; 2007) and Kennedy & McNally's (2005) recent and influential scalar analysis of gradable adjectives. An alternative to their analysis are so-called vagueness approaches (see e.g. Klein (1980)), but the differences between the two kinds of views don't matter for our purposes.

Let us begin by looking at the general characteristics of gradable adjectives. First, they can be recognised by the following features:
(i) They can be modified by degree modifiers (e.g. *very, somewhat, fairly, quite).*
(ii) They can appear in syntactic environments which Kennedy calls *degree constructions.* These contain an adjective and a degree morpheme (e.g. *er/more, less, as, too, enough, so, how*) and take the form [Deg (Adv)* _ _] [_ _ Deg]. (Kennedy, 1999) Below are two examples of degree constructions:

(15) Sea otters are cuter than coati.

(16) How long does it take to cross the Channel by swimming?

Gradable adjectives contrast with absolute adjectives which include e.g. *pregnant, dead, former, infinite, round* and *square.* We should be aware that certain absolute adjectives can be grammatically used in degree constructions (e.g. "round enough"), but these uses are limited unlike with *bona fide* gradable adjectives.

According to Kennedy and McNally (2005), gradable adjectives express gradient properties which things can have more or less. When we look at the above list of absolute adjectives it is clear that these express properties that things either have or do not, but cannot have to a degree: nothing can be somewhat dead or very square except metaphorically.

3.2   Scale

Formally the semantic type of gradable adjectives is a function that takes an object as an argument and returns a point on a *scale* as a value. A scale consists of a set of degrees ordered according to a *dimension.* The dimension specifies what is measured: for example, height, weight, smartness, beauty or disgustingness. *Linear* adjectives are ones whose comparative form *-er than* allows a linear ordering of all the objects to which the adjective applies (Klein, 1980). An example is *tall*: there is a unique scale of tallness to which all objects that have a length can be mapped.

In contrast, *non-linear* adjectives like *clever* have several dimensions: cleverness in philosophical thinking does not, alas, entail being clever in ordinary life. Thus, *clever* can express several different properties which will correlate with different scales. Kennedy takes adjectives with several scales to be ambiguous (1999, 100) or polysemous (2007, 6), rather than a matter of context sensitivity. Once a dimension is selected, a linear total ordering of suitable objects follows.

Given a dimension, there is an *ordering* of the adjective's arguments to the degrees on the scale. The ordering depends on the adjective meaning: antonyms like *rich / poor* both use the same scale of degrees of wealth, but the ordering is inverse. So imagine the scale for *rich* and *poor* having degrees of wealth from huge amounts of debts to huge amounts of wealth. The context will determine the standard for richness and poorness, i.e. the threshold for counting as rich or poor, and the way the objects get mapped onto the degrees will be exactly the inverse for *rich* and for *poor.* That also ensures that we can make valid inferences such as *Peter is rich* $\models$ *Peter is not poor*, though only within a context given

the context dependence of the standard.

Kennedy and McNally (2005) argue that there are four different kinds of scales which correlate with different kinds of adjective meanings. Furthermore, they argue that only one scale type correlates with context sensitivity. Which kind of scale an adjective is associated with can be tested by checking which modifiers the adjective licences. *Perfectly*, *completely* and *totally* express having the maximum degree on the scale. If an adjective cannot be modified with any of them, the scale of the adjective does not have an upper bound. *Slightly* expresses having the property just above the minimum degree so if an adjective cannot be modified with *slightly*, it does not have a lower bound.

If an adjective cannot be modified neither with *perfectly* etc. nor with *slightly,* then the scale is open on both ends. And if it can be modified with both kinds of modifiers, the scale is closed on both ends. A further test to see whether an adjective has a closed or open scale is offered by proportional modifiers like *half, mostly* and *most of the way,* which can only combine with closed scale adjectives.

This classifies adjectives into four kinds, depending on the kind of scale they map their arguments to:

(i) Totally open scale (e.g. *short, smart, handsome*).

(ii) Closed on the lower end of the scale *(dirty, wet)*.

(iii) Closed on the upper end of the scale (*clean, dry*).

(iv) Totally closed on both ends (*full, empty*).

Kennedy and McNally (2005) argue that it is only adjectives with open scales that display context sensitivity (for a discussion, see Kennedy and McNally (2005, 357)). If that is right, then for example whether something is wet is not a context-sensitive matter: something is wet if and only if the degree of humidity of the object is above a certain (rather high) degree. Depending on the adjective's scale type, gradable adjectives themselves divide into *relative* and *absolute:* closed scale adjectives are absolute, open scale ones relative.

Intuitively predicates of taste are context-sensitive, but let us verify that by testing which kind of scale they are associated with. *Prima facie* they are all open scale adjectives since they cannot be modified with e.g. *half, mostly* or *most of the way.* However, we need to pay attention to a further complication in testing the modifiers they can take. *Perfectly, completely* and *totally* are each used to emphasise that something has some property, even if the property in question cannot be had to a maximum degree. Similar uses exist with the other modifiers: even if some property F does not sensibly divide into quantities so

that one could measure a half of it, *half F* is used to say that something has a bit of *F*; for example, someone can be called a *half-decent violinist*. Same holds to a lesser degree of *slightly*. Let me call these uses *emphasis uses* for simplicity.

To show that taste predicates are open scale adjectives we should aim to find examples which show the infelicity of combining them with the modifiers of closed scale adjectives. Since all the modifiers can have emphasis uses (especially with the right stress), the results are not entirely infelicitous. However, they are clearly odd as compared to sentences where the modifier is combined with a closed scale adjective.

(17) ??The party was perfectly boring / fun / amusing / entertaining.

(18) ??Her paintings were half nice / fascinating.

(19) ??Her new husband is completely handsome / good-looking.

(20) ??The home-made wine was half disgusting / delicious / tasty.

Based on these examples we may conclude that at least most predicates of taste are open scale adjectives, and therefore – according to the theory of Kennedy and McNally – context-sensitive.

3.3 Context Sensitivity of Gradable Adjectives

Kennedy and McNally (2005) hold that the context-sensitive element of open scale gradable adjectives is the *standard*, which is the degree above or below which an object must have the gradient property in order for the predication to be true. In addition, Kennedy (2007) argues that which objects are being compared –the so-called *comparison class*– depends on the context.

To understand in intuitive terms how the semantics work let us look at some examples. As we saw *tall* has one dimension, height, so it maps objects onto degrees of height. However, whether something is tall depends on what is being compared: a context where the discussion concerns the heights of 10-year-olds will set the standard much lower than a context where the heights of basketball players are at issue. For example, when discussing the heights of female ballet dancers the context will determine the comparison class (some salient female ballet dancers) and a standard. The standard is set somewhere above the average height of the members in the comparison class. Any attribution of tallness to a female ballet dancer will then be true iff the height of the dancer exceeds the contextually set standard.

Things get more complicated with non-linear adjectives that have multiple dimensions. Kennedy and McNally treat multiple dimensions like ambiguity so the speaker who uses the adjective must select one of the possible dimensions. Suppose the discussion concerns stylishness which has many dimensions. The dimension that is intended will often depend on the comparison class. For example, if the discussion is about which philosophers are stylish, the kind of stylishness under discussion is probably different from the stylishness that would be in question if the discussion concerned bankers. In that case the dimension of stylishness depends on the comparison class. However, it might be selected independently of the comparison class too; a banker who discusses the stylishness of philosophers might very well intend the banker kind of stylishness and conclude that most philosophers lack style.

To summarise, an open scale gradable adjective like a predicate of taste has two context-sensitive elements: the comparison class and the standard. In addition, if the adjective has many dimensions, the speaker must select one of them.

3.4 Can Gradability Explain Disagreements of Taste?

3.4.1 "Faultless Disagreements" and Vagueness

Barker (2013) argues that all gradable adjectives including predicates of taste exhibit indeterminacy regarding the relevant contextual values. Hence, when one makes an assertion with a gradable adjective one not only attributes the property but also thereby constrains the acceptable standards in the discourse. A disagreement over an attribution of a gradable adjective may consequently be either over the facts (e.g. whether Jones is over 190 cm tall), or over the contextual standards (e.g. whether 190 cm counts as tall in the context). Barker defends his view within the framework of dynamic semantics, but for our purposes we can ignore the dynamic aspects since the essence of his view does not depend on them.

Barker's claim is that if speakers don't agree over the relevant contextual standards, the result is a "faultless disagreement", i.e. a disagreement where neither speaker is at fault. His argument is that since gradable adjectives are by nature indeterminate, nothing settles which contextual standards ought to prevail. Hence, each participant to the conversation may be equally correct while still disagreeing with each other. The aim of such disagreements then becomes to coordinate with others on how to understand the context, or to

influence others regarding how they should understand it.

Here is Barker's description of his position (note that what Kennedy calls a *standard* Barker calls a *cutoff point*):

> Here is how it works: at any given moment in a discourse, the discourse participants are prepared to entertain a (constrained) range of possible cutoff points for the applicability of a vague predicate. For instance, we may have some idea of how tall a person needs to be to count as tall, without having a fully precise idea. Then accepting an assertion of 'John is tall' constrains the set of viable cutoffs, since it commits a discourse participant to agreeing that anyone who is at least as tall as John must also count as tall. [...] The kind of faultless disagreement under consideration here occurs when discourse participants agree (in all relevant respects) on facts about the world, but maintain incompatible assumptions about the range of viable cutoffs for some vague predicate. (Barker, 2013, 242).

Furthermore, Barker holds that a faultless disagreement over gradable adjective attributions results from two factors. The first is the irrelevance of non-linguistic facts in solving the issue, and the second is the epistemically symmetrical situation of the discourse participants; none of them have better access to what the values of the contextual parameters are.

Now, the important element in Barker's account is the indeterminacy or indeterminability of where the standard is set. He takes it to be the essence of vagueness that one cannot know the standard (whether or not there is a fact about what the standard actually is), and hence there is bound to be disagreements over gradable properties where the speakers are epistemically faultless.

Without taking a stance on whether there is a determinate standard with gradable adjectives, let us call *indeterminacy* the feature that the participants to the conversation may not be able to know where the standard is set. As we will see, perspective-dependent views where the perspective is that of just one person need not be committed to indeterminacy since it may be the person's perspective that determines the standard. (Of course it's possible to accept indeterminacy since one's perspective might nevertheless not fully determine the standard.) But in a non-perspectival view like Barker's indeterminacy can be expected in usual conversations (except when the speakers deliberately stipulate a standard).

3.4.2 Evaluating Barker's Account

Let us suppose that predicates of taste do not have any special perspective dependence so that their semantics is exactly as Kennedy and McNally's semantics for gradable adjectives. In other words, the context determines a comparison class and a standard, and if the adjective has several dimensions the speaker selects one. Let us now see what Barker's theory would say of Ann and Benyamin's disagreement over horse lasagne, repeated here:

(21) Ann (Eating horse lasagne that's served at the party): The horse lasagne is delicious!
Benyamin: It's disgusting.

Let's suppose that the conversational context has focused on the foods served at the party so the comparison class includes only those dishes. Based on the comparison class the context is supposed to set a standard and to order the dishes according to their deliciousness. But in trying to imagine how the ordering happens we encounter the main problem of Barker's view: the idea of something being delicious independent of anyone's responses to it just makes no sense, as was argued in the previous chapter. There simply is no perspective-independent property of deliciousness which could determine the ordering. So whose perspective then determines it?

Here is one way Barker might address the question. Deliciousness is a property like greenness in that it depends on our responses. But that doesn't mean greenness is dependent on any particular perspective. Rather, which things are green depends on the average colour vision in the linguistic community (more or less), and likewise, what determines the ordering in the case of deliciousness is the average response to those foods. Hence, what settles whether the lasagne is delicious is the usage of *delicious* in the community, and Ann and Ben are merely trying to use the word according to the prevalent norms. In making her utterance Ann is trying to approximate the correct usage. Furthermore, supposing that some amount of contextual negotiation is allowed, she may also be trying to influence what is an acceptable standard in the conversation (even if it wouldn't be acceptable by the standards of the larger community). That is what Lewis (1983) called *accommodation.*

Let us suppose that that is Barker's view on what Ann is doing when she judges the horse lasagne to be delicious. Now, Benyamin's response can be interpreted in two ways in Barker's account. First, he might think that Ann

has gotten the norms of the use of *delicious* wrong so that the community would not count the lasagne as delicious. Another option, more centred on the particular context, is that Ben is refusing to accept Ann's attempt to influence the context. Ben's utterance could be seen an example of accommodation: he refuses to accept Ann's attempt to make horse lasagne count as delicious in the context, and instead he takes a stance for it to count as disgusting.

Is that a plausible description of what the disagreement is about? There are good reasons to think not. Since Barker would take the dispute to be over the correct usage of *delicious* (and *disgusting*), Ann and Ben could advance their inquiry by asking the opinions of others in the party. Suppose they do that, and the consensus is that the horse lasagne does count as delicious. Now, what can explain that Ben can always refuse to accept the consensus and state "I still think it's disgusting"? He might be self-confident enough to think that he has better access to the norms that govern the use of *delicious*, but that is hardly likely. According to the theory Ben's refusal to accept the consensus is entirely irrational since the community's consensus is all there is to determining the extension of vague terms.

Moreover, if we compare the above dispute to say, a quarrel over whether some particular wallpaper is green or blue, we see that the reasons given for the judgments are not quite of the same kind. For example, it is perfectly reasonable to ask the opinion of others in the case of the wallpaper, and if one were to find out that the majority of speakers took the wallpaper to be green, that would constitute a decisive reason to adopt that belief and to adjust one's use of *green* and *blue*. However, the same considerations do not apply with judgments of taste. Even if the whole community disagrees with one's judgment about the deliciousness of something, there is no feeling that the speaker is making a *linguistic* mistake. What we rather conclude is that he is physiologically different; he just doesn't experience the taste of the object as others do.

I think the above considerations suffice to show that Barker's account fails to appreciate the difference between disagreements generated merely by vagueness and disagreements of taste: the latter are usually not only over language or over contextual sharpening of an expression. I say *usually* since I think that some uses of predicates of taste do take into account the community in general. I give examples in chapter 5: *The Grounds of Judgments of Taste*. However, there I will argue that even in those cases the question is not merely over how the word is correctly used, but over the more substantive matter of how things are from the perspective of the community.

We have seen considerations against Barker's account as a sufficient explanation for what goes on in disagreements of taste. But we should also ask whether it can accommodate the Intuition of Many Relevant Perspectives, i.e. that judgments of taste display some kind of perspective dependence, and the Intuition of No Fault, i.e. that people are faultless because their judgments are made on the basis of their own taste. Barker's motivation for his view is to explain how "faultless disagreement" is possible, and he emphasises the existence of faultlessness that is due to vagueness. However, the faultlessness that people advocate for judgments of taste is taken to have a different source: the fact that people's tastes vary, and that judgments of taste are made on the basis of one's personal taste. So his view is useful in accounting for a certain form of faultless disagreements, those which are about the standards in the context, but the view cannot accommodate the Intuition of No Fault in its specific sense of "faultlessness".

Therefore, if one adopts Barker's theory one has to explain away the Intuition of Many Relevant Perspectives, and the Intuition of No Fault. What are the consequences of rejecting these two intuitions? Most importantly, the truth of judgments of taste will be independent of the tastes of the speakers in the context. Hence, if they do make a judgment of taste based on their own taste they run a risk of being mistaken. And given the widespread difference in tastes, the risk is very real indeed. Barker is thus denying the infallibility of direct experience as a method for judging matters of taste. The problem is that people *do* make judgments of taste based on their own direct experiences rather than on the basis of their assessments of how the community in general judges.

One could suggest that that is because of a general but mistaken assumption about people's similarity to others. In other words, we typically think that our taste is representative of everyone's tastes and hence use it as a method to make universal judgments. I think there is a lot of truth to that claim. However, what is more worrying than people's reliance on a bad method is the consequences of the method: Barker's theory predicts that very often people's judgments of taste are false, even if they are epistemically faultless as a consequence of vagueness. After all, if truth depends on the linguistic community, then supposedly it is the majority's judgment that determines whether e.g. a Big Mac falls within the extension of *tasty*. It doesn't matter if you're a master chef, if your judgment differs from that of the majority you are saying something false.

To conclude, the problems of Barker's theory are quite serious. First, it severs the link between personal experience about matters of taste and truth of judgments of taste which is why perspective-dependent theories are so appealing

in the first place. That need not be a problem if perspective-dependent accounts simply cannot be made to work; that is the topic of the coming chapters. Second, because truth about taste depends on the speaker only to the extent that they too belong to the linguistic community, the speakers' judgments of taste may easily be false. There is something quite implausible about the idea that judgments of "personal" taste are not actually personal at all: their truth is as little dependent on the way the speaker is as the truth of "Trees are green" is. For the moment we will set aside the view but we return to discuss perspective-independent accounts in Ch. 13: *An Error Theory for Discourses About Taste* once the problems of contextualist and relativist accounts have become clear.

3.5   Summary of Chapter 3

The aim of this chapter was to show the semantic features that predicates of personal taste have in virtue of being gradable adjectives. I've presented the influential theory by Kennedy and McNally which treat adjectives as functions from objects to points on a scale.

We've concluded that predicates of taste are relative gradable adjectives which means that they are context-sensitive in two ways: the context determines the comparison class and the standard. What their theory leaves open is how exactly the context does that; these metasemantic questions will be addressed later. Additionally, in the case of multidimensional adjectives the speakers selects a dimension.

The second part of the chapter considered Barker's theory which holds that the semantics of predicates of taste are just like the semantics of other gradable adjectives in that there is no extra perspective dependence. Barker argues that the existence of disagreements of taste where neither speaker is at fault is due to the indeterminacy of where the standard is set. I've argued that the view is problematic in many ways.

First, whereas it seems somewhat plausible to take a disagreement over greenness to be over the standard for *green* in the context, what counts as green is not dependent only on the speakers' perceptions. The extension of *green* depends on how the word is used in the linguistic community, and since no one has access to such facts the speakers are indeed epistemically faultless. In contrast, judgments of taste are made on the grounds of one's experiences, and they don't aim at stating what is e.g. delicious according to the community. Instead, one can felicitously make judgments of taste while disagreeing with

everyone. For the moment we will thus set aside views like Barker's which posit no perspective dependence, but they will be reconsidered in part IV.

4 Perspective Dependence and Subjective Attitude Verbs

By far we have proceeded with an intuitive understanding of which expressions are predicates of personal taste. In this chapter we will consider a suggested criterion for identifying predicates of personal taste. Several linguists have argued that verbs *find, consider* and other so-called "subjective attitude verbs" have a special relation to perspective-dependent predicates (Mitchell (1986), Lasersohn (2009), Sæbø (2009) and Kennedy (2013)).

Sæbø (2009) argues that the attitude sense of *find* can only embed semantically perspective-dependent predicates ("subjective" predicates in his terminology) which he takes to include predicates of personal taste. If Sæbø's argument is correct, it is important for two reasons. First, it would offer evidence from linguistics that predicates of personal taste are indeed semantically perspective-dependent. Second, as argued by Kennedy (2013), one could use the felicity judgments of compatibility with *find* as a test for whether a predicate is lexically perspective-dependent.

The aim of this chapter is to evaluate Sæbø's and Kennedy's claims about the relation of *find* to subjectivity. I will show that *find* can embed predicates that aren't perspective-dependent. The positive part of the chapter suggests that (i) *find* can only embed gradable expressions, and (ii) *find* judgments require experience as grounds. As will be show in the next chapter, Ch. 5: *The Grounds of Judgments of Taste,* judgments of taste normally require experience as grounds too which explains why there seems to be a special match between *find* and predicates of taste.

4.1 Subjective Attitude Verbs

Sæbø (2009) discusses a group of verbs which include *find* and *consider* in English, *finden* in German, *trouver* in French, and *tycker* in Swedish. Each of these verbs is ambiguous, for example *find* has the discovery sense as in "I found my keys", and the psychological attitude sense as in "I found the movie boring". Sæbø's argument only concerns the senses which express attitudes. Sæbø calls the attitude senses of these verbs "subjective attitude verbs" because he thinks the verbs in question can only embed "subjective" predicates. His main example of subjective predicates are predicates of personal taste.

Let us first look at the data about the attitude verb *find* and its French and

Swedish counterparts *trouver* and *tycker*.[8]

(22) #I find her pregnant.

(23) #I find that she is pregnant.

(24) I find her beautiful.

(25) I find that she is beautiful.

Someone's possible pregnancy is a common topic in the web and it is perfectly felicitous to *think* or *believe* that someone is pregnant. However, speakers do not "find" that someone is pregnant. On the contrary, finding someone beautiful is a very common attitude to have. Below we have translations of the sentences in French and Swedish (note that *tycker* differs from *find* and *trouver* by only taking a propositional complement.)

(26) #Je trouve qu'elle est enceinte.

(27) Je trouve qu'elle est belle.

(28) #Jag tycker att hon är gravid.

(29) Jag tycker att hon är vacker.

The pattern is the same as in English: the attitudes *trouver* and *tycker* are not held towards possible pregnancies, unlike *penser* and *tror* (think / believe), but the former two are widely used with *belle* and *vacker* (beautiful).

The results are uniform between the three verbs we have considered and show a remarkable contrast between our example sentences. We can immediately rule out that the differences are due to syntax since we have considered sentences with identical syntactic forms such as (22) and (24). Hence we are safe to assume that the difference lies in semantics.

Sæbø and Lasersohn both count *consider* among subjective attitude verbs, and indeed we get the same contrast as above with *beautiful* and *pregnant*. However, *consider* does not otherwise pattern with *find*. Lasersohn is aware that *consider* combines less well with predicates of taste but he nevertheless thinks that some kind of perspective dependence is involved:

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[8]The felicity / infelicity judgments are based on the number of matches in Google; a felicitous sentence in English normally gets from thousands to millions of matches depending on the topic and an infelicitous one hardly any.

Actually, *consider* combines with a much wider class of clauses than just those which express personal taste; but they all, it seems to me, involve some sort of evaluative judgment or decision on the part of anyone assessing them for truth. (Lasersohn, 2009, 365)

Here are some examples of the contrasts with *find* and *consider* from Kennedy (2013, 266)):

(30) Homer considers/??finds himself gay.

(31) Homer considers/??finds trippa alla romana vegetarian.

One should also be careful not to make too broad conclusions regarding the non-English verbs we've looked at. As Sæbø acknowledges, there are differences between *find* and its apparent cross-linguistic counterparts:

It is in fact difficult to identify an attitude verb as unequivocally subjective and equivalent to a verb in some other, not too closely related language. The Swedish *tycka* and the Norwegian *synes* are good candidates, but once they are compared to the French *trouver* or the German *finden*, they turn out to have not only a somewhat narrower but also a slightly wider distribution, corresponding to *croire* or *glauben* when the relevant predicate in the complement clause is a verb of perception and the two subjects corefer (as, for example, in *we thought we heard a nightingale*). (Sæbø, 2009, 350-351).

For a fuller treatment of the topic it would be important to make cross-linguistic comparisons. However, given the narrow scope of our inquiry we will henceforth only consider the data with *find*. That is the main example used by Sæbø, and if it looks like even *find* doesn't actually require lexically subjective predicates, it is doubtful that that would be the case with the other subjective attitude verbs.

4.2 *Find* and Subjectivity

Sæbø argues that *find* selects for "subjective" predicates. He takes subjectivity to be lexically encoded and the examples of subjective predicates he gives are predicates of taste, dimensional adjectives and deontic flavours of modals. Below is his main claim:

Generalisation

A subjective attitude verb is only felicitous with a complement clause whose character, intension or extension is a nonconstant function from judges. (Sæbø, 2009, 333)

The problem in evaluating Sæbø's proposal is that he doesn't offer criteria for what makes a predicate subjective, i.e. for when the character, intension or extension of a complement clause is a nonconstant function from judges (or perspectives). Nevertheless, we may rely on intuition as he does. Kennedy (2013) builds his account of the subjectivity of expressions partly on Sæbø's view, and he suggests a criterion for subjectivity. He holds that evaluative expressions are subjective, and that one can recognise an evaluative expression because its presence suffices for a faultless disagreement (Kennedy, 2013, 271). However, that criterion is not very useful either since it's doubtful that we have clear intuitions on which topics are subject to faultless disagreements.

Let us look at some examples. The following predicates have nothing subjective about them, at least intuitively:

(32) I find hardbacks too heavy to carry around.

(33) I find television very educating.[9]

(34) I find your analysis flawed.

(35) I find this piece of cake heavy/light/dense. (Kennedy, 2013, 265)

The last example is worth discussing in more detail. Kennedy (2013, 271) argues that words like *heavy, light* and *dense* are ambiguous between a "dimensional / objective" sense (heavy and light in weight, dense in density) and an "qualitative / subjective" sense: "how it sits in the stomach or feels on the tongue" (Kennedy, 2013, 265). Kennedy claims that in examples like (35) *find* forces a reading of *heavy / light / dense* which corresponds to a subjective, evaluative sense:

The examples in (35) [12b], however, have only the latter [evaluative] reading: these sentences are ways of reporting a subjective experience of the cake, made in virtue of tasting it, but they are not good ways of describing the cake's physical properties, made in virtue of, for example, weighing it on a scale. (Kennedy, 2013, 265)

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[9]Apparently this was said by Groucho Marx. The citation continues: "Every time somebody turns on the set, I go into the other room and read a book." http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/850.html

If Kennedy is right, then predicates which intuitively are not subjective might appear so just because they have two senses of which one is indeed not subjective. Thus we have a counterexample to Sæbø's generalisation that *find* requires subjectivity only if we have a case where *find* is acceptable with a dimensional / objective reading of such ambiguous predicates. And indeed, there are such cases. We can think of perfectly felicitous examples of the attitude sense of *find* with the dimensional / objective sense of the above adjectives and other similar ones. For example, suppose Anna and Ben are on the beach:

(36) (a) Anna: Didn't you pack the inflatable mattress?
      (b) Ben: I found it too heavy.

Suppose that a person is selecting models for a catwalk show and after checking the measurements and photos of the candidates she says of a model:

(37) I find her short.

Also, consider the following example:

(38) I found the Toshiba laptop heavier than the Mac. But we weighed them and in fact they are equally heavy.

Kennedy would have to say that the two sentences contain a difference sense of *heavy*: the first sentence attributes a subjective, evaluative sense of heaviness and the second one a dimensional, objective sense. That's just doesn't seem plausible.

Finally, Sæbø gives examples where *find* embeds two predicates with a familiar pattern of felicity:

(39) [24] (a) You must be handsome and below 45.
      (b) #She finds him handsome and below 45.
      (c) She finds him handsome and pleasant to be with. (Sæbø, 2009, 338)

Sæbø claims that (b) is infelicitous because "a judge-sensitive predicate can be coordinated with another predicate, but if the clause is embedded under a subjective attitude, the other predicate must be judge-sensitive too." Here is a counterexample:

(40) She finds him good-looking but young.

Again, Kennedy would have to say that *young* gets a subjective, evaluative sense here. However, the sentence is perfectly felicitous even if the person has learnt

the age say, from a passport. Thus we have examples of felicitous sentences where *find* embeds the "objective" readings of *heavy, short* and *young*. Based on the felicity reports we can conclude that contrary to the accounts of Sæbø and Kennedy, there is no match between intuitive subjectivity and felicity with *find*.

4.3   The Role of Experience

Now, I think that Kennedy is right in holding that *find* sentences have a relation to experience. But even if experience itself is subjective in a very obvious way, the properties that we experience need not be subjective.We can have experiences of objective, dimensional qualities like weight, height and density. For example, lifting a piece of cake up is a way to experience its weight, and in such a context it is perfectly fine to say "I find the piece of cake heavy".

In other words, one cannot argue that if a property can be experienced then that property is subjective. What seems to be going on is that Kennedy takes the experience implied by a *find* judgment to come from the predicate which *find* embeds. The hypothesis is natural given that there is some restriction on the predicates that *find* can embed. But why not rather think that the experience is implied by *find* itself and the explanation for the restriction comes from elsewhere? In this section we will look for another explanation for the patterns of felicity and infelicity.

Let us first consider Stephenson's (2007b) account. She argues that *S finds p* is true iff S believes *p* on the grounds of having direct experience of the relevant object or event. As was mentioned, experience clearly has a role to play in the right account. However, Stephenson's view cannot be the whole story. First, it faces difficulties in explaining certain data about the uses of *find*. Below is a dialogue which shows how *find* is used to retreat to a weaker stance in a disagreement, but *believe / think* isn't:

(41) (a) Alice: This fondue is delicious.
     (b) Björn: I don't think so. There's too much kirsch in it.
     (c) Alice: Well, I find it delicious.
     (c*) Alice: Well, I think it's delicious.

Alice's *I find it delicious* sounds weaker than her judgment (a), and it is something she can say to avoid a disagreement. However, (c*) does not avoid disagreement; instead it sounds like she is reaffirming (a) and sticking to her guns.

We are imagining a case where Alice has tried the fondue, and therefore she has direct experience of it. Hence, (c) and (c*) have the same grounds and they should have the same truth-conditions. Nevertheless we can see a clear difference between the effects of them which sheds doubt on the claim that their truth-conditions are the same.

A second and more serious problem for Stephenson's view is that it doesn't predict or explain what is infelicitous about many judgments, for example the following:

(42) #I find myself pregnant.

(43) #Homer finds himself gay. (Sæbø, 2009)

(44) #She finds the house two-storied.

(45) #I find the room square / decorated in Art Deco style.

One can obviously have direct experience of being pregnant or gay, and via perceptual experience we can learn that a room is square and a house two-storied. Moreover, trying to refine the view to rule out perceptual experience won't do. There is no relevant difference with respect to the experiences of perceiving that a room is square or decorated in Art Deco style, or perceiving that it's beautiful or messy, but the latter are felicitous unlike the former.

4.3.1 *Find* Requires Experience as Grounds

I think focusing on *find* in relation to predicates of taste has mislead theorists who have failed to see that there are other verbs which share similarities with *find*: *see, hear, feel* and *perceive,* as well as *looks, seems* and *appears.* Common to all these verbs is that they (or more specifically, the relevant senses of them) require that the agent of the judgment must have direct experience of the object or event, via the relevant sensory modality. For example, one cannot say "Peter looked tired" without having seen Peter; if testimony is involved, the appropriate thing to say is something like "Apparently Peter looked tired", or "Lucy said that Peter looked tired". Let us call these verbs *verbs of perceptual experience.*

It's important to note that verbs of perceptual experience can be used metaphorically. For example *see* is also used to mean roughly the same as *understand* (e.g. "He saw then that the marriage was over") and *it looks / seems / appears* can be used to indicate the likelihood of something without any relevant visual experience (e.g. "It looks like our flight will be canceled" is perfectly fine after

hearing from the radio that a snow storm has closed down airports). So in exploring the similarities between *find* and the other verbs we will focus on the non-metaphorical uses.

What I want to argue for is that *find* is similar to verbs of perception in that the agent's experience of the relevant object or event is necessary for a felicitous use of *find*. However, whereas some of the perceptual verbs attribute very specific perceptual experience, *find* allows for a much broader range of experiences ranging from perceptions of flavour to experiences of various properties ("I find this luggage heavy", "I find the choreography difficult").

The first suggestion is thus that in order to felicitously judge that *S finds x F* requires that *S* has experience-based evidence for *x*'s being *F* which *S* takes to support *x*'s being *F*. It's important to emphasise that a *find* judgment doesn't merely require that there is (possibly defeasible) evidence, but that the speaker takes the evidence to support the predication. Otherwise it should be ok to say things like "I don't find the curry delicious although I know it is". In that sense there is a difference between a *find* judgment and for example a *looks* judgment, since although a speaker can take the looks of something to be evidence, a *looks* judgment may also merely attribute a look. For example, it's ok to say "It looks like they're not home since the curtains are drawn but I know they're home".

Thus we can think of a *find* judgment as akin to a judgment about how things seem: the speaker is taking a stance in behalf of the truth of some proposition without fully believing it, and the stance is based on evidence from experience. An important consequence of the account is that to find *x F* is weaker than to believe that *x* is *F,* just like to believe that *x* seems *F* is weaker than to believe that *x* is *F*. This explains the difference observed between the uses of *find* and *think* in example (41), which Stephenson's theory cannot account for. Furthermore, in section 4.4 on page 62 below I will argue that *find* can only embed gradable expressions, and there we will discuss the link between gradability and experience.

4.3.2 Experience As a Semantic Presupposition?

I've argued that for judgments of the form *S finds x F* to be felicitous, *S* must have experience-based evidence for *x*'s being *F*. But there is also evidence for a stronger claim that a *find* judgment semantically presupposes that the agent has experience. Below I will offer considerations in favour of the claim but I won't try to establish it here. However, the data that supports the stronger

thesis also supports our weaker thesis about the necessity of experience.

A common account of semantic presupposition holds that a sentence S semantically presupposes p iff S gets no truth-value in the possible worlds in which p is not the case (see e.g. Heim and Kratzer (1998)). There are several tests that are standardly used to identify a semantic presupposition which I will use to argue that *find* semantically presupposes that the subject has experience of the relevant object or event.

The first test relies on presupposition projection. If an assertion of a sentence presupposes the truth of a proposition, the presupposition is preserved also when the sentence is not asserted but embedded in a question, negation, conditional and so on. There is thus a contrast between what the sentence asserts and what it presupposes. Here is an example:

(46) Mary saw your sister yesterday.

(47) Mary didn't see your sister yesterday.

(46) presupposes that the addressee has a sister since even when (46) is negated the presupposition is preserved; if *your sister* fails to refer neither sentence is truth-evaluable. In contrast, the asserted content of (46), i.e. that Mary saw the addressee's sister the day before the utterance context, is not preserved under negation.

When testing for presupposition projection under negation, we notice that *find* is subject to Neg-raising which is common to some attitude verbs. For example,

(48) Olof thinks she will be late.

(49) Olof doesn't think she will be late.

The natural reading of (49) is that Olof thinks that she will not be late, not *It's not the case that Olof thinks she will be late* (which can be true if Olof has no thoughts regarding her possible lateness). We observe the same phenomenon with *find*:

(50) I find the luggage heavy.

(51) I don't find the luggage heavy.

(51) is the natural negation of (50), and despite of its appearance it means that the speaker finds the luggage not heavy. Here it seems that both sentences

presuppose that the subject has experience of the luggage's weight, for example that she has lifted it up. However, given the presence of Neg-raising the data is inconclusive and we do better to focus on other forms of embedding.

Here are some examples of questions with *find*, where the presupposition of the subject's experience of the relevant object or event is preserved under embedding:

(52) John finds the luggage heavy.

(53) Does John find the luggage heavy?

(54) Mary found the trip long.

(55) Did Mary find the trip long?

Another test we can use to uncover presuppositions is from von Fintel (2004) (who says it's a variation of a test by Shanon (1976)). If p is presupposed by a sentence, then one can felicitously say "Hey, wait a minute. I had no idea that p." Here is an example (von Fintel, 2004, 317):

(56) (a) The mathematician who proved Goldbach's Conjecture is a woman.
      (b) Hey, wait a minute. I had no idea that someone proved Goldbach's Conjecture.
      (b*) #Hey, wait a minute. I had no idea that that was a woman.

Again, *find* easily passes the test:

(57) (a) I found Romania extremely beautiful.
      (b) Hey, wait a minute. I had no idea you've been to Romania.

(58) (a) Mary found your curry delicious.
      (b) Hey, wait a minute. I had no idea that Mary ate the curry too.

Finally, the oddity of some cases from the literature can be explained as resulting from the absence of direct experience. Here are some examples from Kennedy (2013) (who offers the examples to support Sæbø's view):

(59) ?? Anna finds the cat food tasty (because the cat ate it all up).

(60) ?? I'm sorry, sir, but the airline finds this bag heavy. You will have to pay an extra baggage fee.

The *because* of the first example states that the grounds for Anna's finding the cat food tasty is the cat's behaviour. Hence there is a mismatch between the presupposition about direct experience required by *find* and what the subclause states: the *find* sentence requires that *Anna* has direct experience of the food, not the cat. We may compare the sentence to "Anna finds the cat food tasty because she tasted it" which is fine. In the second sentence the oddity is due to the airline not being the kind of subject that can have direct experiences.

We've spoken generally about experience but ideally we would want to know what counts as the relevant kind of experience. After all, when we compared *find* to other verbs of perceptual experience we saw that many of them require very specific kind of experience, e.g. *looks* requires seeing, *sounds* hearing and so on. *Find* is much broader in its uses and doesn't require an experience acquired via any specific sensory modality. Most things can be experienced one way or another, and it seems that there are degrees of acceptability of *find* judgments that correlate with whether the presence of the relevant property can be experienced. For example "I find Anna rich" isn't clearly infelicitous, but it seems like it would be better to say "I consider Anna rich". I would thus predict that the more difficult a property is to experience, the more infelicitous a *find* judgment about the property is.

4.4 Hypothesis: *Find* Requires Gradability

A second constraint that I will argue for is that *find* can only embed gradable adjectives (and possibly other gradable constructions, although I won't discuss them here; *prima facie* at least gradable adverbs are fine, as in "I find that he sang poorly"). Let us begin by looking at the requirement that the embedded clause attributes a gradable property. Let me repeat some of the example sentences with *find*:

(61) #I find her pregnant.

(62) I find her beautiful.

(63) #Homer finds himself gay.

(64) #She finds the house two-storied.

(65) #I find the room square / decorated in Art Deco style.

(66) I find what he did wrong / right / inexcusable / evil / bad.

(67) Peter finds proving the theorem difficult / hard / easy / impossible / possible.

Pregnant, gay, two-storied, square, decorated in Art Deco style are all non-gradable whereas the other adjectives are gradable. The requirement that *find* embeds a gradable property predicts most of the infelicities whereas the rest was explained by the experience requirement.

An interesting example in favour of our hypothesis is offered by adjectives of nationality like *Swedish* which are ambiguous between the non-gradable reading (either one has or doesn't have a Swedish nationality) and the gradable reading of having characteristics typical to a Swede. Using *find* forces the latter reading:

(68) I find her Swedish.

In other words, (68) can only mean that the speaker finds the referent to have some characteristics typical to a Swede, not that her nationality is Swedish.

Now, what could explain the requirement that the embedded predicate is gradable? Sæbø's general claim was that *find* embeds subjective predicates. However, we've seen counterexamples to his view and we've suggested another way to account for the link between *find* and subjectivity: the requirement of personal experience which is paradigmatically subjective. But there doesn't seem to be any obvious link between the gradedness of properties and the possibility to experience them. In the following section we consider one explanation which might be a part of the story.

Before that, let us consider some objections and possible counterexamples to the view I've given. First, why is it not ok to look at an empty glass and say "I find the glass empty", even though the speaker has direct experience and *empty* is gradable?[10] There's a perfectly natural Gricean explanation. A *find* judgment is weaker than a judgment that attributes the property (e.g. "The glass is empty"). But when one sees an empty glass one knows the glass to be empty. To say that one merely *finds* it empty would be odd from the point of view of communication, and thereby it would probably trigger the expectation that some implicature is intended.

Another problem is posed by the acceptability of some moral predicates with *find*. The problem is that one need not have experience of some event or action in order to make a *find* judgment that attributes a moral predicate.[11]

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[10]Thanks for an anonymous referee for asking the question.
[11]Thanks to an anonymous referee for pointing out the problem.

For example, it's ok to say "I find suicide wrong". However, what is important to notice is that many other judgments are odd, for example the following:

(69) ??I find vegetarianism good / right / bad / wrong.

(70) ??I find beating children wrong / right / bad.

Now, judgments of the form "I find that [moral judgment]" sound better, but *find that* sentences do not have the kind of restrictions as bare *find* judgments have. Sæbø's arguments for the subjectivity of *find* judgments do not extend to *find that* judgments, and likewise I am not arguing that the experience and gradability requirements hold for *find that* judgments either. It looks like most moral judgments are not ok with bare *find* as our theory predicts, and the remaining acceptable ones can be taken to be metaphorical uses where the experience requirement doesn't hold. As mentioned, other verbs of perception have metaphorical uses so we may expect *find* to have them as well.

4.4.1   Subjectivity, Vagueness, and *Find*

Finally, let us consider one possible explanation for why *find* judgments only allow embedding gradable predicates. It's possible that *find* judgments are mainly used for the contextual negotiation of the threshold of graded properties. In the previous chapter we saw that gradable adjectives, especially relative gradable adjectives which display context sensitivity, have an element of "subjectivity" that is due to their vagueness. As we saw, Barker (2013) emphasises that the contents of context-sensitive gradable adjectives are vague and indeterminate in a context, and this gives rise to faultless disagreements where we feel like the speakers are disagreeing but neither of them need to be mistaken.

I've argued that to find x F is weaker than to believe x to be F, and the judgment requires experience as grounds. What links the requirement of experience and gradability is that since gradable adjectives typically leave room for many suitable standards or cutoff points in the context, a *find* judgment is a way to take a stance on where to set the threshold. The absence of a clear cutoff point in the relevant context creates the need for a judgment that is weaker than a straight x *is* F judgment.

Hence, a first-person *find* judgment can play several conversational roles. First, one might just want to express one's experience of the relevant object, either because one is unsure of the standards of the context, or because one knows that the other participants to the conversation do not agree with the

speaker about where to set the standard. For example, if a speaker knows that her taste is different from the participants to the conversation, she can avoid a conflict by saying "I find x delicious".

Second, one might want to influence the standards of the context without taking a strong stance on them. An all-out judgment, e.g. "John is rich" is a much more direct attempt at fixing the standards, but such assertions can lead to disagreements. Instead, *find* judgments cannot be directly disagreed with given that they are grounded in the speaker's experience to which no one else has access. One can influence the contextual standards by accommodation, i.e. by making a judgment that aims at setting the standard. A judgment with *find* is a subtle way to take a stance on where the standard ought to be.

Now, even if the uses mentioned above are the main uses of *find* judgments, what we need to understand is why *find* cannot embed non-gradable adjectives. I don't have a theory about it but we can speculate. First, graded properties might generally bear a closer relation to experience than non-graded properties. However, some gradable adjectives like *rich* are somewhat infelicitous with *find*, and that would be explained by the fact that richness cannot necessarily be experienced.

Nevertheless, we've seen that many non-graded properties can be experienced too, for example whether a room is square, in Art Deco style or if you're gay or pregnant. However, if gradable adjectives actually do bear a closer relation to experience, as a matter of use *find* could have become specialised so that it is now only used with gradable adjectives. When one wants to hedge a judgment about a non-gradable property, one has to use verbs like *believe* or *think* instead, as in "I think I'm gay / pregnant". In other words, there need be no philosophically interesting or necessary link between experience and finding something to be some way, but as a matter of use the different verbs could have come to be used with different types of adjectives.

4.5   Summary of Chapter 4

To conclude, I've offered plenty of counterexamples to show that *find* doesn't only embed predicates that are intuitively perspective-dependent. Hence the data doesn't support Sæbø's claim that *find* binds a covert experiencer argument, and we can reject the claim that the data from *find* could be used to identify predicates of personal taste, or "subjective" predicates more generally.

I suggested an alternative account which holds that a *find* judgment pre-

supposes experience of the relevant object and the embedded predicate must be gradable. The view explains the data extremely well while still incorporating Sæbø's insight that subjectivity plays some role as well as Stephenson's emphasis on direct experience. As we will see in the next chapter, judgments of personal taste also require experience as grounds. The fact that *find* presupposes experience and *find*'s link to gradability explains why many have been tempted to link *find* specifically with predicates of taste. Given that not all gradable properties can be experienced but all taste properties are both gradable and linked to experience explains why one might think there is a special match.

5 The Grounds of Judgments of Taste

In chapter 1.3.2 we introduced the idea that judgments of taste are made on the basis of one's sensory experiences of the relevant object or event, and we called these *grounding experiential states*. In this chapter we will look more closely at the role played by these states. The aim is to get an understanding of what is required to be in a position to make a judgment of taste. Hence we are remaining neutral on what their content may be and simply focus on data about pragmatics. Mostly our considerations are about judgments of felicity and relevance.

I will argue that being in a grounding experiential state is normally necessary but often not sufficient for making a judgment of taste. What is additionally required is knowledge of the grounding experiential states of other relevant experiencers. However, there are also contexts where the speakers are excluded from being relevant experiencers. What determines the relevant experiencers is the context, especially the topic and aims of the conversation. Finally we will consider the role of "ideal experiencers" in discussions about taste.

5.1 Grounding Experiential States

In most cases a judgment of taste requires that the speaker makes the judgment at least in part on the basis of their own reactions to the object in question: I will call these the *normal cases*. As we will see there are exceptions which will be discussed later, but we'll begin with some generalisations about the normal cases.

Grounding experiential states can be expressed by judgments that make explicit whose experience is in question. For example, the judgment *This movie is boring* is grounded in the state expressible by *This movie bores me*. If a person makes a certain judgment of taste, one can infer –albeit defeasibly– that she also makes a judgment about her grounding experiential state. Here are some examples; if the speaker judges the former, then one can normally infer that she also judges the latter:

> *x is fun -> I am enjoying myself when doing x.*
> *x is boring -> x bores me.*
> *x is funny -> x amuses me.*
> *x is disgusting -> x disgusts me.*

x is attractive -> I am attracted to x.
x is tasty -> x tastes good to me.

Evidence for the inferential relations and hence the requirement of having been
in the experiential state is also provided by judgments of felicity and infelicity.
Pearson (2013) gives the following examples that show that a judgment of an
experiential state which violates the above inference patterns sounds infelicitous:

(71) [(19)] The cake that Mary and I ate was tasty. #But I didn't like it.
      (Pearson, 2013, 111)

That contrasts with the following example:

(72) [(22)] The cake that Mary and I ate was tasty. But she didn't like it.
      (Pearson, 2013, 112)

The latter example shows that a judgment of taste can exclude the experiential
state of another salient experiencer whereas only very special contexts allow the
exclusion of the speaker's experiential state.

Some predicates of taste have a close *conceptual* connection to an expression
which describes an experiential state, as is shown by the examples (e.g. *boring*
and *being bored*). However, it is more important to note the differences between
these expressions and especially the *prima facie* linguistic form of the sentences
in which they appear: a judgment about an experiential state predicates a state
to a person whereas a judgment of taste predicates a property to an object or
event. (I say a *prima facie* form since the surface grammar of a sentence may
give a misleading picture of its actual structure.)

Let us call *taste qualities* the qualities or dispositions of objects that people
experience when they are in an experiential state. As argued in Ch. 2: *The
Evaluative Dimension of Judgments of Taste* we are supposing that taste qualit-
ies are response-dependent so that an object is for example delicious only given
an experiencer. The presupposition is shared by all theorists of taste but it
is important not to overstate its consequences. Even if being in a grounding
experiential state is a necessary condition for a judgment of taste it may not
always be sufficient. For example, MacFarlane (2014) moves from having an
experience of tastiness to being in a position to make a judgment of tastiness:

> **TP.** If you know first-hand how something tastes, call it "tasty"
> just in case its flavour is pleasing to you, and "not tasty" just in case

its flavour is not pleasing to you. MacFarlane (2014, 4).[12]

MacFarlane is hence supposing that experience of an object's taste allows one to call the object *tasty.* We have emphasised that such knowledge allows one to make a statement of one's own state, e.g. *I find this tasty,* and that the knowledge is normally the minimal required grounds for a judgment of taste. In the next section we will see that a judgment of taste often requires more than that. What should be emphasised is that we do often use judgments of taste and judgments of experiential states interchangeably, and it is more natural and common to say *Petanque is fun* than *Petanque amuses me.* However, the two kinds of judgments are by no means interchangeable in all contexts.

The view that personal experience is necessary for a judgment of taste is widespread. Historically theorists of taste contrasted the exercise of reason and the faculty of taste. Here is an example from Kant:

> If someone reads me his poem or takes me to a play that in the end fails to please my taste, then he can adduce **Batteux** or **Lessing**, or even older and more famous critics of taste, and adduce all the rules they established as proofs that his poem is beautiful [...] I will stop my ears, listen to no reasons and arguments, and would rather believe that those rules of the critics are false [...] than allow that my judgment should be determined by means of *a priori* grounds of proof, since it is supposed to be a judgment of taste and not of the understanding of reason. (Kant, 2000, 165)

Frank Sibley's (1959) most famous claim about aesthetic judgments echoes Kant. Sibley held that aesthetic features depend on the non-aesthetic features of an object. However, it is an essential feature of aesthetic concepts that there are no conditions (neither necessary nor sufficient) describable by non-aesthetic terms that determine whether the object has a certain aesthetic quality. Only the exercise of taste allows one judge the aesthetic features of an object.

We have talked of being in a grounding experiential state as necessary for making a judgment of taste (in the normal cases). However, the state also seems to be necessary for forming beliefs about matters of taste, as pointed out by Ryan Doerfler:

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[12]MacFarlane holds that one has first hand knowledge of the taste of something if one has tasted the object. He adds that some physiological conditions like cold or having just brushed your teeth will not count as cases where you can gain knowledge of a food's taste by tasting.

> Whereas discourse about prosaically factual subject matter appears to allow for an individual to become warranted in believing that p on the basis of testimony that p alone [...] when the conversation turns to comedy, or aesthetics generally, testimony that p appears never to suffice by itself for an individual to be warranted in believing that p. (Doerfler, 2012, 496).

Doerfler further states that it seems impossible to imagine cases where a speaker makes a felicitous assertion about something's being funny without having direct experience of it (Doerfler, 2012). We will see some such cases but indeed they are highly exceptional.

In the next section we will look at more detail the role of grounding experiential states. I present cases which show that:

(i) Being in a grounding experiential state is normally necessary for making a judgment of taste.

(ii) There are cases where being in a grounding experiential state is not necessary for making a judgment of taste, and

(iii) There are plenty of cases where being in a grounding experiential state is not sufficient for making a judgment of taste.

5.2   The Relevant Experiencer

In the normal case a judgment of taste implies the presence of a grounding experiential state and hence a hearer can conclude that the speaker also makes the correlating judgment about the relevant experiential state. For example, from an utterance of *Eels are disgusting* one can infer that the speaker believes *Eels disgust me*. But the inferences do not go the other way round: one cannot infer a judgment of taste from a judgment about a grounding experiential state. Contrast the following judgments:

(73) Alexia: The party was great fun.

(74) Ana: I had a lot of fun at the party.

If Craig asks whether the party was fun, Alexia's and Ana's judgments give very different information. From Ana's judgments they can conclude nothing about the party in general; everyone else might have been bored except Ana. Hence Ana's report about her experiential state doesn't allow one to infer that she would also judge that the party was fun, or that anyone else was having fun.

In contrast, it seems like Alexia's judgment entails that she had fun and second, that many other people were having fun. The latter is shown by the fact that normally the following seems contradictory (unless it's ironic):

(75) The party was great fun but most people were bored.

This suggests that normally not only the speaker but other people as well should be in the grounding experiential state. But there are some contexts, to be discussed below, where (75) is an ok thing to say.

Another example which shows that a judgment of taste is not merely an expression of a experiential state is that judgments of taste work better as reasons for recommendations. Here we can see the contrast:

(76) I had a lot of fun in San Francisco. You should visit it!

(77) San Francisco was a lot of fun. You should visit it!

(78) I find the new visiting scholar really good-looking. Why don't you ask him out?

(79) The new visiting scholar is really good-looking. Why don't you ask him out?

There is something strange and self-centered in making a recommendation on the basis of one's experiential states. In contrast, a judgment of taste works as a recommendation even without explicitly adding a recommendation.

In a normal case the speaker who makes the judgment of taste is in the grounding experiential state. But I mentioned that there are also cases where someone else's grounding experiential state matters instead. Generally, a judgment of taste requires that someone has been in the grounding experiential state; let us call that person the *relevant experiencer*. Some judgments of taste are made merely on the basis of beliefs about the grounding experiential states of a relevant experiencer (or a group of them). Who the relevant experiencer is depends on the features of the context, for example on what the topic and the aim of the conversation is.

Let me give some examples to show both variation in the relevant experiencers and the influences of the context to the choice of the experiencer. Above we saw that the following sounds normally rather contradictory:

(80) The party was great fun but most people were bored.

The impression of contradiction supports the idea that usually it is not only the speaker who should be in the grounding state but some other people as well. This suggests that unless the context indicates otherwise, the relevant experiencers include the speaker but also at least some other people who experienced the object or event in question.

However, the generalisation is defeasible. Suppose that Ana and Craig share their taste regarding what kind of parties are fun: no alcohol, classical music and board games to be enjoyed with a small group of close friends. Ana has invited her best friends who are all enjoying the party, but she has also invited a group of visiting students who are more numerous than Ana and her friends. Now *their* idea of fun is drinking, debauchery and loud dance music and consequently they find Ana's party depressing. In such a context (80) makes perfect sense. Ana is simply talking about what she and Craig take to be fun since they are the relevant experiencers, and she is ignoring the experiences of the visiting students even though they constituted a majority at the party.

Even if there is flexibility regarding who the relevant experiencers are, there is a strong expectation that the speaker is among them. Suppose Ana is talking to a third person and it is mutual knowledge between them that their tastes on parties differ. The person asks how the party went. For Ana to say "The party was fun" leaves the hearer with three salient options regarding the inferences to make: either Ana had fun and the others didn't, the others had fun and Ana didn't, or the party managed to be a compromise between debauchery and a calm evening so that it was fun for everyone. However, since the party wasn't fun for all, Ana has the choice between making the judgment either based on her grounding state or that of the others. Now, it would sound insincere if Ana were to say "The party wasn't fun" given that she thinks it was an instance of a prototypically fun party. A more appropriate thing for her to say would be:

(81) The party was fun although most people didn't think so.

Or, if she wants to take the majority as the relevant experiencers:

(82) Apparently the party wasn't fun although I was having a great time.

(81) makes it clear that she takes herself to be the relevant experiencer. But even if she privileges the experiences of the others as in (82), *apparently* removes the conflict between her experiential state and judging that the party was not fun. It thus seems like the speakers are expected to make judgments of taste

on the grounds on their grounding state and if they are not, they should flag it somehow as in (82) where Ana adds that she was having fun.

We have seen that typically judgments of taste are not merely expressions of one's grounding experiential state and that normally some other people too are relevant experiencers, for example in judging whether a party is fun. We mentioned the context and aims of the conversation as features that affect who the relevant experiencers are. A further feature is the taste of the people who experienced the object or event. Some people may be excluded as relevant experiencers if their taste is idiosyncratic –not necessarily objectively idiosyncratic, but relative to the taste of the speaker. That is what happened in Ana and Craig's discussion about the party. They could ignore the visiting students' opinion even though they were present at the party because their taste was simply too different to be relevant for Ana and Craig.

Sometimes a person is considered a relevant experiencer until it is found out that her taste is idiosyncratic. For example, suppose that the visiting students who don't know Craig are asking him what are the fun things to do in the city they are now living in. Craig recommends visiting churches, museums and parks, so the students conclude that there is nothing fun to do in the city. But once they learn of Craig's radically different taste they will simply ignore his advice.

The cases can get complicated if the knowledge of each others' tastes is asymmetrical. For example, if Craig doesn't know that the others are ignoring his views on fun he may aim to make judgments that are a compromise between his taste and theirs; for example, he might find pubs too noisy and drunken people frightening but he thinks the others like pubs so he recommends the one he finds the most calm. So Craig is making his judgment on the grounds of what he believes of the grounding states of the others, and partly on his grounding state. But the others have excluded him from the relevant experiencers so they may make their judgments on the grounds of their grounding states and what they believe of the states of others, excluding Craig. Thus one conversational context need not determine a unique set of relevant experiencers.

5.3 When the Speaker Is Not a Relevant Experiencer

In some rare contexts it is irrelevant whether the speaker is in a grounding experiential state. Suppose that Ana and Craig have to plan activities for children's summer camp. In their context the relevant experiencers are children

generally so the grounds of their judgments are not their own grounding states but their beliefs about the grounding states of children. Hence in that context they can make judgments like "Sleeping in a tent is fun." or "Hot dogs and chicken nuggets are delicious." without either of them thereby making any inferences about each others' experiential states. But knowledge of the context is crucial; if someone is eavesdropping without knowing what the discussion is about they would conclude that Ana and Craig have childish tastes.

Secondly, there are contexts in which the discussion concerns the views of the majority who may –but need not– be the relevant experiencers. For example, magazines and online forums abound in discussions about topics like which celebrities are the sexiest, the most good-looking or best / worst-dressed. Suppose that two people are talking about which actress is the most good-looking. Their conversation may have different aims. For one, they might want to establish who *they* take to be the most good-looking which can include aiming at a consensus: to find someone which both of them rate high. Or they may want to find out who is the best-looking for each of them, even if they don't agree.

But alternatively, one might embark on a more sociological enterprise of finding out who the public considers the best-looking actress. For example, we can imagine movie producers searching for an actress who is generally considered very good-looking. Suppose that after asking around and reading the relevant sources they establish that most people prefer the looks of Angelina Jolie. In their context they can make judgments while ignoring their personal preferences, and they can say things which would normally sound infelicitous, e.g. "Angelina Jolie doesn't appeal to me at all but she is the best looking actress."

In the case of Craig and the visiting students, the latter ignored Craig's judgments of taste once they learnt that his taste is entirely different of theirs. But a speaker may also ignore their own experiential states if they've learnt that their taste is highly idiosyncratic or they simply lack taste. A lack of taste can be a consequence of a deficiency, for example when a person suffering from total colour blindness responds indifferently to colourful paintings. Alternatively they may simply lack sensitivity or interest in the particular sense modality and thereby fail to make any judgments regarding for example the taste of different foods. Many people also have an idiosyncratic taste. Such agents will learn quite quickly that their experiential states do not correlate with those of others and consequently it makes sense for them not to rely on their own senses in making judgments of taste.

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5.4 Ideal Experiencers

Finally, there are cases where one may be hesitant to make a judgment of taste on the grounds of one's own experiential state if one's taste is less cultivated than the taste of another. For example, a novice wine taster in a class with experts may realise that she simply fails to perceive much when tasting wine, and hence her experiential states aren't worth trusting yet. To her it makes more sense to listen to the judgments of the experts and then try to experience what they said about the qualities of the wine. A conversation between an expert and a novice is another case where the speaker may not be a relevant experiencer, when the speaker is the novice.

It is often said that matters of personal taste are essentially and irreducibly personal or "subjective", by which the theorist usually means the combination of two facts: taste experiences are private, and they vary more than for example our visual perceptions of physical objects. And not only do the experiences vary, as we saw in section (1.3.1), it is commonly held that there are many equally valid ways to experience objects of taste. Let me repeat Wright's statement of the Intuition of No Fault:

> [The disagreement over the deliciousness of rhubarb] is, we feel—or is likely to be—a disagreement which there is no point in trying to settle, because it concerns no real matter of fact but is merely an expression of different, permissibly idiosyncratic tastes. Nobody's wrong. (Wright, 2006, 38).

Prima facie there seems to be a conflict with the Intuition of No Fault, i.e. that people are infallible regarding how they experience taste qualities, and the idea that some people are better experiencers than others. Let us call an *ideal experiencer* a person with a "good taste", i.e. a connoisseur of wines, a great chef, a perfume maker, or any other expert on matters of personal taste. The apparent conflict results because if everyone is correct when they make a judgment of taste, then what sense is there in saying that someone is an expert? Our question hence is, is there a way to reconcile the existence of ideal experiencers with the Intuition of No Fault, or need we reject the notion of ideal experiencers with respect to matters of personal taste?

Let us look at a classic statement about what makes one an ideal experiencer:

> a true judge in the finer arts is observed, even during the most polished ages, to be so rare a character: strong sense, united to

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delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison,
and cleared of all prejudice, can alone entitle critics to this valuable
character; and the joint verdict of such, wherever they are to be
found, is the true standard of taste and beauty. (Hume, 1998, 147)

It should be emphasised that the existence of ideal experiencers doesn't require
that they fully agree with each others. As Hume (1998) emphasised, even the
"true judges" may not agree in their judgments as a consequence of their differing
temperaments, ages, views on morality and the influences of the era in which
they live.

An ideal experiencer is described in ordinary language as one who has a good
taste. As was mentioned in the previous section, what causes someone to lack
taste include physical deficiencies in the relevant sense modality, lack of interest
or insensibility. An ideal experiencer in contrast has keen sense modalities,
interest and sensibility regarding the relevant topic. The idea of a better or
worse taste correlates with the idea that the taste in question can be developed
and cultivated. Knowledge plays an obvious role too; for example, evaluation of
food tastes depend on one's expectations and beliefs about what one is eating.
For example, Yeomans et al. (2008) showed that people's evaluations of a cold
salmon dish varied depending on whether it was presented as mousse or as
ice-cream.

Past experiences and habituation clearly make a difference in every matter
of taste. It was already mentioned that people's taste in food, although partly
dependent on their genes, is largely a matter of habituation. One of Foot's
(2002b) examples of a matter of personal taste was the looks of people and how
there can be extreme variation between eras and cultures about what kind of
traits make people good-looking. Now, it is questionable whether anyone could
entirely overcome one's parochialism regarding matters of taste and succeed in
having equal amounts of experience of say, foods of various cultures or exposure
to different-looking people. However, it seems clear that an ideal experiencer
should have a lot of experience and consequently habituated in various flavours /
sounds / looks which allows them to compare more things. Habituation applies
both to flavours as such and beliefs: one comes to prefer flavours with exposure
to them, and if one gets used to the idea that e.g. maggots are food, one gets
rid of a disgust towards them.

The expectation that there can be ideal experiencers is reflected in debates
on taste; some people are treated as authorities whose views others defer to.

There might also be critical and analytic literature on the topic and perhaps recognised experts in the public. However, whether the opinion of an ideal experiencer matters depends on the usual aims of the conversations about the topic. For example, most discussions about what is fun are practical, aiming to establish what should be done next or in the future. So even if there were experts in fun, given that one may not share the taste of the expert one might be better off just doing what one finds fun.

Now, despite of the widespread view that tastes can't be disputed and that everyone is right in matters of taste, most people do seem to acknowledge the existence of ideal experiencers in food, wine, coffee, tea, cocktails, style in clothes, interior design etc., music, movies, comedy and humour and even what is fun. Considering these topics we also see that drawing a line between matters of "personal" taste and matters aesthetic is easier said than done. The challenge that a theory of personal taste faces is to reconcile the idea that there can be better and worse tastes with the basic intuition that there is something infallible in one's experiences of taste. The topic will be discussed in more detail in Ch. 13: *An Error Theory for Discourses About Taste.*

5.5   Summary of Chapter 5

In this section I've shown that the felicity of judgments of taste depends on the aims and participants to the conversations, as well as on the tastes of the participants. These features determine what I called *the relevant experiencers*. I suggested that a minimal requirement for a judgment of taste is normally that the relevant experiencer has been in the grounding experiential state. Hence, if the relevant experiencer includes others than the speaker, she must have beliefs (or perhaps even knowledge) about the experiential states of others.

However, the relevant experiencer depends on the features of the context, including the tastes of the participants and the aims of the conversation. What I haven't taken a stance on or talked about is whether these considerations about the grounds of judgments of taste are reflected in the contents or truth-conditions of judgments of taste. We have merely pointed out that the conversational context influences the felicity of judgments, and the relevant feature of the context is whose grounding experiential state matters.

Now, there are two lines of explanation for how the relevant experiencer influences judgments' felicity. First is a semantic explanation: take the relevant experiencer to be an element of the lexical semantics of predicates of taste.

Hence our judgments of felicity would match judgments about truth and falsity: the speaker says something infelicitous when she has misunderstood or ignored the relevant experiencers in the context, and consequently she also says something false. We will discuss a contextualist account along these lines in Chapter 8: *Flexible Contextualism.*

The second explanation is pragmatic: the semantics does not reflect the role of relevant experiencers which means that the felicity judgments do not relate to the truth-values of the judgment. In other words, a judgment might in principle be true albeit infelicitous, or felicitous but false. We will consider pragmatic explanations in Chapters 6: *Two Contextualist Approaches* and 8: *Flexible Contextualism.*

Part II

Contextualism

6 Two Contextualist Approaches

In ch. 3: *Gradability and Perspective Dependence* we saw in which respects predicates of taste are context-sensitive merely in virtue of being open scale gradable adjectives. Moreover, Barker showed that indeterminacy of the standard in a context leads to one kind of faultless disagreements. However, we saw that the context sensitivity that is due to the variability of a comparison class and a standard is not enough to account for disagreements of taste, nor can it account for our intuitions that there can be many relevant perspectives and that each speaker may be infallible in making judgments of taste.

In this part we look at *contextualist* accounts of predicates of taste which hold that in addition to the above-mentioned context sensitivity, predicates of taste refer to a perspective which is determined by the context. Contextualism is a rather standard view of the semantics of many expressions, even if the way context affects content hasn't been fully worked out. In Ch. 1: *Judgments of Personal Taste* we already briefly encountered a contextualist account which I called *simple subjectivism*. However, the recently defended contextualist accounts are all forms of "sophisticated subjectivism" in that whose perspective matters for a judgment of taste may vary.

In the previous chapter we discussed how experience matters as the grounds for judgments of taste, and how a judgment may be infelicitous if it is made on the grounds of an irrelevant experiencer. The first section of this chapter shows how the data about relevant experiencers can be used to motivate contextualism. The following sections introduce two rather different approaches to contextualism. What I call *semantics-based contextualism* takes predicates of taste to be lexically context-sensitive, and it is by far the most popular contextualist approach. The alternative, *pragmatics-based contextualism* in contrast holds that predicates of taste are not lexically perspective-dependent, but that based on pragmatic mechanisms the truth-conditions of judgments of taste come to refer to a perspective.

6.1 Contextualism and Relevant Experiencers

In chapter *1*: *Judgments of Personal Taste* we discussed simple subjectivism, the view which identified the semantic content of judgments of taste with judgments about experiential states so that e.g. "Surfing is fun" means roughly "I enjoy surfing" (or to account for temporary lack of enjoyment due to e.g. bad mood, "I normally enjoy surfing"). We saw that the view is implausible because of the entirely different pragmatics of the two kinds of judgments. Judgments of taste can be disagreed or agreed with and judged true or false independently of what the hearer believes of the speaker. In contrast, judgments about experiential states explicitly concern the speaker, so the hearer may agree or disagree only if they believe that the speaker misunderstand their own state.

We've seen that experiential states play a crucial role as the grounds for judgments of taste. Moreover, our discussion of relevant experiencers showed that whose experiential state is relevant may vary from one context to another. These features point to an improved version of subjectivism which we may call *sophisticated subjectivism*. The view shares the essence of simple subjectivism, namely that the truth of judgments of taste depends also on the responses of people and not only on the properties of objects. But it is sophisticated in that it allows for more variation in whose experiences the judgment is about.

The variation in perspectives *prima facie* solves the problems faced by simple subjectivism, namely the major pragmatic differences between judgments of taste and judgments about experiential states. Most importantly it seems to be able to explain why people disagree over taste. If the relevant perspective includes all the speakers in the context then *prima facie* it looks like they can disagree over the truth of a judgment of taste as well as judge it as true or false. The views which defend sophisticated subjectivism by taking the judgment's content to refer to variable perspectives are contextualist since they model the role of the perspective as additional context sensitivity of predicates of taste. Contextualism for predicates of taste has been defended by Cappelen and Hawthorne (2009), Glanzberg (2007) and Sundell (2011).[13] To distinguish between contextualist versions of simple and sophisticated subjectivism, let us call the latter *flexible contextualism*.

As we saw in chapter 5: *The Grounds of Judgments of Taste*, the felicity of judgments of taste may depend on the conversational context including the

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[13]Foot (2002a; 2002c) defends a form of "proto contextualism": the view seems to be a form of sophisticated subjectivism but she doesn't say anything about how the semantics works.

tastes of the participants. The context determines whose taste matters, i.e. who are the relevant experiencers. Now, flexible contextualism is in principle in an excellent position to account for the role of relevant experiencers. Indeed, one could use the linguistic data about how experiencers influence felicity as an argument in favour of contextualism. One has simply to take relevant experiencers to be a part of the content of judgments of taste. Hence, the context determines whose experiences are relevant and the judgment refers to those experiencers. For example, "The party was fun" might have as its semantic content that the party was fun for the speaker, the speaker and the hearer, most of the participants to the party and so on –whoever the context deems relevant.

In the previous chapter we listed examples where the felicity of a judgment of taste depends on who are the relevant experiencers. Since flexible contextualism takes the judgment to be about the relevant experiencers, it would explain the infelicities we encountered either as a correlating with the falsehood of the judgments, or as resulting from the pragmatic oddity or irrelevance of the judgment. The explanation depends on the theory's *metasemantics,* which is how Kaplan (1989a) calls the study of how meanings are determined. There are two common metasemantic views for how the values of context-sensitive expressions are determined. (i) The intentions of the speaker determine the contextual values (within reason), or (ii) "the context" determines them. We return to metasemantics issues in more detail later, but let me sketch how the two approaches to how context determines meaning could explain the infelicitous judgments of taste.

If one holds that the speaker's intentions determine the contextual values, one can say that an infelicitous judgment of taste results from the speaker having misunderstood the point of the conversation. In other words a person may say something true (for example that the party was fun for her), but the hearer is expecting a judgment about how the party was for the majority of the people.

The second metasemantic view holds that the values of the covert context-sensitive elements of predicates of taste are determined "by the context" –a common way to call the complicated rule-based mechanism which takes as input features such as the topic and aim of the conversation, the intentions of the speakers, the salient linguistic and extralinguistic phenomena taking place and so on. According to this approach the infelicitous judgments of taste are a consequence of a mismatch between which experiencers are determined to be relevant by the context and which experiencers the *speaker* considers relevant. Since the speaker's intentions do not decide who the relevant experiencer is, if

she gets it wrong her judgement is false, and infelicitous if the hearers know its falsehood. For example, suppose the conversation is about how the party was for the majority of the people. Let's say it was boring; however, the speaker thinks the topic is how the party was for her, and she says "The party was fun". Since the context has determined the majority, not her, as the relevant experiencer, the judgment is false, and infelicitous in that we know it wasn't fun for the majority.

Let us now go through some of our earlier examples and see how a generic flexible contextualist account can explain them. First, we mentioned that normally it's not ok to make a judgment of taste merely on the basis of one's own experiential state if other experiencers are relevant too, especially if one's experiences are not representative of the experiences of others. We pointed out that (83) is pretty weird in a context where someone asks how the party was:

(83) The party was great fun but most people were bored.

The contextualist could explain the oddity by saying that the judgment is false since the truth of "the party was fun" in the particular context depends on others besides just the speaker.

We saw further variability in relevant experiencers when e.g. the speaker knows that her taste differs from that of the majority but (a) she is the relevant experiencer and (b) the hearer shares her taste. In such a case (83) is fine. The case could be nicely explained as resulting from the experiencer class being limited to the participants to the conversation.

Flexible contextualism is thus *prima facie* promising. By taking people as making judgments about shared experiential states it might avoid the problems that simple subjectivism had in accounting for how judgments of taste are used. Moreover, we have seen that people are sensitive to experiences of others besides themselves, and whose experiences are relevant in the context matter to the judgment's felicity. Flexible contextualist can take the felicity data and show that it correlates with either the truth-values or relevance of the content of judgments of taste.

6.2 Semantics-Based Contextualism

Which expressions have context-sensitive semantic values is controversial. By far our discussion of context sensitivity has been limited to views which take expressions to be lexically context-sensitive. Let us call that *semantics-based*

context sensitivity. We have already seen in broad outline how semantics-based context sensitivity works. The lexical semantics of a particular expression specify a rule for how the expression's semantic value depends on the context. Based on knowledge of language and of the relevant contextual information the hearer is able to retrieve the content.

The existence of semantics-based context sensitivity is accepted by all mainstream theories, even if there is disagreement over which particular expressions are context-sensitive. The controversial issue is whether there are other kinds of context sensitivity. Below we will discuss views which hold that there is also pragmatics-based context-sensitivity. In general there are two opposing viewpoints to where the line between semantics and pragmatics goes, and the question of the limits of context sensitivity is one of the core issues in the debates.[14] There are several large issues involved in the debates between the two approaches to context sensitivity which we cannot discuss in the current context.[15] Instead we will explore both kinds of contextualist accounts only as applied to predicates of taste.

Traditional semantics-based views that are represented by e.g. Grice (1989) hold that there is a unique proposition expressed (or the "literal meaning" of a sentence, or the "what is said" by a sentence) in a context which belongs entirely within the domain of semantics. Pragmatics is concerned with "speaker meaning", i.e. what the speaker communicates by the proposition expressed via e.g. implicatures. Hence the truth-conditional content of utterances is a matter of semantics only.

Indexical contextualism or *indexicalism,* defended especially by Stanley (2000; 2007) is a recently influential approach to drawing the semantics / pragmatics divide squarely within the traditionalist approach. It holds that every context-sensitive expression excluding indexicals and demonstratives contain a covert variable whose value must be saturated based on the context. The account has been popular since it predicts that context-sensitive expressions should get readings where the covert variable is bound by an operator. If the hypothesis is correct, it would provide a very straightforward way of distinguishing between context-sensitive and context-insensitive expressions. The view has been influential in the literature on predicates of taste as well so we will discuss bound readings of taste predicates and whether they support indexicalism in section

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[14]See e.g. Huang (2007) for an overview of the different ways how theorists have tried to distinguish semantics from pragmatics.

[15]For recent surveys of the issues see e.g. Recanati (2010); Szabo (2005).

7.2 below.

Let us now return to the metasemantic question of what exactly determines the semantic values of lexically context-sensitive expressions. Before we said that the lexical semantics determines a rule; the question of metasemantics of context sensitivity could be seen as the question of the nature of those rules. For example, *here* requires that one looks at the place of the utterance. But the limits of *here* are not determined by the place: it can mean an area ranging from a barely visible spot ("Here is the hole made with the pin") to the entire planet or further (e.g. imagine a person in the future who has to move to another planet saying "Things are so well here"). What determines the content of *here* could be e.g. only the intentions of the speaker, only the salient features of the linguistic and extra-linguistic context or various combinations (including intentions and beliefs of other participants to the conversation).

Kaplan (1989b) distinguished between "pure" indexicals which were supposed to get their semantic value automatically based on the context without any mediation by e.g. the speaker's belief or intentions, and demonstratives. He took pure indexicals to include *I, now, here* and *today.* Demonstratives, e.g. *this, that, he, she* are supposed to be more dependent on the speaker's intentions about their referents. A lot of cases has since been presented to argue that even the pure indexicals don't work so automatically (for a recent defence that no indexical is automatic, see Mount (2008)). Whether or not that's the case, what seems right is that lexically context-sensitive expressions can be positioned on a scale with indexicals being near-automatic and expressions like gradable adjectives allowing for a lot of input from the context. That even pure indexicals aren't entirely pure supports the view discussed in the section below which holds that almost any expression allows for *pragmatic enrichment.*

Differences in the metasemantics of context-sensitivity can make for quite radical differences in the predictions of a contextualist account, and we will see examples of two possible metasemantics in the next chapter when we discuss Glanzberg's semantics-based contextualism for predicates of taste.

6.3   Pragmatics-Based Contextualism

The approach that we will call *pragmatics-based contextualism* holds that the semantic values of most expressions can be sensitive to the context without their lexical semantics being context-sensitive. In other words, the "what is said" / truth-conditions of an utterance typically result from an interaction between

the linguistically encoded content and what the speaker intends to say by that content. Recanati (2004) labels *truth-conditional pragmatics* those approaches to semantics / pragmatics division which hold that the truth-conditions of utterances depend not only on the semantic content + the input from the context, but also from various pragmatic features of the conversation.

Pragmatics-based views have been advocated by e.g. Bach (1987); Carston (2002); Recanati (2004, 2010); Sperber and Wilson (1986), and despite of their differences they share a common spirit. Recanati's account is close enough in broad outlines with the relevance theorists Carston, Sperber and Wilson, so in what follows we will focus on their views. We will discuss Bach's "radical invariantist" theory of predicates of taste in section 10.3 when we compare it with Lasersohn's (2005) relativist account.

Recanati (2010) takes the core difference between semantics and pragmatics-based views to be the role of *pragmatic competence*, i.e. a hearer's ability to understand what a speaker means by their utterance. The semantics-based conception holds that all that is required to get to the content is semantic competence, i.e. knowledge of the truth-conditions of expressions and rules of their composition. If the utterance contains context-sensitive expressions the hearer must also have knowledge of the relevant aspects of the context. But pragmatic competence is not required to interpret the content and it's only needed for communication in the broader sense, for example in order to understand implicatures.

Regarding context sensitivity, pragmatics-based views typically accept that there are expressions which are lexically context-sensitive. But they argue that additionally interpretation requires pragmatic processes known as *free enrichment,* the umbrella term for various specific processes. In getting to the right content the hearers must use their pragmatic competence to freely enrich the literal or core meaning provided by the sentence in the context. Hence the expressions and their mode of composition doesn't restrict the possible truth-conditions in the context as much as in the semantics-based account.

6.3.1 Meaning Determination vs. Interpretation

Some authors have emphasised the distinction between meaning determination (i.e. the metasemantic question) and interpretation of meaning, and blame the pragmatics-based theorists of confusing the two (see e.g. Devitt (1981; 2013)). The difference is certainly important and the relevance theorists do write as

if they were only concerned with the interpretation of utterances. After all, their aim is to provide an empirically testable, cognitive psychological theory of communication (Wilson and Sperber, 2004). From that point of view what Devitt calls the question of "metaphysics of meaning" may seem somewhat irrelevant since the focus is typically on the pragmatic, inferential processes that take place in the hearer.

However, the defenders of pragmatics-based context sensitivity do have an answer to the meaning determination question too. First, along with the traditional view they hold that there is a level of linguistically encoded meaning that the lexical semantics of expressions together with their rules of composition determine. But that's typically not yet the truth-conditional level. The truth-conditions get determined based on linguistically encoded meaning *and* the intentions of the speaker, within reasonable limits of what can be understood by the hearer. So in the truth-conditional pragmatics framework the Gricean notion of "what is said" has been expanded to also include the Gricean notion of speaker-meaning.[16]

Whereas semantics-based approaches typically talk about content and truth-conditions, truth-conditional pragmatists generally emphasise the pragmatic processes that take place in the idealised *hearer* when she interprets what has been said. Sometimes the emphasis on the processes causes sliding between the notions of meaning determination and interpretation. Here is an example: "According to TCP [truth-conditional pragmatics], what is said$_{int}$ [what has intuitively been said] may be affected by top-down pragmatic processes." (Recanati, 2010, 13). That is somewhat confusing given that what is said is determined by the linguistic content together with the speaker's intentions, and the top-down pragmatic processes take place in the hearer. The idea is *not* that of content relativism where the content of the utterance is determined by how the hearer understands it (for a defence of content relativism, see Cappelen (2008)).

One way to understand the sliding between the two notions is that when communication is successful it doesn't matter whether we look at communication from the point of view of the speaker or the hearer: the hearer grasps what is said by freely enriching the linguistically encoded content. If we wanted to we could distinguish two notions: what is said$_{speaker}$ and what is said$_{hearer}$. In the

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[16]Recanati's approach in his *Perspectival Thought* (2007) is much more in the semantics tradition in that its discussion is focused on content and truth-conditions, and it's not entirely clear in what way the notions of content presented there relate to his truth-conditional pragmatics framework.

good cases these two match. In the bad cases the speaker calls the shots, but only to the extent that what she intended to say could have been grasped by an ideal hearer in the context. In what follows I will talk of free enrichment in an unorthodox manner as if it was a process that determines content since our focus is content determination, not interpretation.

6.3.2 Pragmatics-Based Contextualism for Predicates of Taste

Let us now look at the broad outlines of pragmatics-based contextualism for predicates of taste. In Ch. 5 we noticed that the relevant experiencers in a context influence at least the felicity of judgments of taste, but we have remained neutral on whether they also matter to the truth-conditions. A pragmatics-based contextualist would naturally hold that relevant experiencers matter for the truth-conditions –as would the semantics-based contextualist. But that's not because the utterance mandates the saturation of a covert perspective for the taste predicate; instead, it's because the context makes it clear to the hearer that the speaker intended a particular perspective.

A pragmatics-based contextualist about predicates of taste would thus hold that there's nothing in the lexical semantics of taste predicates that requires a perspective. However, a particular perspective can be an *unarticulated constituent* of a judgment of taste: an element of the content expressed that is due to free enrichment of the sentence uttered.[17] The enriched content (or *explicature* in the relevance theoretic terminology) thus refers to a certain perspective. The hearer can figure out who are the intended relevant experiencers by reading the intentions of the speaker together with their knowledge about the aims of the conversation, the tastes of the speakers and other salient people (including possible ideal experiencers). Let us look at an example:

(84) Alex has a good-looking partner.

Normally the default reading is that at least the speaker finds the partner good-looking. But if the conversation has some specific aim, for example to find a good-looking person to host a show, then the speaker might intend the relevant experiencer to be an average audience member. As long as the hearer is following the conversation they are able to understand which perspective the speaker

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[17] *Unarticulated constituent* has become a generic term for truth-conditional content that's not contributed by the sentence used or its logical form but by pragmatic mechanisms. The term was originally introduced by Perry (1986); for a more recent update on types of unarticulated constituents see Korta and Perry (2011).

intends. The proposition expressed in the context is thus true iff the relevant experiencer(s) would find Alex's partner good-looking.

One interesting consequence of the pragmatics-based approach is that the reference to a perspective depends on the intentions of the speaker. If a speaker doesn't intend a perspective at all it is not an unarticulated constituent of a judgment.[18] Now, in our discussion of taste objectivism I argued that an object can have a taste quality like deliciousness only relative to some experiencer(s). So what happens if the speaker doesn't intend one? There are several possible answers which we will explore later. But it is worth pointing out that pragmatics-based contextualism leaves room also for non-perspectival judgments, whereas the semantics-based contextualism doesn't, given that the context-sensitivity is lexically encoded and hence the predicate must be saturated on pain of infelicity.

The rest of this chapter and the next will focus on semantics-based accounts for taste predicates since they have dominated both the pro- and anti-contextualist literature on the topic. Once the problems of the semantics-based approach have become clear we will return to the pragmatics-based approach to see whether it can avoid those problems.

6.4 Summary of Chapter 6

In the previous chapters it was often pointed out that the grounds of a judgment of taste is the experiential state of someone. The role of experience was further reflected in the role that relevant experiencers played. Depending on the aims of the conversation the relevant experiencer may vary, and in some rare cases it need not even include the speaker.

Contextualist accounts of predicates of taste hold that the context (one way or another) selects a perspective which is part of the content of judgments of taste. In this chapter we've seen the broad outlines of semantics- and pragmatics-based contextualism. The aim was to highlight the differences of the views in what they take to be the sources of context-sensitivity, and to raise the importance of metasemantic questions that will be discussed later when we look at the views in more detail.

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[18]Here the terminology of unarticulated constituents is a bit murky. Perry (1986) also talked of constituents that enter a proposition without being represented at all (and hence, not intended at least in one sense), but he didn't call them *unarticulated constituents*. But some authors simply take them to be a different type of unarticulated constituent; see e.g. Clapp (2010).

7 Arguments for Semantics-Based Contextualism

As was mentioned, most contextualist accounts for predicates of taste are forms of semantics-based contextualism. In the literature there are several arguments that aim to show that certain constructions support semantics-based context sensitivity of predicates of taste. One of them we have already discussed and rejected in Ch. 4, namely Sæbø's (2009) claim that *find* and other subjective attitude verbs select for lexically perspective-dependent predicates, and since *find* embeds predicates of taste, they have a covert argument for a perspective. Since Sæbø's defence of semantics-based contextualism builds on his account of *find* which we've shown to be incorrect we won't discuss it further.

This chapter discusses other linguistic data that has been offered in support of semantics-based contextualism for predicates of taste. The first section looks at *to / for x* phrases, focusing on Schaffer's (2011) arguments that aim to show that the phrases make explicit an argument for a perspective that is normally covert. I conclude that Schaffer's arguments don't support the claim.

The rest of the chapter discusses certain readings of judgments of taste which are claimed to result from a quantifier binding a covert perspective variable. I argue that the readings can result either from binding or from pragmatic enrichment. I use various tests to evaluate whether the readings are due to binding, and conclude that they result from pragmatics.

7.1 *To / For x* Phrases

To / for x phrases show similar felicity behaviour to *find*. Schaffer (2011) who defends indexicalism for predicates of taste claims that they make explicit a perspective argument that's normally covert. Here are his examples:

(85) Liquorice is tasty to me.

(86) Liquorice is tasty to everyone. (Schaffer, 2011, 179)

When there is no *to / for x* phrase the covert perspective argument is supposed to be saturated by the context. However, Richard (2008) gives the following counterexamples to the view that *to / for x* are specific to predicates of taste:

(87) Protest marching is unpatriotic to Howard.

(88) It's a chair to Carolyn.

(89) They are red to Park. (Richard, 2008, 141)

Moreover, *to / for x* phrases don't behave like arguments. For example, Schaffer compares the behaviour of adjuncts and arguments in order to show that *to / for x* are arguments, and he claims that one can recognise an argument by the infelicity that results when an adjunct is placed between an expression and its argument. I'm not taking a stance on whether Schaffer is right about his examples of arguments, but he claims that e.g. *of history* is an argument of *student* which he takes to be a relational noun.

However, predicates and their arguments are generally not separable from each others in the way that *to / for x* is. Compare the following:

(90) To me the dance show was terrible.

(91) *Of history John is a student.

(92) *Of Mary Susan is a sister .

Generally *for / to x* can always be placed in front of the clause. Such flexibility is certainly more typical to adjuncts (e.g. temporal expressions such as *tomorrow, yesterday*, locational expressions like *In London, near the hotel* etc.)

Another test that Schaffer (2011) uses are sluicing constructions, i.e. sentences where a wh-expression introduces an ellipsis that elides the preceding clause. Here is an example where the latter sentence makes explicit the ellipsis:

(93) (a) Mary is in love, but with who?
      (b) Mary is in love, but with who [is Mary in love]?

Schaffer states that sluicing constructions can be used to detect covert arguments. Below is Schaffer's example with *eat*, followed by an example with the intransitive *dine* which comes out infelicitous:

(94) Pam ate, but what?

(95) *Pam dined, but what? (Schaffer, 2011, 199-200)

Schaffer argues that predicates of taste allow for sluicing which supports the view that they have covert arguments. Here are his examples:

(96) The stinky cheese is tasty, but to whom?

(97) The paper clips are fun, but for whom? (Schaffer, 2011, 200)

First, I find the examples somewhat infelicitous.[19] However, even if one finds the examples ok the test does not work in revealing covert arguments. Schaffer mentions that sluicing can also be used with optional adjuncts, as below:

(100) Pam ate, but when?

(101) Pam ate, but where?

(102) Pam ate, but why? (Schaffer, 2011, 201)

Schaffer doesn't take that fact to interfere with testing for covert arguments of taste predicates since he takes himself to have shown that *to / for x* are not adjuncts. However, we already saw reasons to think that *to / for x* are not arguments. Moreover, it looks like the sluicing test cannot be used to uncover arguments even by Schaffer's own lights. Here are some examples:

(103) ??She is a student, but of what?

(104) ??Mike is a father, but of who?

(105) ??Karen turned to the left, but of what?

(106) ??Alex is an enemy, but of who?

Again I find these examples somewhat infelicitous. However, if one disagrees and finds both the examples above and the sluicing examples with predicates of taste felicitous, the fact remains that they may be felicitous due to sluicing of the optional adjunct *to / for x*. Therefore we may conclude that *for / to x* phrases are not evidence in favour of the view that predicates of taste have a covert argument for a perspective. More work needs to be done to determine whether the phrases are adjuncts or arguments.

7.2 Bound Readings As Evidence for Semantics-Based Contextualism

One often repeated argument for indexicalism about predicates of taste is the existence of so-called bound readings of predicates of taste, i.e. readings where

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[19]They are also somewhat infelicitous in Finnish and French, just to mention some cross-linguistic data:

(98) ??Homejuusto on hyvää, mutta kenelle?

(99) ??Fromage bleu est bon, mais pour qui?

the semantic value of a taste predicate depends on a higher operator. Here is an example:

(107) Everyone did something fun.

(107) has a reading which means that each person did something that was fun for that person. Many authors have argued that the existence of bound readings favours indexicalist accounts while posing a challenge for relativism (see e.g. Cappelen and Hawthorne (2009); Glanzberg (2007); Schaffer (2011)).

However, the alleged bound readings can have two possible sources: semantics and pragmatics. What hasn't been sufficiently taken into account in the literature is that apparent bound readings only support indexicalism if they really are a result of binding, not of purely pragmatic processes. In this section we use linguistic tests to figure out what is the origin of the readings. The data strongly suggest that they are not of semantic but of pragmatic origins. The result undermines a common argument for indexicalism and shows that the alleged bound readings do not favour semantics-based contextualism.

7.2.1 Indexicalism

Recently one of the most debated issues in philosophy of language has been the extent of context-sensitivity in language. *Minimalism* holds that pretty much only indexicals and demonstratives are context-sensitive, and *contextualism* in the context of those debates means a view which accepts that there are many more context-sensitive expressions. One of the core issues between minimalism vs. contextualism is naturally how to draw the line between context-sensitive and context-insensitive expressions.

Stanley (2000; 2002; 2005b; 2007) is well known for defending indexicalism which holds that any context-sensitive expression besides indexicals, demonstratives and pronouns comes with a covert variable in the logical form (LF) of the sentence. According to Stanley we ought to posit context sensitivity only when we have intuitions about contextual variation in an expression, and there exists syntactic evidence for a covert variable.

Stanley's (2000) *Binding Argument* aims to bridge the gap between syntax and semantics; it states that if a sentence allows for so-called *bound* readings, then some relevant expression in the sentence contains a covert variable which is in effect bound. The argument builds on data originally suggested by Mitchell (1986) and Partee (1989) who pointed out that several expressions behave like

pronouns in allowing both for a bound and a free reading. On a free reading the expression gets its value from some salient aspect of the context. Below is an example of a free and a bound reading of *local:*

(108) John visited a local bar. (Mitchell, 1986)

(109) Every sports fan in the country was at a local bar watching the playoffs. (Partee, 1989)

(108) can only get a free reading of *local,* which may mean local to the speaker or local to John. In the second example the natural reading is the bound one: every sports fan is at their local bar. Normally a quantified sentence like (109) also allows for a free reading where the bar is for example local to the speaker, but in this case it is pragmatically ruled out unless the country in question is tiny. One possible explanation for the bound reading in (109) is to posit a covert variable which gets bound by the quantifier expression. Partee (1989) ultimately rejected the explanation which Stanley (2000) adopts. A terminological note: from now on I'll call readings like the relevant one of (109) *bound readings* although of course what will be at issue is whether such readings result from binding or not.

The Binding Argument aims to show that bound readings are evidence for covert variables in the LF. Below is an example of a bound reading from Stanley (2002), where (111) gives what Stanley takes to be the quasi-syntactic structure of the sentence and which makes explicit the way the desired reading of *three Frenchmen* depends on the quantifier expression *in most of his classes.*

(110) In most of his classes, John fails exactly three Frenchmen.

(111) In most of his classes x, John fails exactly three Frenchmen in x.

Recanati (2004) has argued that rather than the bound reading resulting from binding an antecedently existing variable, it is possible that the quantifier contributes the variable. Sennett (2008) points out that the Binding Argument needs to suppose something like his Semantic Innocence Assumption:

> *Semantic Innocence Assumption* (SI): The variables (in sentences like (4) [Everywhere Bianca goes, it rains.]) are contributed by the subordinate clause and the structure of the subordinate clause is unchanged by adjoining a quantifier phrase to it. (Sennett, 2008, 143).

Together with the above-mentioned assumptions the Binding Argument provides the conclusion that bound readings are evidence for covert variables. Now, indexicalism and its underlying assumptions are controversial but for our limited purposes we do not need to evaluate the view's strengths and weaknesses.[20] If indexicalism predicts the correct linguistic data it deservers further investigation, but if it doesn't –as will be argued below– we may leave such concerns aside.

7.2.2 Bound Readings of Predicates of Taste

The indexicalist account of predicates of taste holds that they come with a covert variable for a perspective. Hence the presence of the variable should make bound readings possible. Let us look at some candidate examples:

(112) All the girls had a good-looking boyfriend.

(113) Every student got a fun assignment.

(114) Each writer wrote an entertaining story.

Indexicalism predicts that in these examples there are two alternative readings. First, there should be the free reading where the relevant perspective depends on the context. Second, there should be the bound reading where what counts as good-looking / fun / entertaining depends on the perspective of each of the girls / students / writers. For example, the bound reading of (114) can be paraphrased as:

(115) Each writer wrote a story that was entertaining for themselves / for that writer.

As was mentioned, many contextualists have emphasised the existence of such readings. However, they have all defended either indexicalism or at least semantics-based contextualism. But bound readings only support those views if one can show that they result from semantics, not pragmatics.[21] Let us next look at how pragmatics-based views could explain bound readings.

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[20]For discussion, see e.g. Cappelen and Hawthorne (2007); Cohen and Rickless (2007); Elbourne (2008); Recanati (2004); Sennett (2008). For a framework which dispenses with variables altogether, see Jacobson (1999).

[21]Moreover, indexicalism is supported only if the reading is best explained as resulting from the binding of a hidden variable associated with the predicate. For an alternative semantic explanation of binding, see Cappelen and Hawthorne (2007).

7.2.3 Pragmatics-Based "Bound" Readings

In section 6.3 we saw how truth-conditional pragmatics explain context sensitivity that's not due to the lexical semantics of an expression. The same pragmatic processes can explain the bound readings too.[22] Suppose that a chef is describing how an important dinner in his restaurant went:

(116) The customers were very happy. Everyone had a delicious dinner.

Here we can hear the reading that each person had a dinner that they themselves considered delicious. The pragmatic account says that there is no binding involved, and the "bound" reading is merely a consequence of the usual free enrichment based on interpreting the intentions of the speaker and on other contextual clues. The reading that is most relevant in the context is that each guest at the restaurant had a dinner that was delicious to them.

Now suppose that the next day a group of adolescents on a class trip eat at the restaurant. They don't like the fancy food and complain to their teachers that that they'd rather eat fast food. The chef is upset and says:

(117) Everyone had a delicious dinner but they complain! What ungrateful brats, I hope they choke on their factory farmed burgers.

Here the context makes it clear that the relevant reading is one where the teenager customers are *not* among the relevant experiencers who get to determine what counts as delicious. Hence the pragmatics-based account can in principle predict the same interpretations as the semantics-based account without positing a covert argument for predicates of taste.

In the previous chapter we contrasted semantics- and pragmatics-based contextualist accounts of predicates of taste. However, it's important to distinguish between pragmatics-based contextualism for predicates of taste and a pragmatics-based explanation of bound readings. One can adopt the latter without being a contextualist about taste predicates at all as long as one has no objections to truth-conditional pragmatics. For example, Pearson (2013) defends a view according to which predicates of taste express a kind of generic reading (e.g. *delicious to one*) which the speaker makes on the basis of her own experiences. Pearson-style view would be entirely compatible with a pragmatic explanation of bound readings where the context makes it clear that the default reading is not the relevant one.

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[22]Note that Recanati, one of the main defenders of truth-conditional pragmatics, has another explanation for bound readings. See p. 7.2.1 above.

7.2.4 How to Distinguish Semantics- and Pragmatics-Based Readings

As the literature on the semantics / pragmatics distinction has made clear it can be notoriously hard to decide whether a certain interpretation of an utterance is a consequence of context-based saturation of hidden variables or of free enrichment. Without any constraints on the examples it's possible that the semantics provides only the free reading which is then pragmatically enriched to what looks like a bound reading. This is especially true of the examples offered in the literature where the author always states the desired reading. As is well-known, the effects of contexts on the possible interpretations can be enormous (for great examples, see Searle (1978)). Therefore stating which readings the sentence is supposed to have can make a huge difference to whether they can be heard or not.

Now, free enrichment is based only on contextual clues and hence, pragmatics-based bound readings are available exclusively when the context requires such a reading for what is said to be relevant. But if the bound reading is available as a matter of semantics, there is always a choice between the free and the bound reading. Here as well the contextual clues (linguistic or extralinguistic) will determine the appropriate reading, but even if the context rules out one of the readings as inappropriate we can still hear it. Here are some examples:

(118) Alex told Bob he wanted to date his mother.

Here *his mother* could be bound either by Alex or Bob, but in any ordinary context we expect it to be bound by Bob. However, we can hear both readings. We saw another example before:

(109) Every sports fan in the country was at a local bar watching the playoffs.

The free reading –all the sports fan were in one bar– is ruled out by the context due to its absurdity (supposing the speaker is not in a tiny country). But we can still hear it, we just happen to know it's not the intended one.

In contrast, readings that are based on pragmatics are available only when the context prompts them. For example, we've seen that the semantics of gradable adjectives requires a unique comparison class: "They're all tall" normally cannot be true in a context where the heights of the people vary from 100cm to 215cm, even if one is tall for a 10-year old, another for a basketball player, third

for a jockey and so on. However, if the context makes it clear enough what is intended, normally unavailable readings can be heard thanks to pragmatic free enrichment.

For example, suppose that researchers are studying couples where one partner is much larger than the other in order to see whether the smaller partner will eventually become larger due to the sharing of eating habits. Each subject comes with a partner who is much larger than they are, but there are huge size differences between each "large" person. One researcher checks whether the subjects are ready and reports:

(119) Everyone has a large partner.

In this case we understand the utterance as "Each subject has a partner that's large compared to them". But there clearly isn't a covert perspective variable in *large* that's bound by the quantifier, and the reading is possible only given the special context.

The lesson from the considerations about the mandatory nature of saturation is this. To be sure that we are testing for bound readings that are due to covert variables we should use examples that exclude the default reading. A reading where the variable is bound by the quantifier ought to be available as a matter of semantics if there is indeed a covert variable. However, if the sentence sounds infelicitous, that means that the semantics does not make available a bound reading. The infelicity results from the ruling out of the default reading, and of the absence of a context that would provide a plausible pragmatics-based interpretation.

7.2.5 The Tests

We have seen that the indexicalist versions of contextualism for predicates of taste account for their perspective dependence by positing a covert variable. Here are some examples from the literature where one is supposed to hear a bound reading. Below each I have given a quasi-syntactic structure which shows how the hidden variable associated with the predicate is supposed to depend on the quantifier:

(120) Everyone had a fun vacation. (Glanzberg, 2007)

(121) Every x had a vacation that was fun for x.

(122) Everyone ordered something tasty. (Richard, 2008)

(123) Every x ordered something that was tasty for x.

To find out whether the apparent bound reading is a product of semantics, what we need is an example where the default reading is not available. If the result is an infelicitous sentence that shows that semantics does not provide a bound reading. Now, there is something like a consensus that the default reading of a judgment of taste depends on the speaker. In the indexicalist framework that means that by default the value of the perspective variable is bound by the speaker. Speaker-dependence gets support by the oddity of examples like the ones below:

(124) This pizza is tasty but I don't find it tasty.

(125) The dinner we had was delicious but not for me.

These examples are not necessarily infelicitous since the speaker could have non-gustatory reasons for disliking tasty pizza or delicious dinner (e.g. moral reasons, a diet or dirty plates). However, they do sound strange and make one wonder of whose taste the speaker is talking about.

(I) Excluding the Default Reading

The method to test the origins of bound readings should thus exclude the speaker-centered reading, leaving the bound reading as the natural interpretation. We do this by giving a quantified sentence which potentially allows for a bound and a speaker-centered reading, and then adding a sentence which makes the speaker-centered reading impossible. The hearer is forced to give up the speaker-centered default interpretation and if possible, give another interpretation to the sentence, in these cases the bound reading.

Our method for excluding the speaker-centered reading is to add *to / for me*, which according to indexicalists makes the perspective variable explicit.

Here are some examples:

(126) Everyone cooked something tasty. But what they cooked wasn't tasty to me.

(127) Most national dishes are delicious. But to me only the French ones are delicious.

(128) Some guests had cute partners. But I found none of them cute.

Now, these sentences sound truly odd but they should be perfectly fine if the bound readings were a genuine semantically provided alternative reading.[23]

It is worth pointing out that Glanzberg (2007) and Schaffer (2011) defend what we've called *flexible contextualism* which holds that the perspective may be that of some other individual(s) than the speaker. Since our test leaves open the possibility of other free variable interpretations besides the speaker-centered one, they also work to evaluate the plausibility of flexible contextualism. If the example sentences sound even slightly infelicitous, this sheds serious doubt on the claim that semantically we have a wide variety of options for the value of the perspective argument.

We can also test the existence of bound readings without excluding the speaker-centered reading. A predicate of taste where the covert perspective variable isn't made overt by e.g. *to me / to John* etc. will get a contextually assigned value. Hence the following should be perfectly ok:

(129) Everyone met a pretty girl. But they weren't pretty.

(130) Each diner had a delicious pizza. But they weren't delicious.

(131) Every professor had a good-looking date. But they weren't good-looking.

Now, these sentences sound radically infelicitous. But there is no reason for that according to indexicalism, since the first sentence of each pair is supposed to get a reading where the variable is bound by the quantifier, and the second a reading where the variable is bound by some contextually salient perspective, as made explicit below:

(132) Every professor x had a date that was good-looking according to x. But they weren't good-looking according to me / us / etc.

These cases are even stronger evidence against a covert variable since they leave more flexibility for the reading that's not bound by the quantifier. Hence the results don't depend on the correctness of the view that the default perspective is the speaker's. Nevertheless they are compatible with that view as well.

(II) The Negation Test

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[23]It might be worth noting that some people who read the examples reported that the they only make sense if one takes the first occurrence of the taste predicate as if appearing inside quotation marks; the unreflected adding of quotation marks might explain why the examples sound ok to some.

Marti (2006) came up with the *Negation Test* to check the availability of bound readings. The test relies on the fact that with standard context-sensitive expressions one can negate, affirm or otherwise comment on the inexplicit but contextually provided parts of the content. Hence the test hypothesis is that if a sentence has a certain contextually provided reading, that reading can be negated. If the negation sounds infelicitous it shows that the alleged reading wasn't available.

To illustrate how the test works let me first give examples containing *bona fide* context-sensitive expressions: *tall,* a gradable adjective and quantifier expressions. In the first case Alex is contemplating his chances of being elected to the faculty basketball team.

(133) a) Alex: I won't be elected for the team, I'm too short.

b) Bernice: No, you're not, even if you're too short for NBA.

Here Bernice correctly interprets Alex as referring to the standards of tallness for basketball players in the faculty team. Similar examples can be given of quantifier domain restriction. In the next case Alex and Bernice are about to celebrate Alex's being elected to the basketball team.

(134) a) Alex: Everyone will join us later.

b) Bernice: Not everyone; Peter can't come since he's sick, but everyone from the team is coming.

Here Alex intended to restrict *everyone* to everyone in the faculty, which consists of different individuals than the team. Finally, an example with a bound reading:

(135) a) Alex: Everyone bought their wine from a local shop.

b) Bernice: No, they didn't; John bought his from our local shop.

Bernice's answer in (135) would not be felicitous if the only available reading of Alex's utterance was the unbound *shop local to us.*

Now, here are some examples with predicates of taste:

(136) a) Anastasia: Everyone was listening to boring music.

b) Bob: ??No they weren't; although to me the music was boring.

Here Bob is supposed to have negated the bound reading "Everyone was listening to music that was boring to them", but his comment sounds plain infelicitous.

(137) a) Agatha: Poor children! Each had a disgusting sandwich for lunch.

b) Boris: ??No, they didn't; but the sandwiches were disgusting to me.

Here Boris is trying to negate the bound reading "Each child had a sandwich that was disgusting to him / her", but again it's purely infelicitous. These cases are thus quite unacceptable, and the contrast with the above felicitous cases is remarkable (note that in (137b) the only acceptable interpretation seems to be *No, they didn't have a sandwich*).[24] Hence we can take the results of the Negation Test as particularly clear evidence against the claim that there are bound readings that result from binding the perspective variable.

7.2.6 Binding and Attitude Reports

A case that I haven't yet discussed is attitude reports. Perhaps attitude reports are evidence of binding the perspective variable? Here are some examples:[25]

(139) Everyone thought their meal was tasty.

(140) Everyone said they had a fun vacation.

(141) John thinks roller coasters are fun.

(142) Some people find liquorice tasty.

Certainly with these there is no problem in adding a sentence that rules out the speaker-centered interpretation:

(143) John thinks roller coasters are fun, but they are not.

(144) John thinks roller coasters are fun, but to me they are not.

But there's no reason to think any binding is going on in the attitude reports. They are reports of a doxastic state of the agent which can be false. That is

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[24]I have tested the sentences with many people who agree with the felicity judgments stated here. However, an anonymous referee gave me a following example which s/he took to be a positive result for indexicalism from the Negation Test:

the Smiths go out for ice cream. Ma only likes chocolate, Pa only likes vanilla, Suzy only likes rum raisin, and Billy only likes mint chip. But today there is only chocolate. Ma orders everyone chocolate.

(138) a) Ma: Everyone got something tasty

b) Suzy: No we didn't; but we all got something tasty to you.

To me Suzy's utterance sounds absolutely infelicitous so I consider the example as another piece of evidence against the indexicalist.

[25]The examples were given by an anonymous referee who claimed that they are clear cases of bound readings.

the natural interpretation of the two sentences above: the speaker is reporting John's thought and adding that he is wrong. We can give parallel cases where there's obviously no binding involved:

(145) Every student thought Geneva is the capital of Switzerland, but it's not.

However, we haven't shown there is no binding in the taste cases. The indexicalist could insist that there is and say that we have the burden of proof to show that there isn't. However, claiming that there is binding will lead them to serious trouble. The following is clearly infelicitous:

(146) #John knows that roller coasters are fun, but they're not.

The indexicalist cannot explain the infelicity. Let me go through their options. If there is binding of *fun* by *John*, the truth-conditions of the first clause should be as follows:

(147) John knows that roller coasters are fun for him.

Now, regarding the second clause *but they're not*, the indexicalist seems to have a choice. First option is that there is an ellipsis to the entire previous clause so we get the following truth-conditions:

(148) John knows that rollers coasters are fun for him, but they are not fun for him.

Given that *knows* is factive the sentence is contradictory which is good news for the indexicalist: it would explain the infelicity of (146). But unfortunately they cannot adopt the explanation since then the non-factive attitude reports would be infelicitous as well. But as we've seen, they are not:

(149) John thinks roller coasters are fun, but they are not.

(150) John finds roller coaster fun but they are not.

(151) John said roller coasters are fun but they are not.[26]

The indexicalist is hence forced to accept the other option regarding the second clause, namely that the elided *fun* is free and it gets a contextually assigned value. For example:

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[26]One option is to claim that the latter clause indeed elides the perspective of the first one, but the speaker is pointing out that John is mistaken about his own taste. However, the option is quite unacceptable since it goes totally against our intuitions about what the reports say.

(152) John knows that roller coasters are fun for him but they are not fun for me.

But under that interpretation there is no explanation for the infelicity of (146). After all, the above sentence is perfectly felicitous, and it's supposed to make explicit a salient reading of (146).

Let me summarise the argument. The indexicalist says that attitude reports are examples of bound readings of taste predicates which pass our tests. Hence they claim that the predicate of taste is bound by the matrix subject in attitude reports. When we add a clause which negates the predication, the indexicalist must give an account of what is the value of the perspective variable in the negated clause. If they opt for ellipsis of the perspective in the first clause they incorrectly predict that non-factive attitude reports like (149) are infelicitous. If they say that the perspective is provided by the context, they incorrectly predict that factive attitude reports like (146) are felicitous. Hence positing binding in the attitude reports systematically leads to bad predictions.

7.3   Summary of Chapter 7

The aim of this chapter was to review some linguistic data that has been claimed to support semantics-based contextualism for predicates of taste. First we looked at *to / for x* phrases which Schaffer (2011) claims make explicit a perspective argument that is normally covert. We saw that there is no good evidence to think so.

The rest of the chapter discussed certain readings that many have claimed to result from a quantifier binding a covert perspective variable. I argued that readings that appear to be due to binding of a variable can result from pragmatic enrichment of the sentence uttered. The bound readings of judgments of taste support indexicalism for predicates of taste only if there is evidence that the readings result from semantics.

I've presented tests which rely on the fact that in uncontroversial cases of syntactic / semantic binding we can hear the alternative readings even when some of them are excluded as irrelevant given the context. By the same token, with quantified sentences containing predicates of taste we should hear the readings bound by the quantifier and bound by some salient perspective. However, our tests show that ruling out the default reading where the relevant experiencer is the speaker systematically results in infelicity rather than forcing us to hear

the bound reading. The tests thus give very strong evidence against the view that predicates of taste have a covert perspective variable.

Moreover, the results clash with the predictions of flexible contextualism which holds that there are many choices for the perspective. If many alternative perspectives were available our test sentences should receive felicitous interpretations, but as we have seen they sound systematically odd. The next chapter will look in more detail a particular flexible contextualist account.

8 Flexible Contextualism

In this chapter we discuss Michael Glanzberg's (2007) flexible contextualism which posits an experiencer class to account for the variation in perspectives. The experiencer class is part of the lexical semantics of predicates of taste and its value is determined by the context. The value of the experiencer class is supposed to be flexible, ranging from just one individual to a group or anything in between. One can see the appeal of the view in light of our previous discussions of how the choice of a relevant experiencer may influence the felicity of judgments of taste. In a contextualist view like Glanzberg's the relevant experiencer can be identified with the experiencer class, and the truth-conditions of judgments of taste would thus match the contextual variation in relevant experiencers.

Despite of its initial appeal I will argue that flexible contextualism faces very serious problems. I show that in ordinary cases where the participants to a conversation have even slightly different tastes Glanzberg's account predicts two kinds of undesirable results:

(i) Once the context-sensitive elements get their values, the truth-conditions in a context can be highly unintuitive to the speakers. That causes them to make mistaken truth-value judgments about their own and others' judgments of taste.

(ii) The compositional semantics might not be able to deliver a semantic value for a predicate of taste and hence some judgments of taste do not express propositions at all.

In subsection 8.4 I summarise other problems that critics of contextualism have presented. The final section returns to pragmatics-based contextualism to evaluate whether it can avoid the problems that semantics-based flexible contextualism faces.

8.1 Glanzberg's Account

Glanzberg (2007) takes as his starting point the semantics of gradable adjectives by Kennedy (1999; 2007; 2013) and Kennedy and McNally (2005) which we discussed in chapter (3): *Gradability and Perspective Dependence.* We saw there that even if gradability causes indeterminacy over the standard for the application of an adjective, the resulting "faultless disagreements" are not *the* faultless disagreements that the theorist of taste is concerned with. The main

problem was that without a perspective a judgment of taste doesn't get the kind of truth-conditions that can do justice to our intuitions about them. Consider for example the following judgments:

(153) Hagfish are large creatures.

(154) Hagfish are disgusting creatures.

The dimension of largeness (large in e.g. weight, height, or volume) together with a comparison class will provide the ordering of the relevant objects, and the context will set the standard which determines whether (153) is true. Hagfish may be large if they are compared to most fish but small if they are compared to mammals. Likewise, whether hagfish is disgusting will depend on what it is being compared to. However, even after the comparison class is determined we still need a perspective to decide the ordering and the standard of disgustingness.

Glanzberg modifies the theory of Kennedy and McNally by adding an extra argument for an *experiencer class* to the semantics of predicates of taste. Hence, the context determines an experiencer class which together with the comparison class (and possibly a dimension) orders the objects on a scale. And finally, the context determines a standard, aka a threshold for whether an object has the property in question or not. Glanzberg holds that the choice of the experiencer class is highly flexible so that it can consist of for example just the speaker, all the participants to the conversation or just the addressee. Here is how we may paraphrase the content of a judgment of taste:

(155) Ann: This hagfish pie is delicious.
= The degree of gustatory quality of this hagfish pie is higher than the standard of gustatory quality S, for an experiencer class E.

Suppose that Ann is eating the hagfish pie with Bob. If the experiencer class includes them both, then it looks like Bob can disagree with Ann's judgment in the very classical sense of disagreement as a dispute over the truth of a proposition. The way to ensure that there can be a single proposition under dispute is to allow for enough flexibility in how the members of the the experiencer class get chosen, so that no matter what kind of a group is discussing their tastes may be taken into account.

An important detail of Glanzberg's account is his commitments regarding the metasemantics of context-sensitive expressions. In Ch. 6: *Two Contextualist Approaches* we contrasted two possible metasemantics for context sensitivity, one based on speaker's intentions and the other based on the context more

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broadly speaking. Glanzberg is explicitly committed to the latter view which he calls *indirect metasemantics*. In other words "the context" resolves the semantic values of the context-sensitive elements based on various features such as speaker's intentions, their taste, the aims of the conversation and so on.

Unfortunately Glanzberg doesn't provide a full account of how the experiencer class is determined or about what kind of an operation provides an ordering of objects on a scale on the basis of the tastes of the class members. Here's what he says about that:

> I am not stipulating that enjoyment as experienced by E is uniformly determined by any norm on E. I am not, for instance, insisting that it be enjoyment by the average member of E. It might be in some cases, but not others. It thus appears to be up to context to work out the right scale of enjoyment or of gustatory quality, given E. (Glanzberg, 2007, 13)

> There are a great many options for fixing a scale for an adjective like *fun*, once the experiencer class is fixed. Among the more obvious are those which amalgamate the subjective experiences of enjoyment for people in the group, e.g., taking the minimum enjoyment value across the group (*fun* means fun for everyone), or the maximum value (*fun* means fun for someone), or an average (*fun* means average fun for the group). Often, predicates of personal taste get a kind of generic reading (*fun* means fun for the typical or generic member of the group). (Glanzberg, 2007, 15-16, footnote 13)

Let us next look at different cases in order to see what kind of predictions we get with Glanzberg's account.

8.2 Problems for Glanzberg's View

In this section I show that Glanzberg's view gets highly unintuitive predictions when the experiencer class has people whose grounding experiential states differ. The bad predictions fall in two classes. In some cases the judgments of taste get highly unintuitive truth-values which cannot be tracked by the participants to the conversation, causing them to make false truth-value judgments. In other cases the semantic mechanisms cannot provide values for the context-sensitive elements and consequently the judgments of taste don't express propositions.

The way we proceed is by looking at a particular case and then checking what results we get with the operations that Glanzberg lists above as determining the scale for a predicate of taste. Here are the options he mentions:

(1) Amalgamate the subjective experiences of enjoyment for people in the group:

(1a) Take the minimum enjoyment value across the group (*fun* means fun for everyone).

(1b) Take the maximum value (*fun* means fun for someone).

(1c) Take the average value (*fun* means average fun for the group).

(2) Choose an average experiencer: the predicate of taste gets a generic reading (*fun* means fun for the typical or generic member of the group).

8.2.1 Highly Unintuitive Truth-Values

Here is the first case:

> ***The apparently fun festival.*** A group of friends are at a music festival. Each of them like most aspects about it, but nobody likes everything about it. Afterwards they are discussing how the festival was. For each attribution of fun such as "Watching the bands was fun" or "Playing music on the camp site was fun" one of them disagrees and says the thing in question wasn't fun.

Let's go through the options of how the scale gets determined. First, let us suppose that the experiencer class is the group of friends. What the comparison class is doesn't really matter but we can stipulate that they are comparing the activities and events that took place in the festival. Now let's suppose that the context amalgamates the experiences of the friends (option 1).

Suppose *fun* means *fun for everyone* (1a). In other words, the events at the festival get ordered on a scale based on how many persons experienced the event as fun. The standard in the context is set so that only events that everyone considered fun count as fun. Now, each positive judgment made by the friends is false since no event was fun for everyone. Only the dissenting persons got it right in denying that the events in question were fun since no event was fun for everyone. So here we have a case of highly unintuitive truth-values: each speaker is speaking sincerely on the basis of their own experiential state but given the contextual mechanisms almost all of them end up speaking falsely. Moreover, those who speak the truth (namely the dissenters) wouldn't know that they did, any more than the others knew that they spoke falsely.

Suppose *fun* means *fun for someone* (1b). Each positive judgment about the festival is true. However, the judgments made by the disagreeing friends who didn't think that so-and-so was fun are all false: they would be true only if the so-and-so wouldn't have been fun for anyone. Again we have plenty of judgments with highly unintuitive truth-values. Just like all the others, each dissenting friend made the judgment sincerely on the basis of their own experiential state so they have no reason to suspect they spoke falsely any more than the others did.

Suppose *fun* means *average fun for the group* (1c). Here we face the question of how can one calculate the average fun for the group. One plausible way is to take each individual's ordering of events according to how much fun they are, exclude events that are low in fun for enough many and keep ones that are fun to at least a moderate degree for everyone or most. If the event needs to be at least slightly fun for everyone, then the problem is the same as with (1a): given the dissenters, each positive judgment is false. If it's enough that most find the event at least moderately fun we have the same problem as with (1b): the positive judgments are true but the dissenters' judgments are false.

Finally, there is option (2) where *fun* means something like *fun for the typical / average member of the group.* One way to find the average member is to take each member's judgments that they make merely on the basis of their own experiential states, and to see which member agrees most with as many other people's judgments as possible. We thus get a person who agrees a bit with many. Alternatively we imagine a hypothetical person whose judgments are a coherent combination of the judgments that are commonly made by the group members. Here the problems are the same as with (1c): the persons who differ from the typical member say falsehoods.

We've seen that each mechanism results in highly unintuitive truth-values for some or all of the judgments of taste in the context. Is there a way around the problem? Let me go through some options that might seem helpful. First, as we've set up the case, each judgment is agreed on except by a dissenter. Isn't it plausible that the context simply excludes the extreme tastes? As we mentioned in the previous chapter one can be excluded from being a relevant experiencer if one's taste is too different. Now, suppose that a dissenter is excluded from the experiencer class. The problem is that they are speaking in the same context as everyone else so the semantic value of *their* judgment of taste will depend on the experiencer class from which they are excluded. Hence in any context where one happens to be a dissenter one automatically speaks falsehoods.

Let us next consider the same festival case but with degrees of disagreement. The case is thus more natural than the previous one since we have persons with extreme opposite views and then everything in between. For example, some hated sleeping in a tent, others loved it and the rest fall somewhere in between. Again (1a) will result in the falsehood of all the positive judgments. The ones who didn't enjoy the activity in question get it right –but again, not because the truth depends on their experiential state but because not everyone had fun. (1b) will result with true positive judgments and false negative judgments. So here we have much more falsehoods that in the simpler case since this time there is more divergence in opinions. And again, not only is there a lot of falsehoods, the ones speaking falsely won't be able to know that they speak falsely, any more than the ones that speak truly will know it.

Here we may add an additional problem related to the contextual mechanisms. In chapter 1: *Judgments of Personal Taste* we introduced the Intuition of No Fault, and mentioned Foot's (2002c) objections to it. She held that one can easily be mistaken in for example thinking that one's wife is good-looking. Glanzberg's flexible contextualism has to give up the intuition of faultlessness too since as we've seen, speakers are easily mistaken and speak falsehoods. Of course that need not be a problem since the upside of the coin is that speakers can genuinely disagree. However, the consequence of the contextual mechanisms by Glanzberg is a problem which we may call the *Arbitrariness of truths about taste.*

As we have seen, what determines the truth-conditions in Glanzberg's account depends on the tastes of the experiencer class and on how the context operates on those tastes. But these mechanisms put together the tastes of the experiencer class blindly, taking into account only numbers: for example, how many people hold that sleeping in a tent is fun. The consequence is that the truth-conditions are arbitrary from the point of view of the speakers. For example, in cases of type (1a) truth requires that everyone agrees; but as a speaker, I'm not sensitive to that feature in the sense that if the group had one more member who would disagree, I would still make the same judgment.

The variation in truth-value is arbitrary because it depends on features that the speakers and hearers cannot track: the tastes of others. I take this to be one of the core problems of Glanzberg's contextualism. The arbitrariness of how the truth-values of judgments of taste are determined causes those truth-values to be totally unintuitive to the speakers. An additional problem caused by untrackable truth-values is that the view predicts that people disagree irrationally. If a

person who belongs to the experiencer class says not p but you've believed that p until that moment, you should suspect that you've made a mistake. So why would people disagree with someone when the other person's judgement is offering them evidence that they might be wrong about the contextual standard?

The above-mentioned problems are serious enough, but there are more. Von Fintel and Gillies (2011) criticise contextualism about epistemic modals as follows. A particular problem with the idea that people make utterances without any idea of their truth-values is that the practice is seriously in conflict with most existing views on norms of assertion. The same criticism applies equally to Glanzberg-style contextualism. Which norm (if any) governs assertion is an open question and we don't need to presuppose any particular account for our purposes. However, Unger (1975) and Williamson (2000) have made a plausible case for the knowledge norm which is the most demanding of the alternatives, and therefore we may assume that the norm is at least somewhat strong. If the norm is something like justified belief, then how can the theory explain its prediction that people make judgments of taste even when the experiencer class includes people whose tastes are entirely unknown to them? If you roughly understand how the truth conditions are determined (as contextualism assumes), then you simply would not assert a judgment of taste in such cases, since you are nowhere near a justified belief about the matter.

8.2.2 Discussion

First comment that one might make about the above cases is that they presuppose something the contextualist need not accept, namely that people make judgments of taste merely on the basis of their own tastes. The contextualist could respond by saying that as we acknowledged when discussing the grounds of judgments of taste, sometimes the grounds include beliefs about the experiential states of others. When there are other relevant experiencers besides the speaker, they cannot rely only on their own experiential states. And as we've seen, sometimes the speakers don't take themselves to be relevant experiencers at all if for example the discussion is about other people, there is an ideal experiencer around or their taste is deficient.

Hence, a contextualist that wants to avoid the problem of unintuitive truth-values will say that the grounds will match the experiencer class. For example, if the experiencer class is the speaker the grounds is the speaker's experiential state. But if the experiencer class includes all the participants to the conversa-

tion, then the grounds are the speaker's beliefs about the experiential states of everyone in the group. If Brant is speaking with Alice about whether retsina wines are tasty, he will make his judgment on the basis of his experiences of retsinas and of his beliefs about Alice's experiences. Now, if his judgment is false, that's a consequence of a false belief about Alice.

There are two things to say in response to the proposal. First, the unintuitiveness does not come from a mismatch between the grounds and the truth-conditions. It comes from how the truth-conditions get calculated by "the context" which operates on the experiential states of different people in ways that cannot be tracked by the speakers. Why they can't be tracked is precisely because they do not depend only on the intentions or beliefs of the speakers. Thus, given the metasemantics of context sensitivity that Glanzberg adopts, the grounds cannot match the truth-conditions. At best the speaker can try to guess how the truth-conditions will be calculated on the basis of the experiencer class.

Second, the view that the grounds of judgments of taste are always a combination of the speaker's experiential state and their beliefs about the states of the others in the experiencer class is implausible. When we discussed who are the relevant experiencers we saw that in each case the context made it clear: for example when the aim of the conversation was to plan activities for a children's camp; when someone asks you what things are fun to do in the city; when someone you know to share your taste asks whether a party was fun; or when someone you don't know asks whether a party was fun and you know that you experienced it differently from the majority. Each of those cases make manifest either who the relevant experiencer is, or that there is a choice to be made due to discrepancies in taste.

Now, the cases we have discussed in this chapter are much more ordinary discussions about taste where the point seems to be to precisely to assert how one experiences the relevant object. When you're speaking with someone about whether a show was fun you don't expect them to be making a guess about whether it was fun for them *and you* (and all the others). You just want to hear their opinion. What confirms this intuition is how people talk about taste. If flexible contextualism were the correct account, we should expect judgments of taste to be much more hedged and cautious than they are since after all, people would be trying to guess how others experienced things.

To illustrate, a discussion about taste where the experiencer class includes the speakers would probably go like this (let's suppose *funny* in the context

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means *funny for everyone*):

(156) Ari: [After seeing a comedy with Beth and Chris] Did you find it funny?
     Beth: Yes, how about you?
     Ari: No, not really.
     Chris: I found it funny.
     Beth: I found it funny too. But ok, it wasn't that funny.

Beth's odd-sounding conclusion should be entirely natural and true if contextualism were correct. We can construct more strange dialogues by changing the meaning of *funny* in the context to e.g. *funny for someone*, in which case Ari would have to conclude "Ok, so it was funny".

Another feature predicted by contextualism which doesn't correspond to actual disagreements about taste is people's retraction behaviour. If discussions about taste were the kind of cooperative processes as the contextualist claims it would be quite typical for people to simply retract what they said if it turns out that others don't agree, since normally the truth of their judgment essentially depends on the views of others.

To summarise, if judgments of taste really were so concerned with the tastes of others,

(a) We would be foolish not to find out about the tastes of others before making judgments,

(b) Our judgments would systematically take the opinions of others into account, and

(c) We would retract our judgments once it turns out they didn't correspond to the experiential states of the others.

However, in the vast majority of cases we do none of these things, and discussions like (156) just don't happen.

8.2.3   No Proposition Expressed by a Judgment of Taste

Let us now consider another case which illustrates the second kind of undesirable prediction: judgments that fail to express propositions.

> ***Comedies that are neither funny nor not funny.*** Ann and
> Ben have just seen a Clint Eastwood comedy and they are evaluating whether it was funny in comparison to Eastwood's two other comedies; call the comedies A, B and C. Ann judges that A is funny

while C and B are not whereas Ben judges that C and B are funny
while A is not.

Let's say that the experiencer class consists of just Ann and Ben. Let us suppose
that if the experiencer class would only consist of Ann, the ordering of the
movies would be <C, B, A> and the standard is set so that only A is funny.
Let's further suppose that if the experiencer class had only Ben the ordering
would be <A, C, B>, and only B would be funny given his standard. These are
the facts based on which the context should order A, B and C on a scale and
determine a standard.

In this case we needn't go through the different ways in which the context
can amalgamate the tastes of the experiencer class since there simply is no way
to do that. The context is supposed to order the objects on a scale according
to the degree of funniness that they have, and the degree is supposed to be
calculated by amalgamating the tastes of the experiencer class. But if the tastes
are different enough as in this case, there is no coherent ordering that can take
the tastes equally into account.

The consequence is that the semantics cannot deliver a scale on which to
map the objects and hence no proposition gets expressed. This has some other
serious consequences. First, the speakers do not say anything truth-evaluable by
their apparently reasonable and coherent utterances. Second, since they don't
express propositions they can't be disagreeing either. But worst of all, none
of this is in any way transparent to the speakers. If we imagine how Ann and
Ben's discussion would go, presumably they would say things like "The first
movie with the ape was the funniest" - "No, the second was better", without any
idea that there was something wrong with their utterances.

Now, the example I've presented is simplified so that we see the structure of
the problematic cases, but we can see that the same structure is present in large
number of ordinary discussions of taste. The feature that causes the problem is
the lack of agreement in the tastes of the experiencers. The same issue will arise
in any case where people's tastes are different enough and there are equal num-
bers of differing tastes so that there's no way to exclude marginal viewpoints.
And cases of very different tastes are entirely ordinary so if contextualism were
correct we should expect there to be a lot of flawed conversations about taste.

The reason why cases of radically different tastes produce truth-valueless
utterances have to do with the way the contextual mechanisms are supposed to
determine the scale and the standard. Since in an ordinary context the taste of

each member of the experiencer class weighs equally, in case they're too different there are only arbitrary ways to resolve the problem by e.g. randomly excluding some members. Now, the contextualist has the option of biting the bullet and accepting that indeed people are quite confused when they talk about taste so it's no surprise that sometimes their utterances aren't truth-evaluable. However, that's a radical conclusion that shouldn't be accepted lightly.

8.3 Possible Solutions?

8.3.1 An Analysis of the Problems

The core problem with flexible contextualism is that in explaining disagreements it makes the truth-conditions and thereby the truth-values too independent of the tastes of the speakers. We saw that the problem of simple subjectivism was that it couldn't explain disagreements of taste since the semantic content of a judgment of taste is a report of the speaker's experiential state. That is not something that can systematically be a topic of disagreements. Flexible contextualism fixes that problem by making the judgments be reports of experiential states of an experiencer class.

But now we have somewhat the opposite problem: there might be a content that could reasonably be disagreed about, but the content is too far removed from the experiential states of the speakers. Hence they themselves could not know under which conditions their judgments are true (since they don't decide how the scale and standard are determined). Thus disagreements of taste become mysterious since people don't know the truth-conditions of their judgments. Thus they might actually disagree over the truth of some proposition p (e.g. "Surströmming is delicious for everyone in the experiencer class E") whose content has been determined by the context. But as has been emphasised they make their judgments on the grounds of their own experiential states, and would not realise that they are actually claiming something about everyone in the context. It just isn't plausible that people's judgments of taste are attempts at saying something about the experiential states of others.

In short, any plausible theory about judgments of taste has to maintain a link between the grounds of judgments and the truth-conditions of judgments so that the speakers are able to track the truth. For example, if a person judges on the basis of their own experience but the truth of the judgment depends on something entirely independent of those grounds, say, the hearer's experience, then they are not able to track the truth. We can imagine that to happen with

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e.g. a person who fails to see any colours but who nevertheless tries to make colour judgments. Their grounds bear no reliable relation to what makes the judgments true so their judgments are like guesses and their chances of getting them right are poor. Flexible contextualism claims that ordinary speakers are in a similar predicament. And the larger the experiencer class is the more difficult their situation becomes. Hence the theory predicts that speakers very often speak falsely about matters of taste and if they do speak truly, that is mostly due to luck.

8.3.2 Indirect Metasemantics

The lack of transparency of the truth-conditions is due to the indirect metasemantics that Glanzberg advocates for context-sensitive expressions, i.e. the idea that it is "the context" that determines their semantic values based on various features. So the obvious first move to fix the problem is to move to direct metasemantics, i.e. where the intentions of the speakers determine the values of the context-sensitive elements, within reasonable limits: the speaker has to follow the usual Gricean conversational maxims and intend something salient enough that the hearers can understand.[27]

However, Glanzberg is explicitly against direct metasemantics which he takes to be a core feature of semantic relativism, echoing Richard (2004) who claims that contextualism has to have indirect metasemantics whereas relativism –to its advantage– has direct metasemantics. I don't think that's the case, and as we will see when discussing relativism, it's unclear which metasemantics the relativists besides Richard accept. For the moment let us suppose that the contextualist could adopt direct metasemantics. Hence, a speaker in a context should select an experiencer class and based on her beliefs about the tastes of the people in that class determine the ordering and the standard.

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[27]Unfortunately it's outside the scope of our concerns to discuss the differences between semantic minimalism, i.e. theories which deny that pragmatics has any influence on semantic content and the non-minimalist approaches (known as "contextualism" in the debates, see e.g. Borg (2004; 2012) and Cappelen and Lepore (2005)). We will be simply assuming with the current mainstream "contextualist" theories that the intentions of the speakers may determine the semantic content of some expressions.

The minimalist wouldn't accept any accounts that posit direct metasemantics as determining semantic content. However, they typically hold that what the contextualist takes as semantic content is rather pragmatic content, i.e. something inferred based on the minimal semantic content in context. Hence they could mirror the direct metasemantics account by taking it to describe the pragmatic level of content. In general minimalist and contextualist accounts can predict pretty much the same data but they would take it to result from very different processes. For an insightful discussion of how to choose between the two approaches see Unger (1984).

To illustrate, take the example where the friends are discussing whether the different aspects of the music festival were fun. For each positive judgment there is one friend who negates the judgment and we get an impression of disagreement. To explain the disagreement the contextualist says that they are disagreeing over what's true for the experiencer class. Suppose one of them says "Sleeping in a tent was fun". According to the contextualism with direct metasemantics the speaker judges so based on his evaluation of what amalgamating the tastes of the experiencer class determines as fun. To put it bit more intuitively, he's saying something like "We all had fun sleeping in a tent" and to say that, he's had to form an idea of the degrees of fun of the festival happenings according to the group.

There are two very strong reasons against the contextualist account with direct metasemantics. Speakers don't seem to have intentions about experiencer classes and especially not about ways of amalgamating their tastes and determining an ordering and a standard. Naturally we don't expect the speakers to have those intentions as described by the formal account as intentions about "experiencer classes" etc. Nevertheless they should be representing the kind of semantic contents that the theory predicts for example by thinking "Given the average taste of our group of friends, sleeping in a tent was fun". Now, there are some cases where the speaker intends to speak in behalf of others as we saw when discussing the relevant experiencers. However, according to the view under discussion the experiencer class must be chosen for *each* use of a predicate of taste. That clearly doesn't happen.

Now, if speakers have intentions about something, the standard view takes those intentions to be transparent to them. I should flag that I will dispute that view in Ch. 14: *Perspectivism*. Nevertheless, the method I recommend there as allowing us to attribute intentions wouldn't attribute the intentions that the flexible contextualist needs, so let us therefore focus only on transparent intentions.

When it comes to determining whether or not an expression's semantic value is determined by intentions, the arguments in favour usually refer to what the speaker had in mind when making the utterance.[28] One way to see that speakers

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[28]For a classic example, take Donnellan's (1966) arguments for distinguishing referential and attributive uses of definite descriptions. One of his examples is the utterance "Smith's murderer is insane", first made by a speaker who doesn't know the murderer and who merely intends to attribute insanity to whoever the murderer is. That is the attributive use. The second, referential, use of "Smith's murderer is insane" is made when it's common ground that Jones is the murderer, and the intention is to refer specifically to Jones. Donnellan argues that the difference is brought out most clearly if it turns out that Smith had no murderer: the

don't have the intentions in question is by looking at disagreements of taste. If speakers needed to determine the context-sensitive values, there would often be misunderstandings by the hearers of what they had in mind. And those misunderstandings should be evident to the speakers.

Let me give an example of such a misunderstanding with respect to *local*, an arguably intention-sensitive expression. Suppose Bob calls Carla and says "I'm at the local bar. Join me." Carla takes Bob to mean local to Bob, and when she can't find Bob at his local bar he calls him to ask where he is. Bob realises her misunderstanding and says "I meant *your* local bar." In other words, when intentions determine a semantic value, the speakers know what they intended and if they are misunderstood they will recognise it. In contrast, it doesn't seem like your average Joe knows which experiencer class and standard they intended when they make a judgment of taste. Nor can they notice if someone misinterprets what they had in mind.

Since direct metasemantics doesn't help, the flexible contextualist is stuck with predicting that judgments of taste have unintuitive truth-values, they lead to irrational disagreements and sometimes they express no propositions. One radical option is to bite the bullet and say that judgments of taste and disagreements about them are often confused and people don't know what they are saying or when it's true. Now, of course that is a possibility, and for example error theorists in metaethics are pretty much saying something similar about moral judgments. But why would you posit something as complicated as the flexible contextualist semantics when you could get the same predictions by adopting semantic invariantism coupled with an error theory? We discuss error theories in Ch. 13: *An Error Theory for Discourses About Taste.*

8.4 Other Problems for Flexible Contextualism

8.4.1 Disagreement Reports

Mark Richard (2004) presents a problem for contextualism that is based on reporting judgments that contain allegedly context-sensitive expressions. His example is a report about judgments of whether a person is rich, but the same problem applies to contextualist accounts of predicates of taste. Richard points out that agents from different contexts can be reported as disagreeing. That's

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first utterance fails to refer whereas the second still refers to Jones, making the first utterance false or truth-valueless and the second utterance true (if Jones is insane). He concludes: "In general, whether or not a definite description is used referentially or attributively is a function of the speaker's intentions in a particular case." (Donnellan, 1966, 297).

a problem for contextualism since the context-sensitive expressions in the judgments get different contents and the judgments are thereby not contradictory. Let me illustrate:

(157) (a) Arthur (in context 1 which includes Arthur's friends and Clare): *Borat* was really funny.
(b) Bob (in context 2 which includes Bob's friends and Clare): *Borat* wasn't funny.
(c) Clare (in context 3 which includes Clare's friends): Arthur and Bob disagree over whether *Borat* is funny.

The question Richard asks is what is the disagreement that is reported in cases like above. Flexible contextualism would say that what counts as funny in each context above depends on the experiencer class, say, the participants to the conversation. Therefore Arthur and Bob whose friends we suppose to be different attribute different properties to *Borat*. Hence, they don't disagree at least in the sense of expressing contradictory contents.

So one problem is why compatible judgments can be reported as a disagreement. But a further problem is that in the report Clare is using *funny* herself, so its semantic value now depends on Clare's context. Therefore, Clare is saying that Arthur and Bob disagree over whether *Borat* is funny given the standards of funniness of Clare and her friends. That's clearly absurd.

We can add another issue related to reports not discussed by Richard which is the discrepancy between the felicity of reports of judgments with *bona fide* context-sensitive expressions and predicates of taste. Here is an example with *local*:[29]

(158) (a) Arthur: (with Clare in Manor House): The local wine shop is really bad.
(b) Bob (with Clare in Summertown): The local wine shop is great.
(c) Clare (with her friends in Dalston): ??Arthur and Bob disagree over whether the local wine shop is good.

This dialogue illustrates how absurd it is to ignore the effects of the context on *local*. First, no English speaker would report Arthur's and Bob's utterances out of their contexts without making explicit where was their locality. Second, no

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[29]The reader can try the same with e.g. indexicals and demonstratives, quantifier domain restriction and locational expressions like *in front, behind, nearby, next door, above* etc. None of these allow the kind of reports that predicates of taste do.

one would take them as disagreeing. Third, no one would take them as having said anything about the current context, i.e. Dalston in the above example. The dialogue above is bizarre; so why isn't (157) bizarre given that the context-sensitivity of *funny* is supposed to be like the context-sensitivity of *local*?

However, in defence of contextualism we should note that there are cases where two apparently contradicting judgments of taste are made in different contexts but where it would be infelicitous to report the speakers as disagreeing. Cappelen and Hawthorne (2009, 109) give examples that aim to show that apparently contradicting judgments of taste made in different contexts don't always give an intuition of contradiction. What's relevant for our purposes is that when there is no intuition of contradiction, it would be infelicitous to make a cross-contextual disagreement report. Let me give their cases to illustrate.

In the first case a caterer says "That party is not going to be fun. I have to cook *hors d'oeuvres* all night". In a separate conversation another person says of the same party "That party is going to be fun. I get to meet lots of school buddies that I haven't seen in a long time." The second examples is of a child who says "The summer is going to be fun. I get to go to music camp." The parent says in a separate conversation "The summer is not going to be fun. I have to work overtime to pay for my child's music camp."

In these cases we don't get an impression of disagreement nor could we felicitously report the speakers as disagreeing. This data is important to take into account in addition to the data about felicitous cross-contextual disagreement reports since it shows that some sensitivity to contexts is taking place at least in some cases. Now, those cases don't *require* contextualism to be explained but they can be used to defend contextualism.

We saw in ch. 5: *The Grounds of Judgments of Taste* that felicity of judgments of taste in general depend on who the relevant experiencer is. In the above cases the speakers make it clear with their justifications that they are the relevant experiencers. Hence one can either take the cases as evidence for contextualism together with the relevant experiencer data, or treat both as independent of truth-values and having to do with pragmatics only.

8.4.2 *Says That* Reports

If one wants to report an utterance that contains indexicals or demonstratives in a context where the expression would get a different semantic value, one has to replace it with an expressions that refers to the correct referent. For example,

the following is clearly unacceptable:

(159) (a) Alice (in context 1 with her family and Clare): I'm hungry.
     (b) Clare (in context 2 with her family): Alice said I'm hungry.

Since indexicals and demonstratives behave so with *says that* reports, several philosophers have argued that a felicitous cross-contextual *says that* report where the embedded content remains unchanged shows that the reported content is contextually invariant (see e.g. Cappelen and Lepore (2005)). Now, judgments of taste allow for cross-contextual *says that* reports like the following:

(160) (a) Alice (in context 1 with her family and Clare): Souley Vegan's food is delicious.
     (b) Clare (in context 2 with her family): Alice said that Souley Vegan's food is delicious.

Clare's report is perfectly felicitous and natural, despite of her reporting Alice's utterance in a different context. Thus the acceptability of judgments of taste in cross-contextual *says that* reports might be taken as evidence against their context sensitivity.

Cappelen and Hawthorne (2009) defend contextualism of predicates of taste against the claim that only context-insensitive expressions allow cross-contextual *says that* reports. They define *Easiness* as follows: "Let us say that a sentence S exhibits *Easiness* if true disquotational says-that reports for S are easy to achieve across a wide range of environments." (Cappelen and Hawthorne, 2009, 34). They also claim that Easiness obtains for e.g. *left* and *nearby*, and they argue that since those expressions are obviously context-sensitive it would be crazy to think that Easiness matches with context insensitivity.

However, *left* and *nearby* (or any similar locational expressions for that matter) are intuitively not easy to report disquotationally. Here is an example:

(161) (a) Arthur: (with Clare in Manor House): The restaurants nearby are popular.
     (b) Clare (with her friends in Dalston): ??Arthur said that the restaurants nearby are popular.

A competent speaker would never make such a report *unless* the context in (161b) was such that the location under discussion was Manor House, not Dalston.

Sentences containing *left* or *nearby* can be truthfully reported only if the context where the report is made provides the same semantic values as the original context, either because it's relevant features are the same or if the original context is more salient than the current context. In any other case the speaker has to make the relevant adjustments to speak truly, e.g. "Arthur said the restaurants near Manor House are popular." Hence *left* and *nearby* are not easy to report cross-contextually, and the same can be said of *ready* and *to have enough*, Cappelen and Hawthorne's other examples of alleged Easiness.

Cappelen and Hawthorne further mention some gradable adjectives as allowing for easy reporting. However, we should note that if one ignores the comparison class when reporting judgments with gradable adjectives the report is infelicitous or false. Here is an example:

(162) (a) Arthur (while talking to Clare about a 5cm long spider found at his English home): This kind of spiders are huge.
(b) Bob (talking to Clare about the same kind of spider 5cm spider at the spider section of a zoo that's full of much bigger spiders): This kind of spiders are pretty small.
(c) Clare (to Bob at the zoo): ?? Arthur thinks they're huge.

Maybe the reports isn't as obviously bad as in (161), but it certainly sounds like it's doing injustice to what Arthur thinks. Note that this kind of infelicity is common to all gradable adjectives, including predicates of taste. Since it's extremely plausible that gradable adjectives have context-sensitive comparison classes, in this respect the *says that* data gives us results that support the view that context-sensitive expressions can be reported only when they get the same semantic value in the reporting context.

In short, there is some plausibility to the claim that cross-contextual *says that* reports are not ok with context-sensitive expressions. At least the contextualist about predicates of taste will have to give a story to explain the different linguistic behaviours of predicates of taste and the expressions that are commonly accepted to be context-sensitive. What the data does show is that if the expressions that allow cross-contextual reports are context-sensitive, their context-sensitivity is not so transparent to the speakers as in the case of e.g. indexicals and demonstratives.

8.4.3 Retractions

One linguistic datum that has played an important part in the anti-contextualist literature are retractions of one's previous utterances (MacFarlane, 2005a). Mac-Farlane's original criticism targets epistemic contextualism but the same problem arises for judgments of taste. Here is an example of a retraction of a past judgment of taste:

(163) (a) Anna (time *t1*): Hiking is fun.

(b) Anna (time *t1* + 1 year): I was wrong when I said hiking is fun. It's actually boring.

Suppose Anna at t1 utters the proposition which expresses roughly the same as *At t1 hiking is normally fun for Anna*. But only roughly; let me make a couple of remarks about our paraphrase. First, we are not supposing that *Hiking is normally fun for Anna* means exactly the same as what the contextualist takes (163a) to express. Rather, we are using it as a shorthand for the proposition that refers to experiences of Anna.

Secondly, I've added *normally* since as was mentioned earlier the analysis would probably want to refer to the normal experiences of the agent / group, thereby allowing for temporary defects in them. There might seem to be a clash in saying *At t1 normally* since the time refers to an instant and normality requires that we look at extended times. What I intend to mean by it is that around t1 Anna enjoys hiking if things are as usual. So, strictly speaking a more accurate contextualist paraphrase is something like *At t1, Anna normally enjoys hiking*, but we will be using phrases of the form *x is F for P* because they are simpler.

The problem with contextualism and retractions goes as follows. According to contextualism, utterances like (163a) are typically true if the relevant perspective is that of the speaker. They know their own experiential states so if the grounds includes nothing else and they are in a normal state, then they speak the truth. Now, when a speaker takes back what they said they seem to deny the truth of the proposition they uttered previously. Hence, in (163b) Anna seems to be saying *At t1 I was wrong when I said hiking was fun*. But according to contextualism Anna's utterance (163a) was, is, and will be true: it expresses an eternal proposition whose truth-value is fixed. So why would Anna be retracting a true utterance and say that she was wrong when she wasn't?

Thus, contextualists have to explain why speakers would retract perfectly correct and true judgments they've made earlier. But additionally, they have to

explain the differences between the expressions that are widely considered to be context-sensitive and predicates of taste. MacFarlane (2005a) points out that knowledge claims can be easily retracted afterwards in contrast to utterances containing indexicals or gradable adjectives. Judgments of taste can likewise be easily retracted later.

As far as I know, no contemporary defender of contextualism for taste predicates has an explanation for why people retract their past judgments of taste. One could try to argue that when people say they were wrong or said something false they are only speaking loosely. Foot (2002c) states the loose talk view in her discussion about judgments of taste, morality and aesthetics:

> 'Disagree' is (to use an expression of Miss Anscombe's applied by her in a different context) 'a light word'. If you find something pleasant and I do not, or you find some food delicious and I do not, we can say 'how we disagree'. My suspicion is that the existing use of 'true' and 'false', and the choice of an objective form of expression ('it is right'), does have a role but a rather disreputable role. When we say that something 'just is' right or wrong we want to give the impression of some kind of fact or authority standing behind our words, though by hypothesis both are here ruled out, maintaining the trappings of objectivity though the substance is not there. Perhaps there is not, in the language already, a subjective form of words which will say just what we want, but we do not have to keep the language as it is. (Foot, 2002c, 9).

The view could also help with the problem of disagreement reports discussed above: even if speakers aren't disagreeing in the true sense of the word it's ok to say loosely that they are. However, the loose talk explanation falls short of explaining many of the problems. First, it cannot explain the impression of disagreement we get with apparently contradictory judgments of taste. And as we saw in the cases of Cappelen and Hawthorne, the impression correlates with the felicity of reporting the speakers as disagreeing.

Second, it cannot account for the discrepancy between the *bona fide* context-sensitive expressions and predicates of taste. If *disagree, true* and *false* are capable of such light uses, then why aren't they used over the board with all context-sensitive and subjective expressions? After all, we have seen that there is a difference between the behaviours of predicates of taste (as well as moral and aesthetic expressions) and other context-sensitive expressions when it comes to

reports and retractions.

A more plausible explanation posits some "semantic blindness". Such a view would hold that predicates of taste are context-sensitive but not as transparently as the ordinary ones. Hence, when a person retracts their past judgment of taste they are making a mistake: the judgment was true, but the speaker now thinks it's false because she is unable to take the perspective of her past self. In evaluating the past judgment she uses the same sentence in the current context which results in a false proposition. Since the context-sensitivity in question isn't entirely transparent, the speaker doesn't realise that the contextually saturated content isn't the same as in the past content.

DeRose (2006) has tended towards accepting some semantic blindness about *know* (while insisting that invariantism must do the same given people's pro-contextualist intuitions). Cappelen and Hawthorne (2009, 120-1, footnote 30) admit that it's not easy to decide between an error theory and a contextualist account which posits some semantic blindness. We'll discuss the semantic blindness strategies in more detail in Ch. 14: *Perspectivism.*

However, one consideration in favour of contextualism should be mentioned. Just like disagreement reports are not systematically felicitous with apparently contradicting judgments of taste, one isn't always forced to retract one's previous judgment of taste even if one's taste has changed. Here is an example:

(164) (a) Anna (t1): Hiking is so much fun!

A year later, Anna has changed her mind:

(165) (a) Anna: Hiking is pretty boring.
(b) Bob: But last year when we went hiking you said it was fun!
(c) Anna: Well, I was different then. Hiking used to be fun but since then I discovered surfing and now I find hiking boring.

Even if Bob were to insist "So you were wrong last year?", Anna can say "I wasn't wrong, it's simply that my taste has changed." This kind of exchanges favour contextualism or other perspective-dependent views that take the relevant experiencer to be the speaker. To conclude, the perfect theory must be able to explain both retractions and cases where one does not retract.

8.5 Can Pragmatics-Based Flexible Contextualism Do Better?

This chapter has looked at a semantics-based flexible contextualism where the context sensitivity is due to the lexical semantics of predicates of taste. But one could advocate flexible contextualism where the context sensitivity is based on the intentions of the speakers instead. We outlined a pragmatics-based contextualist account earlier in section 6.3. Would it make a difference to the predictions of flexible contextualism if it was a pragmatics-based account? The answer is that mostly it wouldn't.

First, a pragmatics-based flexible contextualist would be like semantics-based contextualism with *direct* metasemantics, i.e. according to both views it is the intentions of the speaker that determine the relevant experiencer class in judgments of taste. Hence the same criticism can be made towards the pragmatist: people typically don't have intentions regarding experiencer classes. Moreover, the problems of reports and retractions are likewise shared by the pragmatics-based account. Indeed the same problems are even more pressing for an account which expects the speakers to have intended a certain experiencer class. Such a view is not consistent with any amount of semantic blindness regarding speakers and their knowledge of what they've said.

However, a pragmatics-based account has one distinctive advantage. We've seen that predicates of taste cannot be lexically context-sensitive since it isn't compatible with all the data. But since our discussion of relevant experiencers we have emphasised that there is some amount of flexibility in whose experiences count, and it depends on the speaker's intentions whether the relevant experiencer includes others than the speaker. Moreover, we emphasised that not every apparently contradictory judgment of taste gives an impression of disagreement, and speakers don't always retract their earlier judgments of taste. All that is evidence that sometimes speakers do intend a perspective and that hearers are able to interpret certain judgments as referring to a perspective.

Let us call such uses *subjectivist uses of predicates of taste*. Subjectivist uses are ones where a speaker intends the judgment to refer to a certain salient perspective. These are like the cases by Cappelen and Hawthorne which give no sense of disagreement, and in which a speaker would not retrospectively retract their judgment. Moreover, the hearers who correctly interpret subjectivist uses will not report them cross-contextually without making explicit the intended perspective. Furthermore, if a hearer misunderstands the speaker's intentions,

the speaker will not enter a disagreement but will state something like "I meant [predicate of taste] to me".

What I will argue is that the data mentioned above is explained by subjectivist uses, and hence a pragmatics-based flexible contextualism is right about them. But those uses are only a minority of uses. Let us call the rest *objectivist uses of predicates of taste*. These are the ones where speakers don't intend a perspective, they disagree with each others, feel compelled to retract their past judgments, and freely report judgments of taste cross-contextually. Now, many would surely question the existence of the different kinds of uses. I won't argue for it now, but the need for the distinction will become stronger once we see the problems of other perspective-dependent accounts in accounting for all the data. I return to the two uses in Ch. 13: *An Error Theory for Discourses About Taste.*

8.6   Summary of Chapter 8

Flexible contextualism is motivated by the desire to explain at least partially all three of the prominent intuitions about judgments of taste. The Intuition of Many Relevant Perspectives is explained by positing an experiencer class, the Intuition of No Fault is explained by the cases where the experiencer class includes only the speaker, and the Intuition of Disagreement is explained by taking the speakers to disagree over the truth of a judgment that is about an experiencer class that contains many people.

The aim of this chapter was to argue that flexible contextualism like Glanzberg's account ends up with serious problems. The view holds that the content of a predicate of taste is determined by "the context", a mechanism which takes various features and outputs the ordering of the objects and the standard. I've argued that speakers are unable to track how the truth-conditions of their judgments get determined, and hence the judgments will have truth-values that are highly unintuitive to everyone in the conversation. Moreover, people won't know what the truth-conditions of their judgments are or whether they or the others spoke the truth. Therefore, the view doesn't in the end respect the Intuition of No Fault.

The second major problem are cases where a judgment of taste doesn't express a proposition since the tastes of the participants are so different that the contextual mechanisms cannot deliver an ordering. And again, it is in no way transparent to the speakers that there is anything wrong with their

discourse. I argued that the problems cannot be avoided in a view which takes the truth-conditions to depend on features that are unknown to the speakers (i.e. the tastes of others), in ways that are unknown to the speakers (i.e. the mechanisms of "the context").

I considered further whether it would be helpful to adopt "direct" metasemantics instead, i.e. metasemantics for context-sensitive expressions where the speakers' intentions determine the value. I argued that it's totally implausible given our lack of intentions about experiencer classes. Finally, I summarised three problems for contextualism from the recent literature. First is that judgments of taste made in different contexts can be reported as a disagreement, even if according to contextualism there isn't a unique content over which the disagreement could be about. Second problem is that judgments of taste allow disquotational *says that* reports across contexts, whereas other expressions that are generally considered context-sensitive don't. Third, unlike with other utterances containing context-sensitive expressions, it's normal to retract a past judgment of taste once the relevant contextual parameter (i.e. one's taste) has changed.

Contextualists don't have plausible answers to any of the problems discussed in this chapter, so I conclude that its current forms are not successful. Finally I considered whether pragmatics-based contextualism can do better. Mostly it faces the same problems as semantics-based contextualism. However, I argued that pragmatics-based contextualism is a plausible view if one distinguishes between uses where the speaker explicitly intends to talk about their own taste ("subjectivist uses"). But those are a minority of uses. The true challenge are the uses which create problems for contextualism, namely where the speakers feel they are disagreeing, they report judgments of taste across contexts and they retract their past judgments. Let us next look at whether semantic relativist accounts can do better than contextualism.

Part III

Semantic Relativism

9 Moderate Relativism

In this part we discuss two recent and controversial semantic accounts of predicates of taste. The first is *moderate relativism*, also known as *non-indexical relativism* or *genuine relativism*. The second one is *radical relativism* which also goes by the names *relativism, assessment-relativism* or *assessment sensitivity*.[30] Both frameworks usually build on David Kaplan's (1989b) "double-indexing" semantics which distinguish between propositional content and the circumstance of evaluation which determines the truth of the proposition. Some authors prefer to use David Lewis's (1980) framework which talks of an index instead of a circumstance of evaluation but we will describe the views within Kaplan's framework.

Several defenders of truth-relativism have given as their main motivation the need to provide non-traditional semantics to predicates of taste. That is the primary motivation for Peter Lasersohn (2005) as well as for Max Kölbel (2003; 2009), and an important motivation for Mark Richard (2004; 2008). John MacFarlane (2007; 2014) also takes taste predicates as a case in favour of his view, among a couple of other expressions.[31] Our focus will be on how the views fare in their explanations of the data about predicates of taste so we will not attempt a general assessment of the need for semantic relativism. However, given that many of the views we discuss put heavy weight on their alleged ability to provide the best semantics for taste predicates, their failure in that task will take away a large part of the motivation for relativism.

In the first chapter of this part we will focus on moderate relativism and

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[30]Here is some background behind the different labels: *non-indexical relativism* and *genuine relativism*, names used by e.g. Kölbel (2003) contrast with *indexical relativism*, a name for contextualism by Wright (Wright, 1994). The labels *Moderate* and *radical relativism* draw a parallel between the two views which take truth to depend on parameters additional to a possible world. I prefer the latter labels since we are mainly interested in contrasting forms of relativism with contextualism. Sometimes moderate relativism gets called *non-indexical contextualism* after MacFarlane (2009) who draws a parallel with *indexical contextualism* because both views hold that the truth of an utterance is determined by the context of utterance. However, it is not clear whether every moderate relativist view is committed to that; the issue will be discussed in Ch. 10: *A Closer Look at Relativist Accounts*.

[31]François Recanati (2007; 2008) also offers a moderate relativist account of predicates of taste but his motivations for his branch of relativism are independent of the success of that particular case.

on whether the basic idea of distributing elements from the content to the circumstance of evaluation is helpful in explaining disagreements of taste. I first introduce the basic Kaplanian framework and the modifications the relativists have made to it. We then look at the motivation for moderate relativism, focusing on an argument against speaker-centered contextualism by Kölbel and Lasersohn. One of the issues that have been widely discussed in the literature on relativism is "faultless disagreements" and what they are supposed to be. We look at Kölbel's original definition and his later pronouncements about it as well as the arguments that aim to show that faultless disagreements are not disagreements at all. The final section discusses whether contents that cannot be true when evaluated relative to the same circumstance of evaluation give an impression of disagreement when their circumstances of evaluation are different.

9.1 Moderate Relativism in a Nutshell

Let me first summarise Kaplan's (1989b) semantics which we will use in our characterisation of what makes a semantics relativist. Kaplan distinguishes between a *content* which is what gets evaluated for truth, and a *circumstance of evaluation* which is the actual or possible world which makes the content true or false. The content is determined by the *characters* of the expressions in the sentence, together with the context of utterance in case of context-sensitive expressions. In the relevant literature *content* is often called a *proposition*; however, since the notion of *proposition* used by the relativists is not the traditional one, I mostly use the term *content* to avoid confusion.

The circumstance of evaluation is roughly a situation (actual or merely possible) which determines which truth value the content that is expressed gets. Hence, truth depends on the content expressed and on the circumstance of evaluation. In more formal terms, a character is a function that given a context returns a content, and content is a function that given a circumstance of evaluation returns a truth-value. Which circumstance of evaluation is the relevant one for a particular utterance is fixed by the context of utterance according to Kaplan.

What makes a semantic framework relativist in the sense we are interested in is the idea that contents are true or false relative to something more than just a world of evaluation, i.e. the circumstance of evaluation contains other parameters than just the world (Kölbel, 2009). For example, one can think of tenses as provided by the circumstance of evaluation rather than them being an element

of the content (Kaplan, 1989b). Other parameters that have been defended include locations to account for how utterances which do not explicitly mention a location can be true (Recanati, 2007), epistemic standards (Egan et al., 2005; Stephenson, 2007a), standards of taste (Lasersohn (2005); Stephenson (2007a); Kölbel (2003)) and moral standards (Brogaard (2012); Kölbel (2004)).

9.1.1   Duality and Distribution

To clarify the basic idea, let me follow Recanati's (2007) presentation of semantic relativism as endorsing two core tenets:

> *Duality.* To get a truth-value, we need a circumstance of evaluation as well as a content to evaluate.

> *Distribution.* The determinants of truth-value distribute over the two basic components truth-evaluation involves: content and circumstance. That is, a determinant of truth-value, e.g. a time, is either given as an ingredient of content or as an aspect of the circumstance of evaluation. (Recanati, 2007, 33-34)

The consequence of distribution is that the more parameters the relativist adds, the more incomplete the contents to be evaluated are. The tradition that dates back to Frege takes contents as having a truth value absolutely, but the Kaplanian semantics takes contents to get a truth value only relative to a world. Relativists move even further away from the Fregean tradition by taking contents to be true or false only relative to for example a time, world and agent.

This clearly has consequences for the roles that contents can play, for example whether such incomplete contents can be the contents of thoughts. We will return to that question in Ch. 11: *Relativism and Contents of Thoughts.* For the moment it is good to keep in mind that by *content* (or *proposition*) we only mean the content of an utterance, and remain noncommittal about what other roles it may have.

9.1.2   Relativist Contents: Lekta and Austinian Propositions

Given the relativist's nonstandard notion of content / proposition, we will adopt another useful piece of terminology from Recanati (2007). He distinguishes between two notions of content: *lekton* (*lekta* in plural) and *Austinian proposition.* We will discuss later whether the distinction applies to thought contents,

but for now let us focus on language. Lekton is the explicit content of an utterance, sometimes called the "thin" content, which is what is evaluated for truth relative to a circumstance of evaluation. Austinian propositions consist of the lekton expressed together with a circumstance of evaluation. In other words, they correspond to the Fregean notion of proposition or Thought which have a fixed truth value.

For the sake of illustration, suppose that circumstances of evaluation only have parameters for a world and a time, i.e., the truth of a lekton is relative to a world and a time. Suppose Andi says to Bob "Our hippopotamus is crossing the road" in Gower Street. Lekta correspond to utterance contents rather than sentence contents meaning that lekta are not context-sensitive. Hence, Andi expresses the lekta <A hippopotamus that belongs to Andi and Bob is crossing Gower Street>.

Now, what determines the values of the parameters at the circumstance of evaluation depends on the particular relativist account. In Recanati's account it's mainly dependent on the intentions of the speaker. Andi intends his utterance to be about the situation he is speaking in, and hence the relevant time is the time of utterance and the world the actual world. Thus, the Austinian proposition expressed by his utterance is <A hippopotamus that belongs to Andi and Bob is crossing Gower Street at 4pm, 8th December 2013 at the actual world>. If that's indeed the case then what Andi said is true.

Now, it depends on the theorists's commitments whether one treats certain elements required for resolving the truth of an utterance as belonging to the lekton or the circumstance of evaluation. Hence relativists and contextualists typically agree on the truth-conditions of particular utterances but disagree over whether a certain element of the truth-conditions is part of the content / lekton. As we will see, a large part of the motivation for relativism is that distributing an element from the content to the circumstance is supposed to allow for an explanation of the problematic linguistic data like disagreements and retractions.

As was mentioned, relativism about taste predicates is the most popular case for relativism in the recent literature. The starting point is the same as with contextualism, namely the need to explain how the truth of judgments of taste depend on a perspective. Relativism holds that the truth of a judgment of taste depends on a perspective without it being an element of the lekton. The core semantic idea is that the circumstance of evaluation contains an additional perspective parameter which needs a value for a judgment of taste to get a truth

value. Hence, the content of an utterance (the lekton) will be true depending on the world of evaluation and a perspective. But which perspective?

Whether or not an utterance determines a unique perspective and hence expresses an Austinian proposition depends on the theory. Recanati and Richard (2004; 2008) hold that the context of utterance determines the values of all parameters at the circumstance of evaluation. But as we will see, Lasersohn and Kölbel hold that when it comes to the perspective parameter, there is no unique relevant perspective relative to which the utterance gets evaluated. Therefore a judgment of taste doesn't express a unique Austinian proposition either. What that means exactly will become clearer when we get to the details of their views.

To illustrate the relativist framework in practice, suppose someone utters *Tofutti is better than cream cheese.*[32] The utterance does not have a truth value until we fix the values of a circumstance of evaluation, i.e. choose a perspective and a possible world. Hence the very same content / lekton can be true at a circumstance of evaluation that consists of say, the actual world and my perspective but false at the actual world and your perspective. As with different forms of contextualism, the crucial question is whose perspective a judgment of taste refers to. Likewise, with relativism the main question is what (if any) determines at which perspective the judgment is evaluated. Different theories differ in that respect, and it's the issue that also largely determines the linguistic predictions the views in question get. We will return to the question after discussing what motivates the move to relativism about taste predicates in the first place.

9.2 Motivation for Moderate Relativism for Taste Predicates

Lasersohn (2005) and Kölbel (2003; 2004; 2009) both take relativism to offer the best explanation for the three intuitions about judgments of taste. Both point out the implausibility of perspective-independent accounts for predicates of taste as well as the problems of speaker-centered contextualism. The key assumption behind the anti-contextualist and pro-relativist arguments concerns disagreements. Kölbel's and Lasersohn's arguments presuppose that there is disagreement (Lasersohn) or an impression of disagreement (Kölbel) if and only

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[32] *Tofutti* is a tofu-based imitation cream cheese which is advertised with the slogan *Better than cream cheese.*

if one speaker expresses a content and another one contradicts that content (or expresses a content which entails a contradicting content).[33] We discuss what is meant by "an impression of disagreement" below.

In the previous chapters we have seen that at least without some special story simple subjectivism in the form of speaker-centered contextualism is unable to explain why there seem to be disagreements of taste. By far we have remained largely neutral on the question of what is needed for there to be disagreement or what creates an impression of disagreement, but the assumptions made by relativists require that we begin to investigate the issues more carefully.

9.2.1 The Argument from Disagreement Against Speaker-Centered Contextualism

Below I have tried to spell out the relativist argument against speaker-centered contextualism in a nutshell. The argument shows how both Lasersohn and Kölbel have motivated relativism:

Argument against speaker-centered contextualism

(1) Whether judgments of taste are true or false depends on the speaker's perspective.

(2) If predicates of taste are context-sensitive, then the speaker's perspective is an implicit element of the content expressed by a judgment of taste.

(3) There is an impression of disagreement *iff* one expresses a content and another expresses a content which contradicts it.[34]

(4) There are impressions of disagreements about taste.

(5) Predicates of taste are context-sensitive. (Assumption)

(6) The speaker's perspective is an implicit element of the proposition expressed by a judgment of taste. (By 2,5)

(7) There are no impressions of disagreements of taste. (By 3,6)[35]

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[33]There are some complications with the idea that any two contradictory (or contradiction entailing) contents give an impression of disagreement since there might be say, a massively complicated argument and only a logical genius could see the contradiction. However, let us ignore such problems and focus on simple utterances like judgments of taste where such issues are likely not to arise.

[34]Or, as mentioned above, expresses a content which entails a contradicting content. For simplicity I will omit mentioning that from now on.

[35]To illustrate, when Mary utters *This sauerkraut is delicious*, by (6) she expresses the proposition *sauerkraut is delicious for Mary*. If Peter answers "No, this sauerkraut is totally not delicious" he expresses the proposition *No, this sauerkraut is totally not delicious for Peter*, and hence by (3) there is no appearance of disagreement.

(8) There are impressions of disagreements of taste. (4)

(C) It's not the case that predicates of taste are context-sensitive. (By 2-8)

This argument points out the so-called "Lost Disagreement" problem, and has been used as one of the main arguments against contextualism about predicates of taste. The argument is worth making clear since it shows the crucial assumption (premise three) in the debates, and why relativism seems to offer an easy way out of the problem of disagreements of taste. As was mentioned, the third premise gets different formulations, but in our discussion we will follow the weaker formulation by Kölbel (2009) which only talks about impressions of disagreement rather than disagreement.

The positive case for relativism is an inference to the best explanation which tries to show how the truth of judgments of taste can depend on a perspective without the perspective being an element of the content expressed. The suggestion is that the perspective is a parameter of the circumstance of evaluation. Hence, a judgment of taste gets evaluated relative to a perspective which allows for subjectivism of judgments of taste, including speaker-centering (premise 1). But given premise (3) (or rather, its modified version) about the relation of contradicting contents and appearances of disagreement, relativism gets to say that there are appearances of disagreements about taste (premise 4).

Here are instances of the argument from the literature. As was mentioned above, Lasersohn would construe the argument as speaking of disagreements rather than impressions of disagreements:

> It seems intuitively like sentences containing predicates of personal taste could be true relative to one person but false relative to another, but if we analyse them in this [contextualist] way, *it appears to force us into claiming that they express different contents for different speakers*, and then we no longer seem to be able to explain accurately *which sentences contradict each other and which don't*. (Lasersohn, 2005, 649-650; emphasis added)

> *To really disagree with John, Mary would have to negate a sentence that expresses the same content as his utterance*, not one that expresses the same character (Lasersohn, 2005, 647; emphasis ad-

ded)[36]

Lasersohn points out in the first quote that if we understand "true relative to one person but false relative to another" in the usual contextualist way, then the resulting contents aren't in contradiction. The second quote illustrates his view that disagreement requires the expression of contradicting contents.

Kölbel (2003) criticises contextualist approaches to disagreements of taste as follows:

> Indexical relativists [i.e. contextualists], by contrast, say that they [disagreements of taste] are not really disagreements, at least not in the sense required by clause (b) [sic] [*A* believes (judges) that *p* and *B* believes (judges) that not-*p*] of my definition of 'faultless disagreement'. (Kölbel, 2003, 62)[37]

In a later paper Kölbel (2009) claims that he didn't intend to say that relativism can predict disagreements either, merely appearances of disagreement. That will be discussed in the section below.

9.2.2 Impressions of Disagreement

Unsurprisingly, the third premise which is repeated below has been the one under attack:

> (3) There is an impression of disagreement *iff* one expresses a content and another expresses a content which contradicts it.

The first suspicion concerns the *if and only if* formulation. It seems evident that if two people express contradictory contents there is an impression of disagreement. Such cases are pretty much the prototype for our concept of disagreement. But aren't there other cases where we get an impression of disagreement and no contradictory contents have been expressed? *Practical disagreements* are cases where there is an impression of disagreement but it need not be that contradicting contents have been expressed. For example:

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[36]Lasersohn adds that "one may express disagreement with a previous utterance by asserting any sentence which contradicts it (or perhaps, any sentence which contradicts the result of adding it to the common ground), and not just by asserting the negation of its content." (Lasersohn, 2005, 647, fn 2)

[37]Kölbel must mean his clause (a), not (b); here are the two clauses that define faultless disagreement: "(a) *A* believes (judges) that *p* and *B* believes (judges) that not-*p*
(b) Neither *A* nor *B* has made a mistake (is at fault)." (Kölbel, 2003, 53-54)

(166) a) Arnold: Close the window!

    b) Billy: No, *you* close the window!

Imperatives are normally not considered truth-evaluable so talk of contradiction of contents isn't even applicable here. But one does get an impression of disagreement from the dialogue. There are many other examples of disagreement-like dialogues that don't concern contents but e.g. the expressions used, the way the contents have been expressed (e.g. how they are pronounced) and so on, and which nevertheless give an impression of disagreement (Sundell, 2011).

Now, it's not surprising that a popular contextualist strategy in explaining disagreements of taste has been to argue that many exchanges can give an impression of a disagreement without being disagreements over the truth of a content. E.g. Sundell's (2011) defence of group contextualism relies on refuting the relativist's strict notion of disagreement, in which case the anti-contextualist argument doesn't go through. Given even the uncontroversial cases of impressions of disagreement without contradicting contents (like that of imperatives), it's clear that the above kind of relativist arguments have been too quick to dismiss contextualism. In short, the third premiss is not acceptable as such and hence the argument against contextualism does not work.

However, even if there are other kinds of disagreements or apparent disagreements, it's not so easy to show that disagreements of taste are like them. If relativism can show that disagreements of taste do involve contradictory contents they are certainly in a better position than the speaker-centered contextualist. In what follows, let us accept the following modified premise about impressions of disagreement:

Impression of disagreement*: If one expresses a content and another expresses a content which contradicts it, then there is an impression of disagreement.

The modified premise allows that impressions of disagreement can come about other ways as well. Let me make some clarifications regarding the above clause. By there being an impression of disagreement we simply mean that one who witnesses an exchange or hears separate utterances would tend to judge (form a belief) that the agents or their utterances disagree. The *one* here is intended generically so that even if some particular witness wouldn't get an impression of disagreement in that case, generally one would. Given our formulation, we

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the theorists also count as hearers and hence we may simply consult our own impressions of disagreement.

The second clarification is about the notions of *content* and *contradiction*. In a non-relativist semantics two contents contradict iff it is impossible for them to be true at the same world. As we've seen, the relativist notion of content (lekton) is thinner since it distributes elements of content to the circumstance of evaluation, in this case in the form of a parameter for a perspective. So we suppose lekta are normally without a perspective. Consequently, in a relativist framework one needs to add a perspective to the definition of contradiction: two contents contradict iff it is impossible for them to be true at the same world and the same perspective.

Given the relativist's modified definitions of content and contradiction we can see that in a standard disagreement of taste the speakers contradict, as illustrated below:

(167) a) Arnold: Functionalist architecture is boring.

     b) Billy: It's not boring. It's beautiful in its simplicity.

Given that the relevant perspective is not part of the lekton, what Arnold expresses is *Functionalist architecture is boring*. Billy denies that by saying *Functionalist architecture is not boring*. The lekta expressed by Arnold and Billy do indeed contradict since both cannot be true at the same perspective.

However, the important question is whether the thesis about the impressions of disagreement make sense given the non-standard notion of contradiction that the relativists use. As was mentioned in a traditional semantics the thesis makes perfect sense because the expression of contradicting classical contents is a prototypical disagreement. And naturally a prototypical disagreement also gives the impression of a disagreement. So as regards the traditional picture, disagreements and impressions of disagreement go hand in hand.

Let us next take a closer look at the claim that relativism can explain disagreements of taste, and ask why clashing lekta would give an impression of disagreement.

9.3 Are "Faultless Disagreements" Disagreements?

9.3.1 "Faultless Disagreements"

In Ch. 1: *Judgments of Personal Taste* we discussed the three key intuitions that have guided the project of providing the semantics and pragmatics of predicates

of taste. The No Fault intuition has been emphasised primarily by semantic relativists. Here is a quote from Kölbel where he defines the famous notion of "faultless disagreements":

> A faultless disagreement is a situation where there is a thinker A, a thinker B, and a proposition (content of judgement) p, such that:
> (a) A believes (judges) that p and B believes (judges) that not-p
> (b) Neither A nor B has made a mistake (is at fault).
> I believe that most people have a healthy pre-theoretical intuitions that there can be and are faultless disagreements in this sense. (Kölbel, 2003, 53-54)

Hence, faultless disagreements are cases where (a) the people's belief contents contradict, but (b) neither is mistaken. Whether there are faultless disagreements has been intensively discussed in the literature on semantic relativism. Given the label *faultless disagreement* it is not surprising that the critics have taken Kölbel to be committed to faultless disagreements being disagreements in some intuitive sense. Moreover, the existence of disagreements of taste is one of the core assumptions behind the problem of taste which undoubtedly also explains why commentators have supposed that the relativists are trying to show how there can be disagreements about taste.

Many critics have argued that the relativist framework cannot say that disagreements of taste are really disagreements; at best they are misunderstandings. For example, MacFarlane (2007) argues that moderate relativists cannot explain disagreements about taste because what counts as disagreement ought to depend on one's view on contents. Since the moderate relativist's contents require perspectives for their truth, there is genuine disagreement only when one agent accepts a content, another rejects the same content, *and we hold all the parameters of evaluation fixed*. Hence, in the taste case MacFarlane holds there can be genuine disagreement only if the content is evaluated relative to the same perspective and the speakers disagree on its truth. Above we saw that the relativist notion of contradiction needs to take perspectives into account, and MacFarlane argues that the same holds for the relativist notion of disagreement.

9.3.2 The Principle of Semantic Competence

The problem in taking faultless disagreements to be disagreements is the following. According to relativists, speakers are aware that predicates of taste

are perspective-dependent, and hence that the truth of judgments of taste depends on a perspective. Stojanovic (2007) calls the general principle according to which speakers master the truth-conditions of their utterances the *Semantic Competence* assumption:

> Semantic Competence (SC): Speakers of English are semantically competent with predicates of taste: they master their meaning and truth conditions. (Stojanovic, 2007, 696).

The principle has been implicitly accepted by all the recent theorists of predicates of taste. In Ch. 8: *Flexible Contextualism* I briefly mentioned that one way out of the problems that the contextualists have is to accept that there is some "semantic blindness"; in effect that means giving up Semantic Competence. Currently no one has endorsed giving up the principle but we will discuss the option in the Ch. 14: *Perspectivism*.

The relativists are equally committed to the principle of Semantic Competence as the contextualists are, and we should emphasise that being semantically competent is a matter of knowing *truth-conditions*, not merely the content (whichever notion of content one uses).[38] To put the point in terms of Recanati's terminology, Semantic Competence implies that a speaker who makes a judgment of taste knows which lekton they've expressed, and under what conditions it is true, i.e. which Austinian proposition (if any) gets expressed by the lekton in the context.

Now, relativists also agree that typically the relevant perspective is the speaker's (see e.g. Lasersohn (2005, 670)). Given Semantic Competence, in an ordinary disagreement of taste it should be transparent to the speakers that the perspective that's relevant to the truth of their utterances is the speaker's perspective.[39] Since the truth-conditions –the Austinian proposition– contain the relevant perspective, from the point of view of the speakers the situation is exactly alike to the contextualist account of disagreements of taste. In other words, the speakers ought to know that both are judging based on their own tastes, and both judgments are also made true by their own tastes. Hence they

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[38]Note that Stojanovic's formulation talks of *mastery* rather than of knowledge. I don't think anything hinges on talking about knowledge instead, and I'm sure the relevant authors would accept the principle even if it was stated with *knowledge* rather than *mastery*. It's simply easier to talk of knowing the content of an utterance than of "mastering the content", whatever that would mean.

[39]The picture is slightly more complex than this due to the variability in possible perspectives. However, the cases most discussed by the relativists and used in favour of their view contain utterances whose truth depends on the speaker. How the perspective is determined will be discussed later in detail.

should take the other one to have spoken the truth from their perspective. Consequently, critics like MacFarlane (2007), Recanati (2007) and Stojanovic (2007) have argued that intuitively there isn't any "real" or "genuine" disagreement, at best a misunderstanding over the relevant perspective.

Recanati (2007) illustrates the problem with an analogous case where two clashing lekta are expressed but where the Austinian propositions do not contradict. The analogy is of judgments of taste and of utterances which are about a location that is not mentioned explicitly. Recanati himself holds that location-unspecific judgments have the same relativist semantics as judgments of taste so that if a lekton contains no location then the location is part of the Austinian proposition which determines the truth of the judgment. For example, suppose that I'm in London, I tell you by the phone "it's raining" and no other location has been made salient. Now, you're in Los Angeles and say "It's sunny". Two clashing lekta have been expressed (*It's raining* and *It's sunny*). But we wouldn't judge there to be disagreement, and we both understand that the truth of our utterances depend on our respective locations.

The cases of judgments of taste and locations are analogous even if one does not take locations to be an element of the circumstances of evaluation since in both cases it should be obvious (either due to pragmatics or to semantic competence) what the relevant truth-conditions are. In other words, even if the lekton contains no location or a perspective, the Austinian proposition does, and the latter are equally transparent to competent speakers as the lekta. However, there is a radical disanalogy with the behaviour of the two utterances since in our phone conversation you would never disagree with my utterance about rain even if you were in a sunny place. But people do disagree with judgments of taste.

There are numerous versions of the criticism in the literature (see e.g. Stojanovic (2007); Recanati (2007); Iacona (2008)). However, as was mentioned earlier Kölbel has later emphasised that he had coined the term *faultless disagreement* without intending to imply that faultless disagreements are either disagreements or faultless in any "pre-theoretical" sense:

> The basic evidence [for relativism of predicates of taste] consists in cases that might be called cases of "faultless disagreement". However, the basic evidence is not meant to consist in the purported fact that these cases do indeed involve both faultlessness and disagreement in some pre-theoretical sense. Rather, the evidence at

best consists in the fact that there *appears* to be faultless disagreement. [...] I take it that the existence of cases of *apparent* faultless disagreement like the one described [...] is uncontroversial. (Kölbel, 2009, 389)

So much for the healthiness of the pre-theoretical intuition that there are faultless disagreements, we might say. However, when we evaluate Kölbel's account we will be focusing on whether it can account for apparent disagreements of taste.

The terminology of faultless disagreements is Kölbel's, but Lasersohn (2005) advanced the very same lines of thought against contextualism and for relativism by claiming that it can explain disagreements of taste. But he didn't rely on an intuitive notion of disagreement either:

What I would like to suggest is that we *refine the notion of disagreement so that two people can overtly disagree* – we might even go so far as to say they contradict each other – *even if both their utterances are true.* [...] All we have to do is assign words like *fun* and *tasty* the same content relative to different individuals, but contextually relativize the assignment of truth values to contents, so that the same content may be assigned different truth values relative to different individuals. This will allow for the possibility that two utterances express identical semantic content, but with one of them true and the other one false. (Lasersohn, 2005, 662, emphasis added)

He concludes the discussion on relativist disagreement as follows:

The fact remains that in this analysis there is no matter of fact on which disagreements of taste turn. Such disagreements are in some sense "without substance." More, no doubt, should be said to clarify and justify the notion of "substanceless" disagreement, but this too will be left to further investigation. (Lasersohn, 2005, 684).

So we may suppose that Lasersohn's "substanceless disagreements" didn't aim to be "genuine" disagreements either.

However, before we conclude with the critics that moderate relativism cannot say that there are disagreements of taste it should be emphasised that the critics assume that disagreement requires a classical, eternal proposition (an

Austinian proposition) whose truth is under issue. But that claim is questioned by emotivists and expressivists, and more recently also by contextualists (Sundell, 2011). These alternative views on disagreement will be discussed in Ch. 12: *Normative Disagreement*. For the moment, let us leave open the question of what constitutes a disagreement and remain at the level of impressions of disagreement.

9.4   Contradictory Lekta and Impressions of Disagreement

Let us step back from the particular relativist accounts and consider more generally the idea that an impression of disagreement is due to the fact that speakers express lekta that cannot be true at the same perspective. The Kölbel - Lasersohn style relativist assumes that the formal difference of locating an element of the truth-conditions as a parameter of the circumstance of evaluation instead of the content makes for a difference in linguistic communication. The difference is supposed to be that since only the content (and not the values of the parameters) is linguistically communicated, an utterance and its negation causes an impression of disagreement between the speakers.

Now why should that be the case? Both *content* (or *proposition*) and *circumstance of evaluation* are purely technical terms and we are yet to be shown the link between the formal structure and language use. However, we do know that the relativist is committed to the circumstance-dependence of some other expressions than taste predicates. Thus, given that the distinction between content and parameters of evaluation is supposed to be responsible for the impression of disagreement, we can look at the other cases of parameter-relativity and see whether the disagreement phenomenon is present in them.

Many people have thought that times are best understood not as part of the content but as a parameter of evaluation (see e.g. Prior (1957);Kaplan (1989b)). Kaplan's view is that an utterance which makes no mention of a time gets evaluated relative to the time determined by the context of utterance. Temporal expressions are operators that "shift" the value of the time parameter at the circumstance of evaluation. For example, in *Tomorrow the prophet speaks* the relativist about times takes *tomorrow* to shift the time parameter so that we need to look at whether the embedded clause *The prophet speaks* is true on the day after the day of utterance. If it is true, then the whole sentence is true at the time of utterance.

Now, if one is a relativist about times, one certainly has to hold that the

utterance context determines the value of the time parameter. Normally it's the time of utterance, sometimes some other salient time. The importance of pragmatics in interpreting tenses is shown by languages like Finnish which have no future tense or other expression that's systematically used to mark the time (such as the English modal *will*); sentences about the present and the future are often identical so the hearer must figure out from the context which time the speaker intends to talk about. Let us now look at three variations of a case where a person hears two contradictory tenseless lekta, i.e. two contents which cannot be true at the same time.

Scenario 1. Alex, Berit and Carlo are flatmates who are invited to the pub on Saturday, but they haven't decided whether they are going. Alex is talking on the phone about his trip to Oslo next week. His friend on the phone asks whether he wants some advice about good bars to which he responds "We're not going out". Carlo hears Alex's utterance and takes him to mean that he's decided that they'll all stay home that evening. After a while Berit shows up and says to the others "Get ready, we're going out". Carlo has an impression of disagreement from Alex and Berit's utterances since he interprets them both to be about that Saturday night.

Scenario 2. Imagine the same setup. Things are as before but this time Alex's phone conversation can be heard via the phone's loudspeaker. In this scenario when Berit shows up and says "Get ready, we're going out", Carlo doesn't get the impression that Alex and Berit are disagreeing since he interprets Alex's utterance as being about next week and Berit's about that evening.

Scenario 3. Imagine the same setup again, except that Alex is not talking on the phone. Instead he lies on the sofa and says to Carlo "We're not going out, I want to stay home". Berit shows up and says "Get ready, we're going out". This time Carlo does get an impression of disagreement from Alex's and Berit's utterances since he interprets them both as being about that Saturday night.

Now, we emphasised before that the relevant understanding of *there is an impression of disagreement* was one in which it thus appears to a generic hearer including us. The genericity condition is supposed to rule out ignorant or otherwise confused hearers. In the first case *we* don't get an impression of disagreement from the utterances of Alex and Berit. Carlo does, but only because he's confused of what Alex was talking about.

We can also look at a case of world-relative utterances though it's bound to be highly artificial. Imagine two possible worlds which are identical except that

in first world it's snowing where Carlo is on 6th December and in the second world it isn't. In the first world Carlo says "It's snowing", in the second world Carlo says "It's not snowing". Do we get an impression of disagreement from the utterances of Carlo and his counterpart? I would say no, though I wouldn't put much weight on intuitions about such cases.

Based on these examples it seems that generally speaking impressions of disagreement correlate with lekta that contradict only when one also evaluates them relative to the same parameter. Thereby impressions of disagreement correlate with what intuitively seems to be a requirement for *disagreement* over the truth of a proposition. As MacFarlane (2007) put it, there is genuine disagreement only when one agent accepts a content, another rejects the same content, and we hold all the parameters of evaluation fixed. Therefore, the relativist cannot explain impressions of disagreement by saying that whenever there are two contradicting lekta there is an impression of disagreement. Something else is needed besides. Let us next look at the particular relativist theories and whether they offer an account of why the relativist framework would be better suited to explain impressions of disagreement.

9.5 Summary of Chapter 9

We have now seen in broad outline the idea behind moderate relativism and how it's supposed to be in a better position to explain disagreements of taste. The basic idea was that since certain contents (like judgments of taste) are true only relative to extra parameters such as a perspective, there can be contradictory but true judgments when they are evaluated relative to different perspectives.

However, there is a gap in their argument in moving from contradictory contents to disagreements. Ordinarily there is disagreement when two contradictory contents have been expressed. But in the relativist framework contradictions hold between two contents that cannot be true at the same circumstance of evaluation. In a disagreement of taste the judgments are not evaluated relative to the same circumstance of evaluation. Therefore, even if the contents contradict, intuitively there is no disagreement. Several philosophers have criticised the idea of "faultless disagreements" by making the above point. Kölbel's answer was to say that he didn't mean that faultless disagreements are disagreements, just that they appear to be disagreements. Likewise, Lasersohn held that his theory predicts "substanceless disagreements" which supposedly differ quite a lot from ordinary disagreements.

In the last section we looked at other possible parameters of evaluation, namely tenses and possible worlds. The idea was to see whether we get an impression of disagreement when there are contradictory judgments whose circumstances of evaluation nevertheless differ. The conclusion was that at least in those cases we don't, and hence their behaviour is not analogous to judgments of taste. Therefore we still lack any reason to believe that the moderate relativist framework as such would help to account for disagreements or for why there appear to be disagreements of taste. Let us next look at the particular relativist accounts in detail.

10 A Closer Look at Relativist Accounts

This chapter investigates in more detail the relativist accounts by Kölbel, Laser-sohn and MacFarlane. We begin with Kölbel's account and return first to how he thinks disagreements of taste are faultless. We then look at what he says about the question of whose perspective determines the truth of a judgment of taste. Evans (1985) famously criticised temporal logic, and his criticism applies to contemporary relativists too. We discuss Evans' problem and Kölbel's answer to it.

Next we look at Lasersohn's relativism. The most radical feature of Laser-sohn's account is that a particular judgment of taste cannot get a fixed truth-value; it is incomplete since the semantics does not determine a perspective. Even if a hearer adopts a particular perspective in evaluating an utterance it makes no difference to the truth-value which remains undetermined. Laser-sohn's calls that feature of his view the *subjective assignment of truth-values*. The semantics does not assign truth-values to particular judgments of taste, and that leads to there being no "objective" assignment of truth-values.

However, Lasersohn holds that people normally evaluate the truth of judg-ments of taste from their own perspective and sometimes take up a different perspective. It's not clear what he means by that, so I compare his view to Bach's radical invariantism. Bach likewise holds that a judgment of taste doesn't express a truth-evaluable content. But he supplements the picture with strong pragmatics so that in conversation people are supposed to enrich the propositional radicals with a perspective.

Finally we discuss MacFarlane's radical relativism. We focus especially on the question of the communicative norms that MacFarlane defends, and on the question of the use of assessment-sensitive utterances.

10.1 Kölbel's Relativism

10.1.1 The Normative Role of Perspectives

Let us first discuss the two core roles of perspectives in Kölbel's view: their normative role in governing beliefs and utterances, and their semantic role in the truth-conditions of judgments of taste. Kölbel defines a perspective as follows:

> Let's call the point of evaluation appropriate for a person that person's 'perspective' (where a perspective is a function that assigns truth-values to propositions). (Kölbel, 2003, 70).

He also provides a norm of belief for perspectival contents which we will call the *Relativist Truth Norm of Belief* (Kölbel, 2004, 309):

> *Relativist Truth Norm of Belief*: It is a mistake to believe a content that is not true from one's own perspective.

Hence when it comes to judgments of taste, one is faultless as long as one only believes those judgments of taste that are made true by one's perspective. (Note that we are not including as judgments of taste judgments like "For Peter blueberries are disgusting", only "bare" judgments of taste where no perspective is made explicit.) Kölbel (2004, 309) further adopts a belief norm of assertion:

> *Belief Norm of Assertion:* Assert a content only if you believe it.

The truth norm for belief and the belief norm of assertion together imply that if someone asserts something that is false at their perspective, then they have committed a mistake because they violated the belief norm. Hence the predictions of the two norms seem *prima facie* indistinguishable from having a truth norm for both belief and assertion.

Now, we saw that Kölbel defined faultless disagreements as cases where (a) the speakers' belief / utterance contents contradict, but (b) neither is mistaken. Since judgments of taste don't include perspectives, ordinary disagreements of taste are faultless and "disagreements" in the sense Kölbel defines.

10.1.2 Whose Perspective Matters for Truth

The next question is how does a perspective get selected as the one that determines the truth of some judgment of taste? It is difficult to find a clear answer by Kölbel. As we saw, Kaplan held that the values of the parameters at the circumstance of evaluation are determined by the context of utterance; MacFarlane (2009) calls such a view *non-indexical contextualism*. Lopez de Sa (2007) raises the question of whether Kölbel's view is non-indexical contextualism or radical relativism (i.e. assessment-sensitivity which will be discussed in section 10.5), to which Kölbel (2007) answers the following: "I would say that the best way to fit genuine relativism [i.e. Kölbel's position] into the Kaplan–Lewis framework is by adopting the position called non-indexical contextualism in his [Lopez de Sa's] taxonomy." (Kölbel, 2007, 284).

However, in elaborating his answer Kölbel says nothing about what determines the truth-values of *utterances*. Kölbel (2009) in contrast seems to favour the

non-Kaplanian view that there's no unique relevant perspective that determines the truth of an utterance. Kölbel states that the relativist about predicates of taste cannot follow Kaplan in saying that the context of utterance determines whose perspective determines truth since there are essential differences between the world and perspective parameters:

> First, while it is clear that it is the world of utterance that is relevant for evaluating the correctness of a declarative utterance expressing a contingent proposition, it is not at all clear which standard of taste is to be used in evaluating an utterance expressing a proposition concerning a matter of taste. If we assume that at any time everyone possesses a standard of taste, we could, for example, say that the correctness of an utterance goes with the truth of the expressed proposition at the circumstance of evaluation consisting of the world of utterance and the utterer's standard of taste. But there clearly are alternative ways of evaluating the correctness of such an utterance. We could evaluate it in terms of truth on the evaluator's standard of taste, or on some fixed standard of taste, such as that of Ferran Adrià or Delia Smith. *It seems to be a distinctive feature of this area of discourse that none of the standards is privileged.* [...] None of these ways of evaluating the utterance seems to be clearly privileged, in the way the actual world is privileged in the evaluation of contingent utterances. (Kölbel, 2009, 386-7; emphasis added)

Let me clarify the terminology a bit. Kölbel talks of evaluating the *correctness* of utterances but the topic he discusses in the passage is what determines their truth. In the paper cited Kölbel seems to hold that the semantics does not determine a unique perspective relative to which an utterance is either true or false. How are we to understand what that means? Here's one way to try to make sense of it.

Normal assertions are about the actual world simply because that's the world in which all of us are. Hence there's no question about which world determines the truth. However, perspectives are not shared. So while I'm making a judgment that's true at my perspective, your perspective might differ in relevant respects and make the same judgment false. We disagree simply because things are not the same way at our perspectives. And since our perspectives are equally valid, we cannot privilege one of them in evaluating truth. But note that the consequence of such a view is that relatively true judgments do not get a truth

value.

Now, it's quite strange to argue that people make truth-valueless judgments since they know that no one's perspective is to be privileged. Kölbel quite clearly endorses the view that speakers know that judgments of taste are only relatively true. So given our usual understanding of communication as cooperation, we would think that (a) speakers would get to determine the perspective that's relevant in determining the truth of what they say, and that (b) even if the semantics left open which perspective is relevant, given cooperativeness, hearers would charitably interpret judgments relative to the perspective of the speakers.

Moreover, Kölbel suggests that the phrase *to / for x* is an operator that selects a perspective:

> English seems to contain a construction that might intuitively be interpreted in this way [as an operator that shifts a parameter], namely the "For S, p"-construction, as in "For Anna, whale meat is tasty.", or "Whale meat is tasty for Anna.". (Kölbel, 2009, 385)

Hence a judgment of taste together with a *to / for x* phrase does express an Austinian proposition. Since Kölbel holds that our language does have a way to fix a perspective, why would we make non-perspectival judgments given that we speak from our own perspective, and given that non-perspectival judgments are prone to cause disagreements?

10.1.3 Evans' Problem

Not only is it strange to claim that speakers systematically and competently make truth-valueless judgments of taste. One can also question whether it makes any sense to utter sentences with contents that don't get a determinate truth value. That criticism is known as *Evans' problem* and it's based on the influential but difficult paper by Evans (1985) where he criticises temporal logic. Evans' argument is highly complex and consists of many parts so I'll only focus on the part that's relevant here.

Evans takes as a premise that any successful semantics must explain the link between truth in semantics and the truth (*correctness* in his words) of utterances. The latter includes the abilities of the language users to evaluate the correctness of the utterances of others. The reason why those abilities are included is the Fregean idea that a theory of reference must also serve as the theory of sense, so that knowledge of the theory of reference suffices for language users to speak and to understand the language.

Suppose, as is held by the temporalist, that contents are true relative to some times and false relative to others. Evans points out that the theory is lacking an account of the relation between the correctness of utterances and truth at a time. He concludes that temporalism cannot make sense of the correctness of utterances without relying on the classical notion of eternal truths. That's because a rule of correctness which ties it to truth-at-a-time would result in an utterance which can change from correct to incorrect, and Evans argues that that's not coherent.

The reasons he gives are that (1) the word *correct* is used of actions, in this case utterances, to evaluate them once and for all. Why Evans thinks so is not clear but one reason is that given that actions are tied to time, it seems natural that their correctness properties depend on the time when they take place. The idea that they come to change their properties from correct to incorrect retrospectively is pretty radical (but perhaps not incoherent; we'll see that MacFarlane defends such a view).

The second argument is that (2) even if we can make sense of correctness that varies with times the theory can't serve as the theory of sense since a speaker wouldn't know how to use sentences or how to interpret the utterances of others. This is the reason behind Evans' conclusion that the temporalist must ultimately reintroduce eternal evaluation of correctness to the picture:

> One who utters the sentence type 'It is raining' rules out dry weather only at the time of utterance; he does not rule out later dryness, and hence there can be no argument from the later state of the weather to a re-appraisal of his utterance. Utterances have to be evaluated by what they rule out, and so different utterances of the same tensed sentence made at different times may have to be evaluated (once and for all) differently. They cannot therefore all be assigned the same semantic value. (Evans, 1985, 350)

Hence Evans concludes that even if the temporalist view of *contents* as tenseless is coherent, utterances of them would have to be evaluated for correctness relative to a specific time. Therefore, (to put the conclusion in Recanati's terminology) the temporalist would have to rely on eternal Austinian propositions in the truth-conditions of utterances anyway. Let us next look at why Evans' problem is a problem for contemporary relativists too. Our focus will be on Evans' second argument.

10.1.4 Evans' Problem and Perspectiveless Lekta

Evans' criticism applies to perspectiveless contents as well. Let me quote Kölbel's (2004) statement of Evans' problem as applied to them:

> The difficulty Evans sees is this: we must, in making and interpreting assertions, be able to make sense of the idea that the assertion is correct, so that we can aim to assert correctly (as speakers) or expect an assertion to be correct (as audience). However, if it is relative to perspectives whether the content expressed by an assertoric utterance is true, then there seems to be no sense in which the utterance can be correct or incorrect. The only way it could would be either in relation to some particular perspective or in relation to some, most or all perspectives. *But if we were aiming for correctness in relation to some specific perspective* p1, *perhaps because it is related in some way to the context of utterance, then correctness would no longer be relative to perspectives because an utterance would be absolutely correct just if it is correct in relation to* p1. [...] Thus, the idea of contents of assertion that have relative correctness (or truth) conditions is incoherent. (Kölbel, 2004, 308; emphasis added)

Kölbel's argument against Evans is that he's wrong in claiming that every utterance needs to have absolute correctness as its aim. He asks "Why should it not be coherent for me to aim at truth in relation to my perspective and for you to aim at truth in relation to your perspective?" (Kölbel, 2004, 309). Kölbel then explains how perspectiveless language works by providing the norms for belief and assertion we've seen earlier.[40]

Now, there's an issue regarding the focus of Evans' argument and Kölbel's answer. Evans talks of correctness of utterances by which he means the truth of sentences in context. Whereas the theories of reference in Evans' time traditionally only talked of sentences, since ordinary language has context sensitivity we need to bring in the notion of utterances. Therefore, what Evans asks of temporal logic is how the notion of a sentence that's true at a time and false at others relates to the truth of an utterance of a tenseless sentence.

The answer Kölbel gives is about *norms* of belief and assertion. But those are *communicative norms* that relate to pragmatic felicity and infelicity and

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[40]I focus on Kölbel (2004) but he makes pretty much the same points regarding communicative norms in his (2009).

the success of communication in general. Felicity doesn't correlate systematically with the truth of utterances. We can easily think of cases where someone utters a true sentence but violates e.g. the Gricean maxim of relevance, resulting in a judgment which is true but infelicitous. But Evans' challenge to the perspectivalist is what are the *truth-conditions* of utterances of perspectiveless lekta? Or, if one dislikes the word *utterance*, what are the truth-conditions of a lekton-in-context? It's not an answer to say "You can felicitously use them only if the lekton is true at your perspective". So if Kölbel only intended to talk about communicative norms he hasn't answered Evans' challenge.

However, let us suppose instead that Kölbel intends to provide truth-conditions of utterances with his norms. He states that the norm of assertion together with the norm of belief requires that the *content is true at the perspective of the speaker*. But note that that is an instance of a norm with *absolute* correctness as its aim. Hence he ends up doing what Evans said the temporalist must do: bring in the absolutely true Austinian propositions at the level of truth-conditions of utterances.

What we have are thus two possible interpretations of Kölbel's account of norms that he provides as a response to Evans' challenge. The first interpretation is that the norms express truth-conditions of utterances. In that case Kölbel ends up re-introducing absolutely true Austinian propositions at the level of truth-conditions of utterances, as Evans said the temporalist must do. If that interpretation is correct it also answers our question about whose perspective is relevant for truth: Kölbel's view is a form of "non-indexical contextualism" where the relevant perspective that enters the Austinian proposition is always the speaker's.

The second interpretation is that Kölbel is merely providing communicative norms and remains silent regarding truth-conditions of utterances. This interpretation is more plausible given the norms he gives and his later denials that the relevant perspective is that of the speaker. We will pursue this interpretation further. I will argue that something similar to Evans' problem can be raised regarding the norms of assertion as well. Either the norms reintroduce absolute correctness which shows that from the point of view of communication the distinction between lekta and Austinian propositions make no difference; or the norms themselves are intended to be perspective-dependent in which case they cannot do the work that communicative norms are supposed to do.

10.1.5 Normative Competence

First, let us consider the possibility that Kölbel didn't intend to state a norm for absolute correctness. After all, here's what he says: "Evans' mistake was to assume that every utterance needs to have the same absolute correctness as its aim." (Kölbel, 2004, 308). Let me repeat Kölbel's norms:

> *Relativist Truth Norm of Belief*: It is a mistake to believe a content that is not true from one's own perspective.

> *Belief Norm of Assertion:* Assert a content only if you believe it.

Suppose that Kölbel intended his norm of assertion to only have perspectival correctness as its aim. As was mentioned before on page 148, the combination of the truth norm of belief with the belief norm of assertion amounts to the same as the truth norm of assertion. We can express the unique resulting norm as follows:

> *Perspectival Norm of Assertion:* An assertion of a perspectiveless content is correct at a perspective iff it is true at that perspective.

The thing to note about the above norm is that it states what is correct *at a perspective.* The problem with positing perspectival norms is that they cannot play the role of governing communication which requires shared rules, rules that apply across perspectives. If correctness varies from a perspective to another, how can we aim to assert correctly or to interpret whether others asserted correctly? In making an utterance we have to know whether we communicate successfully. But if we can't know when we are successful since success varies from a perspective to another, the norm is clearly not helpful for communication.

So this interpretation cannot help the relativist. Let us therefore suppose as seems more plausible that the norms express absolute correctness. Let me next argue that given uncontroversial assumptions about our implicit knowledge of communicative norms, Kölbel's relativism is unable to explain why the existence of perspectiveless contents would make any difference to communication.

Norms that govern communication are implicitly known to speakers. Language users follow the norms and are able to evaluate whether the norms have been followed by others, even if they could not make explicit their knowledge of the norms. The norms make sure that information is shared efficiently, and

as Grice (1989) has shown they also make possible implicatures via the flouting of the norms. Hence, people are sensitive to the norms that govern conversations and they can track their violations efficiently. Let us formulate a principle similar to Stojanovic's Semantic Competence principle on page 140:

> *Normative Competence*: Speakers are competent with the norms that govern belief and communication; they have implicit knowledge of the norms which allows them to intentionally flout the norms and track whether others are following the norms.

Given normative competence, people know that normally when one makes a judgment of taste she speaks the truth from her perspective. The normality condition is meant to exclude obvious lies, cases where a speaker is mistaken about their own taste etc. As mentioned, the combination of Kölbel's norms amount to the same as having a truth norm of assertion, i.e. that one must: assert p only if p is true in one's perspective (and this time we are considering the absolute version of it). Let us look at a dialogue in order to see how the norms work in practice. Suppose the following exchange is taking place:

(168) (a) Anouk: Moon boots look ridiculous.
     (b) Bill: You're wrong, they look cool.

Let us assume that both are saying what is true in their perspective: given Anouk's taste moon boots look ridiculous, given Bill's taste they do not. Both are acting according to the communicative norms, i.e. they believe what is true for them and they assert what they believe. As we've emphasised, people usually know their tastes, especially when it comes to matters that don't require much reflection like whether moon booths look ridiculous or not.

Given these assumptions Anouk has no reason to suspect that Bill is speaking falsely from his perspective, and likewise for Bill regarding Anouk. As Kölbel himself said about faultlessness, both speakers follow the norms and hence neither is mistaken. Now, an assertion is correct if and only if it conforms to the norm of assertion. Thus, according to the relativist when hearers evaluate the correctness of others' assertions they must evaluate whether the assertion was true at the speaker's perspective (or, so as not to cut corners, whether the speaker believes what is true for them and asserts what they believe).

So what goes on in the mind of Bill in the above dialogue? He knows that Anouk is speaking the truth from her perspective so her assertion is correct and felicitous. But since there's no rule for whose perspective is relevant for

the truth of the utterance, Bill supposedly evaluates the *lekton* Anouk uttered relative to his own perspective. Since the lekton *Moon boots look ridiculous* is false at Bill's perspective, he contradicts Anouk. So far so good.

But that way of understanding what goes on in the dialogue is puzzling for several reasons. First, how can Bill felicitously say that Anouk is *wrong*, given that it's common knowledge that the disagreement is faultless? Anouk is faultless in two relevant respects: she believes what is true at her perspective and she asserts what she believes. The likely answer that the relativist would give is that from Bill's perspective Anouk is wrong since she believes what is false at Bill's perspective. But that answer is really not satisfactory. The relativist is committed to the principle of Semantic Competence so speakers know very well that the truth of perspectival matters *is relative*. Furthermore, there is no privileged perspective in a context so a hearer like Bill has no reason to evaluate a lekton relative to his own perspective rather than that of the speaker. Since Bill knows the lekton is true at Anouk's perspective, why doesn't he simply acknowledge that?

Second, a charitable interpreter ought to interpret so as to maximise truth and rationality. In a conversation with relatively true contents one can maximise truth by de-relativising. We know how that can be done: by adding the phrase *to / for x* to the lekton (see p. 150 above). So if Bill were charitable, we would expect him to think "For Anouk moon boots look ridiculous. So she's spoken correctly and truthfully. For me moon boots look cool." The relativist account cannot explain why in a faultless disagreement one can accuse the other of being wrong, and why speakers would be so uncharitable as to not acknowledge that the other has spoken correctly by saying the truth from their perspective.

Finally, Kölbel has no explanation for impressions of disagreement given Normative Competence. According to the relativist the standard disagreement of taste is supposed to be a dialogue where two people both believe and utter something true. *We* the theorists are supposed to know this too, not only the speakers. So why do we get a sense of disagreement in the taste case? It can't be just that the lekta contradict, since as Evans emphasised, what matters for using the language is the correctness of utterances.

According to the relativist we also know that those utterances are true *from the perspective of the speaker*. Hence given that we are charitable, and pragmatics ensures that we try to get what the speaker means, there really is no explanation for why we would insist on irrationally evaluating utterances at our perspectives and worst still, accusing people of being wrong while knowing full

well that they've both spoken truly and followed the norms of communication.

10.2   Lasersohn's Relativism

Lasersohn's (2005) relativism is very similar to Kölbel's. The differences are rather formal and terminological than substantial, and he focuses more on the formal implementation than the issues surrounding communication. In the following sections we try to understand what Lasersohn's relativism implies regarding communication since as has been emphasised, the mere story about relativist contents does not suffice to understand how people use relativist language.

Formally Lasersohn defines truth as a relation between a content and a time, world and a perspective (*individual* in his terminology regarding the formal system, *judge* when discussing judgments of taste). In Kaplanian terms the circumstance of evaluation consists of parameters for a world, time and a perspective. As in Kölbel's relativism, we now face the question of what determines the perspective for a particular judgment of taste. Lasersohn is well aware that mere relativised lekta make no difference for communication if the truth-conditions of utterances remain as in a contextualist framework:

> If we claim that it is always possible to determine on an object-ive basis who the judge is, we effectively introduce into our system a level at which truth values are always assigned objectively. For example, if we claim the judge is always the speaker, an utterance would presumably count as true *simpliciter* iff it expresses a content which is true relative to the speaker – at the level of utterances, the relativization would be removed and we would have to count speakers as objectively truthful or untruthful in saying things like "Roller coasters are fun" or "The chili is tasty." (Lasersohn, 2005, 668-669)

For Lasersohn the essence of relativism is that it's not only the lekta that don't get an absolute truth-value, *utterances* don't get them either. Lasersohn treats *contexts* not as concrete utterance situations but as formal objects that fix the values of the parameters of evaluation. To avoid objective assignment of truth-values he suggests the following: "any concrete situation of utterance will determine as many different contexts in our technical sense as there are individuals – one for each potential judge." (Lasersohn, 2005, 669). In short, the truth of a judgment of taste depends on a perspective, but for particular utterances nothing determines the perspective:

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In order to maintain an authentically subjective assignment of truth values to sentences containing predicates of personal taste, we must allow that the objective facts of the situation of utterance do not uniquely determine a judge. (Lasersohn, 2005, 668-669)

Lasersohn thus explicitly endorses the idea that Evans found incoherent, namely that an utterance is not evaluable as true or false *tout court*. Hence, a particular judgment of taste cannot get a fixed truth-value. Now, this raises the very problem Evans was emphasising, namely that language users must know the absolute truth-conditions of utterances in order to use them and to understand others. The point of an utterance is to rule out certain situations; if an utterance doesn't get a fixed truth-value *at all*, not even at the moment of utterance (as a temporalist who ties correctness to truth would have it), then it's really hard to see what is the point of an utterance, or what a speaker intends in making it.

However, in addition to the formal semantics which leaves the truth-values of utterances open Lasersohn states the following:

All this having been said, I think we must recognize that when we do assess an utterance for truth or falsity, we all normally tend to use ourselves as the judge; or, as I shall put it, we adopt an autocentric perspective. [...] This is true regardless of whether we are the speaker, addressee, or a third party: *we typically evaluate our own assertions, and those of others, from our own perspective.* (Lasersohn, 2005, 670; emphasis added)

Now, I'm not sure how we should understand the talk of evaluating assertions from our own perspective. We should be careful to distinguish between what *determines truth* and *how we evaluate truth*. What determines the truth of a use of a sentence is a question for semantics. In contrast, how the truth of that sentence is evaluated by a speaker / hearer is not necessarily a semantic question *if* in the theory these two don't match. Many semantic theories would hold that those two go essentially together, but they need not.

So the core question is, if one evaluates an utterance from one's own perspective, is that a *correct* assessment? Or are we somewhat ignorant of the lack of objectivity involved in matters of taste and hence mistakenly take our own perspective? The same worries that Evans raised arise equally here as when discussing Kölbel's view, especially regarding the truth-conditions of utterances.

Evans' point was that a speaker must be able to aim at uttering the truth. But if the truth-conditions of the utterance are not fixed then the theory in question cannot work as a theory that explains how speakers use the language.

In the next section I summarise Bach's radical invariantism which clearly separates the determination of truth of semantic contents from the evaluation of their truths by language users. His account distinguishes between the invariant but non-truth-evaluable contents determined by semantics, and pragmatics which is about how people interpret and evaluate those contents. One way to interpret Lasersohn is that his view is similar to Bach's in the role that is assigned to pragmatics.

10.3   Lasersohn vs. Bach's Radical Invariantism

Kent Bach's (2011) *radical invariantism* - although explicitly anti-relativist - seems to share the core features of Lasersohn's view albeit with major terminological differences.[41] Bach shares the commitment of all the perspective-dependent theories that the only truths there are about taste are perspective-dependent truths. Like the relativists (and against contextualists) Bach holds that the semantic content of a judgment of taste does not refer to a perspective.

The key idea of Bach's view is that an utterance of a judgment of taste does not express a truth-evaluable content but merely a "propositional radical" which is not truth-evaluable because it doesn't refer to a perspective. So when people make judgments of taste nothing in the semantics fixes or requires a perspective, and thereby the content expressed is not truth-evaluable. However, due to pragmatics communication with propositional radicals succeeds. Speaker-hearers understand what others intend to express by their judgments, and they thereby complete the propositional radicals by adding a perspective. Since there are many possibilities in whose perspective is relevant, sometimes there are disagreements which are actually misunderstandings regarding the relevant perspective.

In comparing Lasersohn's view to Bach's, let us begin with the terminological differences. Lasersohn calls the perspectiveless contents *propositions* whereas Bach terms them *propositional radicals*; but both agree that such contents (lekta) are not truth-evaluable. Now, Lasersohn holds that semantics does not determine a perspective but people evaluate judgments of taste from a

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[41]Bach's article discusses the semantics of epistemic modals, but he states that he holds the same view for predicates of taste ((Bach, 2011, 56, footnote 42). In Bach (2009) he presents an overview of radical invariantism about predicates of taste.

perspective. A natural way to interpret what Lasersohn means is to give pragmatics the role of bridging the gap between a non-truth-evaluable lekton and a truth-evaluable Austinian proposition.

Interestingly, when discussing propositional attitude verbs Lasersohn adds that when we believe a perspectiveless lekton we typically believe it to be true from our point of view. Therefore, normally John believes that the Giant Dipper is fun if and only if he also believes that the Giant Dipper is fun for himself. But we are not unable to take the perspective of others, so we may also believe that judgments of taste are true or false relative to someone else. We do this by believing contents like *For Mary the Giant Dipper is fun* which are not perspective-dependent but true or false absolutely. In other words, semantics does assign a fixed truth-value to judgments of the form *For / to x* [a judgment of taste], i.e. where *for / to x* makes the truth of the embedded clause to depend on the perspective of *x*.

Hence Lasersohn has given the tools to complete the picture of how language users move from the incomplete lekta that are expressed to the truth-evaluable Austinian propositions. Let me sketch one way to understand what Lasersohn means when he says that we evaluate judgments of taste from a perspective. Language users understand that a judgment of taste cannot get a truth-value unless a perspective is determined. As Lasersohn says: "if we adopt an acentric perspective, we do not regard sentences like *Roller coasters are fun* or *The chili is tasty* as having definite truth values." (Lasersohn, 2005, 670). Consequently in evaluating a judgment of taste we take on a particular point of view, effectively mentally adding to the content *to / for x* which fixes the perspective. Hence what we evaluate is not the judgment of taste but a *different* content: the judgment of taste plus *to / for x*, with *x* determining the relevant perspective. The resulting completed content is a truth-evaluable Austinian proposition.

Here is an illustration of how that would work in practice. Suppose Mary says to John *Roller coasters are fun*. Mary is making the utterance from her perspective so her mental content is *Roller coasters are fun for Mary* – which is truth-evaluable. However, the *utterance* doesn't get a truth-value. But being a competent speaker John knows that, and he therefore adds a perspective to the content. As we saw, Lasersohn holds that most of the time people evaluate utterances from their own perspective. So we may suppose that John evaluates the incomplete content relative to himself, i.e. his thought content is *Roller coasters are fun for John*. Depending on his views on roller coasters he may then answer to Mary for example "Indeed" or "No, they're horrible", and if he

answers in the latter way, a "substanceless disagreement" is taking place.

This is one possible way to fill in the details of Lasersohn's account and make sense of what he means by "subjective assignment of truth-values". It is very close to Bach's account despite of the differences in terminology and the formal framework they would use. Let us next look at the problems that both views face.

10.4 Problems for Bach and Lasersohn

The first and major problem of the view under discussion is that judgments of taste do not semantically express truth-evaluable contents. The standard view of semantics is that it provides truth-conditions for utterances (or sentences in contexts if one doesn't want to talk of utterances), which the view under discussion does not do. It is outside of our scope to discuss the broader questions such as the role of semantics. One may reject the Bach-Lasersohn approach merely because of its unorthodox approach to the aim of semantics. However, even if one has no scruples with that there are other problems.

10.4.1 The Frege-Geach Problem

Lasersohn (2005) in his overview of possible semantics for predicates of taste considers expressivism and rejects it on the usual basis that the view faces the so-called Frege-Geach problem. Let me quote him:

> Additionally, sentences like *This is fun* or *This is tasty* can appear embedded under truth-functional connectives and other logical operators, and participate in the usual logical consequence relations which such embeddings give rise to. One would like to preserve the idea that (33) is an ordinary example of Modus Ponens, for example:
>
> (33) If there is a loop, the roller coaster is fun.
> There is a loop.
> Therefore, the roller coaster is fun.
>
> But it is quite hard to see how to maintain this idea if sentences like *The roller coaster is fun* do not have truth values. (Lasersohn, 2005, 657).

Lasersohn further adds that if such sentences are neither true or false the view cannot capture the main intuition, namely that in a disagreement of taste the speakers are contradicting each others. But we have seen that in fact his branch of relativism faces the very same problems. The sentences of (33) above are neither true nor false according to Lasersohn's semantics. Same holds of Bach's radical invariantism. Now, this problem is obviously related to the more general worry that judgments of taste do not express truth-evaluable contents. But I wanted to emphasise this particular consequence since both Lasersohn and Bach (2009) consider the Frege-Geach problem a serious issue for expressivism but not for their own views.

10.4.2 Pragmatic Incompetence

The next worry takes us back to the impressions of disagreement. We have seen that speakers are supposed to know that judgments of taste cannot be truth-evaluable unless a perspective is provided. Hence they evaluate judgments of taste from a perspective, either their own or somebody else's. Disagreements of taste are supposed to be a consequence of both the speaker and the hearer considering the incomplete content from their own perspective, in effect thinking the complete proposition [[judgment of taste] *for me*]. But since the perspective is not made explicit, they may take themselves to be talking of the same perspective even when they are not.

What is puzzling is the constant mistakes people make when evaluating each others' judgments from their *own* perspective, rather than from the perspective of the speaker. After all, since they make judgments of taste from their own perspective they should expect others to do so too and hence evaluate others' judgments from their perspective. In other words, Bach's and Lasersohn's views face the same problems regarding normative competence as Kölbel's account, discussed in section on page 154.

There is also a more specific worry which is a consequence of the view that pragmatics completes the lekton expressed by a judgment of taste. There are many expressions which require pragmatics for the completion of an expression, for example perspectival expressions of location or direction. To understand where is an object that is *to the left / right / above / below* etc. one must choose between several possible interpretations, e.g. to the left of the speaker, the hearer, some other salient person etc. Indeed, Bach (2009) lists such terms together with taste predicates as "relative terms" which suggests that he might

apply radical invariantism to them as well.

The problem that such an account faces is the disanalogous behaviour of hearers regarding predicates of taste and directional expressions. Let me illustrate the point. Suppose Aurora tells Björn that the book he is looking for is *there to the left.* Björn needs to figure out whether she meant to the left of herself, of him, or possibly of some other salient object. How does he do it? He tries to find out what the speaker (Aurora) intended. Communication is about getting a message across, so the hearer's task is to find out which message the speaker tried to communicate. In a case where there are several possible interpretations due to e.g. context sensitivity or a use of an incomplete sentence ("Water!"), the hearer needs to find out which complete content the speaker has in mind.

As was mentioned earlier, what shows that hearers take the speakers to "call the shots" regarding the interpretation of what they said is that when the hearer realises that they misunderstood what the speaker meant they typically say for example "Sorry, I thought you meant..." (unless they couldn't have understood what was said given the contextual clues). Since Bach suggests that pragmatics provides the perspective, when someone hears a judgment of taste they ought to behave as described above. They should consider what the speaker intended, and if they realise that their interpretation was not the right one they should acknowledge it. But that's not what happens in actual disputes about taste. Bach's pragmatic story is implausible since hearers don't behave as the standard pragmatics would have them behave. Whether the above criticism applies to Lasersohn's account depends on whether our understanding of subjective assignment of truth-values as pragmatic re-interpretation of contents is correct.

Let me sum up the problems. Despite of the interpretative possibilities available with judgments of taste, (a) hearers typically do not interpret the judgment as the speaker intended since according to Bach and Lasersohn the speaker in most cases intends their own perspective. But, regarding the uses of predicates of taste, it should be common knowledge that judgments of taste are made from the speaker's perspective. If it were common knowledge, hearers would standardly evaluate the truth of utterances by taking the perspective of the speaker. But they don't; instead they evaluate the content from their own perspective.

Moreover, (b) in a disagreement of taste there is no moment when the hearer realises that they have misunderstood which perspective the speaker had in mind. That is shown by the absence of comments like "I'm sorry, I thought you

were talking about *our / my / our community's* taste", or questions like "Who's taste are you talking about?" or "What do you mean?". (a) and (b) are strong data against the idea that the incompleteness of judgments of taste is a common fact known to speakers, and consequently that filling in the perspective is a task for pragmatics.

A final point against the pragmatic explanation is the following. Suppose the view is correct and the apparent disagreements of taste are explained by the confusions in interpreting which perspective is meant. Thus when someone is about to make a judgment of taste, he knows that if he leaves out the perspective he will not only say something non-truth-evaluable, but he will most likely also be misunderstood.

So why does he not make the perspective explicit? Disagreements of taste take place all the time; if they are known to be mere confusions, why haven't people learnt to say whose perspective they are talking about, interpret as ought to by taking the speaker's perspective, or at least ask which perspective was meant? Rather than taking people to be such hopelessly bad language users we should consider Bach's and Lasersohn's accounts to be implausible.

10.5 MacFarlane's Radical Relativism

10.5.1 Assessment Sensitivity

MacFarlane's "radical relativism" holds that the truth of *assessment-sensitive* utterances depends on particular features of a *context of assessment*. A context of assessment is –as the name suggests– a context where someone assesses an utterance for truth. MacFarlane argues that predicates of taste are assessment-sensitive, and hence the truth of a judgment of taste depends on the perspective of a person who assesses the judgment of taste. A speaker is always also an assessor, so when I say "Fish and chips are not delicious" that's true as assessed from my perspective. But when someone else assesses that utterance, it is true if fish and chips are delicious to them. Assessment-sensitive utterances may thus vary in truth-value according to the perspective of whoever assesses an utterance.

Below is an example of how MacFarlane defines truth in terms of both a context of utterance and a context of assessment with respect to aesthetic judgments:

> *Aesthetic Relativism*: S is true at a context of use C_U and context

of assessment C_A iff there is a proposition p such that

(a) S expresses p at C_U, and

(b) p is true at the world of C_U and the aesthetic standards of the assessor at C_A. (MacFarlane, 2005b, 309)

By replacing "aesthetic standards" with our generic notion of a perspective we see how the view goes with respect to judgments of personal taste. If we think of MacFarlane's view in terms of the terminology of *lekta* and *Austinian propositions*, an assessment-sensitive utterance expresses a lekton but does not determine an Austinian proposition. In other words, an assessment-sensitive judgment does not get a privileged perspective relative to which it should be evaluated, and hence it is never absolutely true or false.

MacFarlane's motivations for radical relativism are broader than Kölbel's and Lasersohn's since he defends the account for a variety of expressions including predicates of taste, knowledge attributions, epistemic modals, judgments about the future and moral *ought* MacFarlane (2003, 2005a); Kolodny and MacFarlane (2010); MacFarlane (2011, 2014). However, the motivation for why judgments of taste should be treated as assessment-sensitive is familiar: it's supposed to allow for an explanation of the perspective-dependence of the judgments while still making sense of disagreements of taste. Additionally MacFarlane has emphasised the advantage of assessment sensitivity over non-indexical contextualism in being able to explain why people retract their judgments (MacFarlane, 2009). Let us begin by looking at his explanation for the impressions of disagreement we have in a disagreement of taste.

10.5.2 Disagreement and Assessment Sensitivity

As we saw in section 9.3: *Are "Faultless Disagreements" Disagreements?* MacFarlane doesn't think that it suffices as an explanation of disagreement that there is a lekton that one person accepts and another rejects; given that in a moderate relativist framework the truth of the lekta depend on perspectives, there is disagreement only when the contradicting lekta are intended to be evaluated relative to the same perspective. However, our earlier discussion revealed that even if Kölbel originally had in mind something like non-indexical contextualism, in his later writings he is clearly leaning towards a view where there is no privileged perspective relative to which an utterance must be evaluated. And Lasersohn's account is quite explicit in rejecting the idea of a privileged perspective too. So after all, neither of them has clearly defended the view that

mere contradictory lekta cause disagreement.

So what does MacFarlane's account add to the explanation of disagreement besides being able to say that the speakers accept contradictory lekta? His theory of assessment-sensitive communication, including disagreements and retractions, relies heavily on communicative norms (MacFarlane 2005b; 2007; 2014). MacFarlane argues that we shouldn't focus on norms of assertion but rather on what one is committed to doing as a consequence of having made an assertion. He suggests that the following norms characterise assessment-sensitive communication (and communication in general; when the assertion in question is not assessment-sensitive the context of assessment plays no role):

> (W*) In asserting that p at C_1, one commits oneself to withdrawing the assertion (in any future context C_2) if p is shown to be untrue relative to context of use C_1 and context of assessment C_2.

> (J*) In asserting that p at C_1, one commits oneself to justifying the assertion when the assertion is appropriately challenged. To justify the assertion in a context C_2 is to provide grounds for the truth of p relative to context of use C_1 and context of assessment C_2.

> (R*) In asserting that p at C_1, one commits oneself to accepting responsibility (at any future context C_2) if on the basis of this assertion someone else takes p to be true (relative to context of use C_1 and context of assessment C_2) and it proves to be untrue (relative to C_1 and C_2). (MacFarlane, 2005b, 320-1)

Let us think of a concrete case to see what these norms mean in practice. Suppose Anna, who is at context of utterance C_{U1} and context of assessment C_{A1}, makes the following assertion:

(169) Anna: Anchovies are disgusting.

Bengt (whose context of assessment is C_{A2}) likes anchovies so he says:

(170) Bengt: No, they're not, they're delicious! Every pizzeria has a pizza with anchovies. Do you think they'd sell them if anchovies were disgusting?

Let's suppose that Bengt's argument counts as an appropriate challenge. Given (J*), Anna must now provide grounds for the truth of her utterance relative to Bengt's context of assessment C_{A2}. Therefore she goes on to justify herself:

(171) Anna: They only serve them because they're traditional and it costs nothing to keep anchovies in store in case some lunatic wants them. I read that from Slate.[42]

However, that's not a good argument for Bengt who does like anchovies; after all, (J*) states that Anna must show her utterance to be true relative to Bengt's context of assessment. So Bengt goes on:

(172) Bengt: Well, I happen to be one of those "lunatics" and I tell you anchovies are delicious. You just have to get used to them.

Anna sees that her justification didn't work since her utterance is still false as assessed by Bengt. Given (W*) she must withdraw her assertion:

(173) Anna: Ok then, so anchovies are not disgusting. But I don't like them.

To illustrate (R*), we can imagine another scenario in which Anna has never tasted anchovies and Bengt tells her they are delicious. She then tries them and thinks they're disgusting. She goes back to Bengt and accuses him of having spoken falsely. Given assessment sensitivity she is right: Bengt's assertion is false relative to her context of assessment. (R*) states that one must take responsibility if one's assertion turns out false at some context of assessment. So Bengt must now do that, for example by saying something like the following:

(174) Bengt: Well, anchovies are delicious *to me.* I'm sorry you don't like them.

These examples show that the norms that MacFarlane suggests seem to be the kind of norms that people do indeed follow when they make assertions. Here's MacFarlane's description of what goes on in disagreements of taste:

> This account captures the distinctive phenomenology of disagreement about matters whose truth is relative. The challenger thinks (rightly) that he has absolutely compelling grounds for thinking that the assertion was not accurate. But the original asserter thinks (also rightly, from her point of view) that the challenger's grounds do nothing to call in question the accuracy of the assertion. The asserter's vindication will seem to the challenger not to show that the

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[42]Indeed, Slate has an article on the topic where the journalist writes: "Why does virtually every pizzeria offer anchovies, even though no one ever orders them? They're traditional." http://www.slate.com/articles/life/explainer/2012/03/why_do_pizzerias_offer_anchovies_.html

assertion was accurate, and the challenger will continue to press his claim. (Until the game gets boring.) *Thus we have all the normative trappings of real disagreement, but without the possibility of resolution except by a relevant change in one or both parties' contexts of assessment.* (MacFarlane, 2007, 29; emphasis added)

However, it's important to note that the norms MacFarlane gives are not at all specific to assessment-sensitive assertions. As mentioned, if an assertion is not assessment-sensitive, then the mentioning of the context of assessment in the norms makes no difference since an assessment-*in*sensitive utterance is either true or false at all contexts of assessment.

In other words, the fact that the norms match the kind of conversations that people may have about matters of taste can be due to either:

(1) the assessment sensitivity of judgments of taste, or

(2) that people take judgments of taste to be perspective-*in*dependent (at least sometimes).

At this point it's worth emphasising the one general feature that relativist accounts share with perspective-independent views. Both hold that the explicit content of what is said does not refer to a perspective. Additionally relativism holds that perspectives play a role in determining the truth but as we've seen in connection to Kölbel's and Lasersohn's account, it's unclear why it would make any difference that the perspective is a parameter of evaluation rather than part of the content.

We've mentioned that the main argument against perspective-independent views is that taste objectivism is false. So if one expects the semantics to match metaphysics, the truth of judgments of taste has to depend on perspectives. However, (2) does not presuppose the truth of objectivist metaphysics: it only holds that people take judgments of taste to be perspective-independent. So it is important to notice that the data that relativism claims to get right and that contextualism gets wrong is due to relativism mirroring perspective-independent views in many of its predictions in virtue of its thin notion of content. In part IV: *Alternatives to Contextualism and Relativism* we return to perspective-independent views and their predictions. But before that, let's see what else MacFarlane says about communication with assessment-sensitive contents.

10.5.3 What's the Point of Assessment Sensitive Assertions?

Returning to our dialogues above we might wonder what's the *point* of the conversations. The norms make good sense when what is under discussion is something whose truth is not relative. For example, suppose a friend tells me that the swimming pool is open and I bike there in the rain just to find it closed. In such a case it would be nice if she could justify her assertion or to "take responsibility" by e.g. next time checking the opening hours before speaking in case she didn't have a good justification for her false utterance. And normally a speaker who realises their mistake will automatically retract their judgment or at least the corresponding belief once she learns that it was false.

As is well known ordinary assertions aim at truth, and the three norms follow naturally from that. We retract false utterances since we don't want anyone to keep believing them; we justify ourselves in case we spoke falsely to show that we are not irresponsible liars or bad thinkers; and we hold ourselves responsible if we've spoken falsely and someone acts on the falsehood since we've made a mistake in providing misinformation. But none of that is true of assessment-sensitive utterances. If a judgment of taste is true as assessed by me, then why on earth would I retract it if it's false *as assessed by you*? My truth shouldn't be any worse than your truth after all –on the contrary, many have argued that if relativism is true then we naturally privilege our truths (we'll discuss this below in section 11.3).

Moreover, if judgments of taste are relatively true then why would I need to justify myself to anyone? I believe and speak the truth (to me), and telling you my justification for those truths, e.g. that anchovies taste good to me or that I enjoy swimming, won't make any difference to whether my judgments of taste are true to you. And finally, if I speak the truth (to me), it's pretty crazy to hold me responsible if my truth isn't your truth. That's *your* problem, not mine.

Let me quote in length the following passage which –as far as I can tell– is MacFarlane's only genuine answer to why relativism would make sense:

> *Assessment-sensitive expressions are designed, it seems, to foster controversy*, where use-sensitive expressions preclude it. But what is the point of fostering controversy in "subjective" domains, if there is no (nonrelative) truth on which both parties can converge? Why shouldn't we just talk about our own tastes, rather than ascribing

subjective properties to the objects? Perhaps the point is to bring about agreement by leading our interlocutors into relevantly different contexts of assessment. *If you say "skiing is fun" and I contradict you, it is not because I think that the proposition you asserted is false as assessed by you in your current situation, with the affective attitudes you now have, but because I hope to change these attitudes.* Perhaps, then, the point of using controversy-inducing assessment-sensitive vocabulary is to foster *coordination* of contexts. We have an interest in sharing standards of taste, senses of humour, and epistemic states with those around us. [...]

Controversy encourages coordination because, in general, controversy is uncomfortable. But why should controversy feel uncomfortable even when the disagreement is entirely due to differences in the interlocutors' respective contexts of assessment? One possible answer is: it just is. That's a brute psychological fact about us. Perhaps, as Allan Gibbard suggests (Gibbard, 1990, p. 217), there is an evolutionary explanation. Assessment-sensitive expressions exploit this psychological fact about us—our tendency to treat dispute as a crisis to be resolved—to foster subjective coordination by provoking controversy.

From lofty philosophical heights, the language games we play with words like 'funny' and 'likely' may seem irrational. But that is no reason to deny that we do play these games, or that they have a social purpose. *If describing our use of these expressions requires relativizing the accuracy of speech acts and mental states to contexts of assessment, then this much Relativism is required by our dispensation to describe the world as it is, not as we think it ought to be.* (MacFarlane, 2007, 30; emphasis added)

The above passage contains several important ideas as to how we should understand the relativist project, at least the one undertaken by MacFarlane. First, relativism is a descriptive project which aims to correctly describe how we use judgments of taste, without having a psychological account to offer. Second, the aim of disagreements of taste is not to point out falsehoods but to change the attitudes that others have. And third, the kind of conversations that we have about taste are not that rational from the information-sharing point of view; rather, they have a social purpose since we want others to share our tastes.

When we discussed Kölbel's and Lasersohn's views we criticised both accounts of failing to explain why hearers who know very well that relativism is true about taste insist on disagreeing with others just because they say something false *to them,* the hearer. A charitable hearer should normally try to understand what the speaker intends to say, and since they speak the truth from their point of view (and the hearers know it) there is nothing to disagree about. Putting together what MacFarlane says in the above quote suggests how he would respond to the same criticism.

Along with the other relativists he holds that people do know that others speak truly from their perspectives, but he thinks that the truth is not at issue in a disagreement of taste. Rather, we simply want to change the attitudes of others. And even though it may appear somewhat irrational to argue against someone who speaks truly, it's effective in making them change their minds since no one likes controversy. As MacFarlane's reference to Gibbard suggests, his explanation of the aim of disagreements of taste is really Gibbard's view whose work echoes earlier non-cognitivists Ayer and Stevenson. We delve deeper into the idea of disagreements of taste as coordination in Ch. 12: *Normative Disagreement.* But before that, let me argue in the next chapter that that is indeed the only way the relativists could explain disagreements.

10.6   Summary of Chapter 10

In this chapter we have looked at the relativist accounts by Kölbel, Lasersohn and MacFarlane, all of who take predicates of taste to be a major case in favour of semantic relativism. The core problem I pressed for each of the views is the lack of explanation for why people would have disagreements of taste while knowing perfectly well that truth is relative, that others are speaking the truth, and that there is no privileged perspective. In short, there is a long way to go from the story of relative contents to providing a plausible account of how to communicate with such contents.

We began by looking at Kölbel's account, focusing on whether in his view utterances of relatively true contents get a fixed truth value, and if they do, whose perspective determines the truth value. He doesn't give an answer to those questions which makes it rather unclear what the predictions of his view are. I then presented Evans' challenge and how it applies to perspectiveless contents. We looked at Kölbel's answer to Evans that is based on his account of the norms of belief and assertion for relative contents. Evans' challenge concerns

the truth-conditions of utterances, whereas Kölbel's answer to it only talks of communicative norms and hence it doesn't answer the challenge. I then showed that a problem very similar to Evans' problem can be raised also regarding relativist communicative norms. If the norms themselves are perspective-dependent, they cannot govern communication.

The norms thus must be perspective-independent. But since everyone has implicit knowledge of the communicative norms, a hearer knows that a speaker who makes a judgment of taste that is true from the speaker's perspective is following the norms. Moreover, they know that relativism is true about taste, and that there is no privileged perspective. Hence, why would they disagree when they know that the speaker is speaking the truth?

Lasersohn's relativism faced the very same problem of not being able to provide an account of why people would speak the way they do despite of their knowledge of the truth of relativism. Lasersohn's account, though semantically detailed, has no explanation for how people use judgments of taste which do not get a truth-value. I compared his view to Bach's radical invariantism due to the similarities of the accounts. Bach also holds that judgments of taste semantically don't express truth-evaluable propositions but mere propositional radicals. However, pragmatics bridges the gap so that in communicating people are able to enrich the radical by adding a perspective which results in truth-evaluable proposition. Some things that Lasersohn say point to the same direction, so he might also accept a similar pragmatic story to say how people communicate with the relative contents.

I then presented problems for Bach's and Lasersohn's views. Given the lack of truth-values of judgments of taste, their views face the Frege-Geach problem with Lasersohn himself considers a sufficient reason to reject expressivism. Moreover, the way that people use judgments of taste simply doesn't match with the pragmatic account. There are many other expressions where people need pragmatics to complete the content, but in no case are they as confused as they are with judgments of taste which they fail to evaluate relative to the salient judge etc.

Finally we looked at MacFarlane's radical relativism. MacFarlane tries to provide an account of how to use relativist language in communication by giving norms for what to do if one's judgment is say, shown to be false in another context of assessment. Now, the norms match the way people actually use language, but I argued that that is just because the norms are made for non-assessment-sensitive assertions. By far we have seen that both contextualist

and relativist accounts are far from being able to explain our uses of judgments of taste. Hence, if one gives norms for perspective-independent assertions it is no wonder that judgments of taste are used following such norms since it looks likely that people treat them as perspective-independent.

In the last section I pointed out that the norms that MacFarlane gives make no sense for assessment-sensitive assertions. If truth depends on perspectives and we know that we would be crazy to retract judgments that are true for ourselves but false for others. There is no privileged perspective so why would I give up mine in favour of someone else's? The same holds for the other norms. Justification differs from a perspective to a perspective: e.g. if I like anchovies, that justifies my utterance "Anchovies are tasty". But that justification is entirely irrelevant to whether "Anchovies are tasty" is true as assessed by you.

I thus conclude that semantic relativists are far from having offered a successful explanation of why relativist semantics for predicates of taste would lead to people speaking about taste the way they do. In the next chapter I make the case against relativism stronger by arguing that at the level of thought the framework makes no difference since given the other commitments by relativists people must think in terms of Austinian propositions. Therefore the distinction between lekta and Austinian propositions makes no difference to linguistic predictions in the relativist frameworks under discussion.

11 Relativism and Contents of Thoughts

The previous chapter discussed the relativist accounts of predicates of taste and argued that none of them can ultimately explain how the relativist framework is supposed to help in making sense of disagreements of taste. In this chapter I discuss relativism more generally and focus on what the consequences of the view are regarding contents of thought.

I first consider MacFarlane's (2009) claim that Perry's (1986) distinction between *concerning* and *being about* can be used by the relativists to provide an account of relativised and non-relativised thoughts, which is supposed to help to predict the linguistic data. I show that the distinction as defined by Perry cannot be adopted by relativists given their other commitments. I then show that Perry's (1979) earlier criticism of relativism as a solution to the problem of the essential indexical applies equally to contemporary forms of relativism. The upshot of the criticism is that at the level of thought people think in terms of complete, truth-evaluable propositions. The explanation for the linguistic data thus has to come from somewhere else.

The following section considers the idea that people are naturally egocentric and therefore from relativism it follows that people take their own perspective when they evaluate the truth of relative judgments. We discuss the question of how one should act if one knows relativism to be true. I argue that the relativist would have to posit psychologically implausible egoism to explain people's privileging their own perspective, whereas a rational relativist evaluates the judgments of others from their perspective. The last section revisits some criticism the relativists have made against contextualists and shows that they apply equally to relativists themselves.

11.1 Concerning vs. Being About

We've seen that MacFarlane (2007) was among the critics of the claim that "faultless disagreements" are disagreements. His point was that if the truth of contents depend on a parameter, then there is "genuine" disagreement only if the contents *concern* the same circumstance of evaluation. Now, the *concerning* vs. *being about* terminology comes from Perry (1986), and MacFarlane (2007; 2009) finds it useful for the purposes of the relativist. Here's how he describes the difference between the notions with respect to the question of whether a possible world belongs to the contents of thoughts:

One might respond to these considerations by bringing the world of the context of use into the *content* of Sam's thought. Intuitively, though, Sam could have had a thought with the very same content even if the world had been very different. Our ordinary ways of individuating thought contents do not support making the world of the context of use part of the content, except in exceptional circumstances. Moreover, bringing the world of the context into the content of Sam's thought would make this content a necessary truth about this possible world, rather than a contingent truth about the weather in Paris. We should not say, then, that Sam's thought is *about* the world of use. It is not *about* any particular world. Acknowledging the fact that it depends for its truth on the world of use, we may adopt John Perry's terminology and say that it *concerns* the world of use (Perry (1986)). (MacFarlane, 2009, 243)

Perry (1986) introduces the *being about* vs. *concerning* distinction as a possible account of cases of "thoughts without representation". These are cases where the agent does not represent some element which nevertheless has to be a part of the truth-conditions of the agent's thoughts or utterances for them to get a truth-value. Such cases might motivate a form of relativism where the distinction between representation and non-representation at the level of thoughts matches with the content vs. parameters of evaluation distinction.

Let me describe the main case that Perry gives to illustrate thought without representation. Z-landers are a tribe who don't represent locations in their thoughts. They've always lived in Z-land which is very small, they never travel and they don't know that there are other locations. When it rains they say *It's raining*, but they take rain to be a property, not a relation between events of rain and a location. What Perry asks is how should we account for the role of location in the thought and language of Z-landers? One answer he considers is the following kind of relativism: the thought and utterance contents of Z-landers don't refer to locations, but their truth depends on a location parameter. Hence, the concerning vs. being about distinction is meant to distinguish between thoughts without and with representation of a certain element, in this case a location.

However, the contemporary relativists are not defending such a view. The relativists that we have discussed explicitly state that the speakers know the relativity of truth and they are able to evaluate truth relative to different values

of the parameters of evaluation. Hence, they *do* represent the parameters of evaluation, and therefore according to Perry's terminology, their thoughts are *about* those parameters too. In other words, the distinction cannot be used to illuminate the contemporary relativist's views on thoughts.

If one divorces the concerning vs. aboutness distinction from the non-representation vs. representation distinction, it can only refer to the formal difference of locating an element of truth-conditions to the content vs. to the parameters of the circumstance of evaluation. But we have been given no argument whatsoever to show that the choice between the relativist framework and the traditional framework of propositions whose truth depends only on worlds is anything besides a decision about what is the most convenient way to do formal semantics. We are still in the dark as to the relevance of the relativist semantics with respect to language use.

11.2 Perry on Relativism and Contents of Thoughts

In an earlier paper Perry (1979) considers relativism as a solution to the "problem of the essential indexical". Given the different motivation, the relativism Perry considers doesn't posit the concerning / aboutness distinction. Thus the view is closer to the contemporary forms of relativism.

The problem of the essential indexical is how to account for the differing cognitive significance of beliefs or utterances which nevertheless are supposed to express the same proposition. Perry's classic example is about himself in a supermarket, following a trail of sugar leaking from the torn bag of a shopper that Perry is trying to find, until he realises that *he himself* is the messy shopper. The contrast is between beliefs like "The shopper with a torn sack is making a mess" and "I am making a mess". According to the standard view these sentences in Perry's context express the same proposition. But their cognitive significance differs, as illustrated by Perry's different actions that follow from each belief content. The same problem holds for beliefs expressed by other indexicals such as *here* or *now.*

One attempt to solve the problem that Perry considers is to relativise propositions to persons. Prior (1968) illustrates how such egocentric logic would go on the model of temporal logic. Lewis (1979) suggests that rather than thinking of propositions as sets of possible worlds we should think of them as sets of *centered worlds*: triples consisting of a time, world and an agent. Lewis himself took the framework to be helpful for precisely the problem that Perry was con-

cerned of. Recently Lewis' framework has had a revival along with relativism in general, and it has been defended by Andy Egan (2010) as a solution to the problem of predicates of taste among other issues.

How would relativised propositions help with Perry's problem? The idea is simple. It takes indexical contents to correspond to lekta that are true or false only relative to persons. Hence, "I am making a mess" is true relative to Perry during the famous shopping trip, and it's false relatively to me now, sitting on my desk and writing (from now on let's ignore times for simplicity). In contrast, the non-indexical proposition "The shopper with a torn sack is making a mess" expresses an Austinian proposition since it doesn't contain any agent-sensitive expressions. In other words, it's true or false relative to all agents. This allows one to distinguish between different levels of content that correspond to the differing cognitive significance of Perry's two beliefs.

However, Perry considers the view and argues that it doesn't work. Let me quote Perry on why relativism isn't helpful regarding the problem of the essential indexical:

> I believed that certain proposition, *that I am making a mess* was true –true for me. So belief that this proposition was true for me then does not differentiate me from some other shopper, who believes *that I am making a mess* was true for John Perry. So this belief cannot be what explains my stopping and searching my cart for the torn sack. *Once we have adopted these new-fangled propositions, which are only true at times for persons, we have to admit also that we believe them as true for persons at times, and not absolutely.* And then our problem returns.
>
> Clearly an important distinction must be made. All believing is done by persons at times, or so we may suppose. But the time of belief and the person doing the believing cannot be generally identified with the person and time relative to which the propositions believed is held true. You now believe *that I am making a mess* was true for me, then, but you certainly do not believe it is true for you now, unless you are reading this in a supermarket. (Perry, 1993, 44; emphasis added)

Perry is making a couple of distinct points. First, even if the contents of our thoughts were agent-neutral propositions, we don't merely believe those contents. Rather, we believe them to be true relative to some agents, false relative

to some others. Why? Well, suppose that you are in the supermarket with Perry. He has just realised it is he who is leaving the trail so he cries out "I am making the mess!" Suppose you merely believe agent-neutral contents, in this case "Making a mess!". Given Perry's utterance, you now come to believe "Making a mess" about yourself so you reach for your cart and look for a sugar bag. That's clearly a pretty poor theory of indexical language and thought.

To avoid such predictions, the theory has to hold that when you hear Perry's utterance you believe that "I am making a mess" is true relative to Perry and fortunately, false relative to you. But if that's the case, then when you are making a mess wouldn't it be natural that you believe "I am making a mess" is true relative to you, not just "making a mess"? If you're able to relativise agentless propositions when uttered by others, you must be able to do so when you're the agent too.

Now, the problem that Perry points out is the core problem I've argued that relativists about predicates of taste face. According to the relativists we don't blindly evaluate judgments of taste relative to our perspectives but we are able to take the perspective of others. Hence, when Bengt tells Anna "Anchovies are delicious", she doesn't merely come to believe "Anchovies are delicious"; she comes to believe "Anchovies are delicious" is true relative to Bengt. And knowing her taste, she also believes that "Anchovies are delicious" is false relative to herself.

What she is thus thinking about it is two distinct thoughts whose truth only depends on the actual world: "Anchovies are delicious is true relative to Bengt", and "Anchovies are delicious is false relative to Anna". It is these complete thoughts that guide people's linguistic and other behaviour, including whether they disagree or retract. The formal semantic distinction between "content" and parameters of evaluation are irrelevant to the actual linguistic predictions of relativism.

Let me summarise the problem. If we evaluate the relativised propositions (lekta) fluently relative to different agents, times, perspectives or other suggested parameters, then at the level of thought the relativist framework makes no difference. That criticism applies not only to moderate relativists but to radical relativism as well. We are supposed to know the truth of assessment-sensitivity. Hence, when evaluating each others' utterances, we evaluate them as e.g. true as assessed by whoever is the speaker and false as assessed by me. *That* is what we believe, not just the lekta.

Let us next consider whether relativists could get the desired predictions by

arguing that given relativity of truth, people naturally privilege what is true to them and therefore disagree with others.

11.3 Relativism and Egocentricity

Above we have seen that relativists hold that people are aware of the relativity of truth. Therefore if relativism is true, speakers know that certain judgments are merely relatively true. Let us call such language users *enlightened relativists.* Enlightened relativists also know that people make judgments from their own perspectives and hence those judgments are true relative to the speakers.

Now, above we've seen that the relativists must hold that at the level of thought speakers represent the very same content as in a contextualist picture, namely a fully truth-conditional Austinian proposition. Therefore, the fact that only a lekton is expressed by an utterance makes no difference to the predictions regarding the felicitous responses of language users. What matters is their thought contents. Moreover, I've argued that given that we are usually charitable interpreters, we have no reason to disagree if someone says something that is true to them. If truth is relative, why would *our* truth matter more?

However, several philosophers have argued that if truth is relative then of course we privilege our truth. This section investigates what follows regarding actions, including utterances, if relativism is true. More specifically, what we need to consider is whether an enlightened relativist has reasons to privilege their own perspective in a situation where judgments are made from different, incompatible perspectives.

We must separate two issues: whether one is justified to act (in non-linguistic ways) on the basis of one's own perspective, and whether one is justified in evaluating the judgments of others relative to one's own perspective rather than relative to theirs. For example, if moral relativism is true, then in a case of conflicting moral frameworks one may be justified in acting as is required by one's own moral standards if some action has to be taken. However, I will argue that in a conversation one is never justified in interpreting others merely from one's own perspective, rather than from theirs. Only brute egoism would explain such behaviour, so my conclusion is that relativism has to posit an unlikely psychological story about the egoism of speakers in order to make sense of their predictions.

11.3.1 How Should One Act if Relativism is True?

Let us first consider moral relativism as most views on what follows regarding actions if relativism is true come from ethicists. It is well known from ethics literature that moral relativism does not imply that one should let everyone act as is right to them. The infamous "tolerant relativism" holds something like the following: moral judgments are true only relative to the norms of some community. Hence, since each community acts as is true according to it, it's wrong to interfere with what its members are doing (or to put it another way, we *shouldn't* interfere with them). Here the problem is that the statement about the wrongness of interference or that one morally shouldn't interfere aims to state a universal moral truth. Hence the view is inconsistent (Williams, 1972).

Does moral relativism imply that one must act according to the moral truths of one's community? For example, suppose you know that moral relativism is true. In your community killing strangers is wrong but in the neighbouring community killing strangers is ok. They're planning to kill innocent passers-by from some third community (whose moral judgments are unknown to you, in case one thinks that would matter). Should you prevent the killing because it's wrong according to your community? If one thinks that from relativism it follows that everyone ought to act as is "true to them", a threat of incoherence looms as well. The statement that everyone ought to act as the moral rules of their community state aims to state a universal moral rule, so again we have an incoherent form of moral relativism (Harman, 1975).

The idea of relative truth is extremely puzzling and there are many viewpoints as to what exactly it implies regarding how one ought to think or act. Scanlon (1998) argues that moral relativism has to be committed to there being normative principles that an agent can privilege because otherwise relativism would preclude the possibility of making sensible moral judgments:

> Moral Relativism denies that there is a single set of ultimate substantive moral standards by which all actions are to be judged, *but it nonetheless presupposes a single normative perspective, from which judgments can be made about which principles (including moral principles) people in various situations have reason to regard as authoritative.* Recognizing such a standpoint may seem to represent normative universalism of a kind that is at odds with the spirit of Relativism, but this is a mistake. Moral Relativism is, after all, a thesis about what people do and do not have reason to do. It therefore

cannot be intelligibly asserted without presupposing the possibility that such judgments can coherently be made and defended. (Scanlon, 1998, 329; emphasis added)

It's not clear that that has to be the case, though. For example, Harman (1978) doesn't defend relativism as an account of how ordinary people speak or think.[43] In contrast, he thinks that the truth of relativism is a discovery akin to e.g. the discovery that mass is relative to a framework. He thus speaks of what is rational to do if one is an enlightened relativist. Now, contrary to what Scanlon claims it is an open possibility that a revisionist view would actually recommend a Stoic silence regarding moral judgments, as well as acting only on non-moral reasons. Harman does think it's incoherent to make moral judgments in certain cases; we'll see below what he thinks follows from relativism regarding moral conversations. However, we should be neutral at first regarding whether there has to be a privileged perspective, and if there is one, which one it is.

Let us first look at some defences of the classic egocentric relativism according to which we have reasons to privilege our own standards. James Dreier (2006) states the following about the consequences of relativism with respect to morality and taste:

I personally find Vegemite disgusting. Australians eat a lot of it, produce a lot of it, and apparently find its taste pleasing. Nevertheless, I stand by my own judgment. Vegemite tastes terrible. Australians eat something with a terrible taste, and apparently they like it. If pressed, I will say that it tastes good to them, and bad to me, and that's all there is to it; there is no further question of whose taste is correct. A moral relativist must say the same about the protection of individual rights: it is morally important according to our moral outlook, unimportant according to others, and no further question of which standards are correct. Still, when we actually make moral judgments, we can quite properly make them from our own perspective. Riding roughshod over the interests of the minority is wrong, even over there, and Vegemite is still foul-tasting stuff. (Dreier, 2006, 255)

When we are trying to make up our minds about what is morally

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[43]Harman's earliest writings on moral relativism aren't clear on whether he intended revisionism or not.

right and wrong, we are trying to decide what people ought to do. We have no choice but to use some standards or other. And, naturally enough, we use our own. They are our standards! We accept them. We find them compelling. So when, upon reflection, we judge that it is morally wrong for the majoritarians to disenfranchise their political minority, we are already committed to the judgment that they ought not to do it. (Dreier, 2006, 256)

Dreier thus agrees with Scanlon that we must privilege some standards in order to act and to make judgments, and therefore the natural choice is to privilege our own standards. Now, that might be the *natural* choice. However, it's not clear that it's the rational choice.

The question that is of most interest to us is how one should use and evaluate merely relatively true judgments if relativism is true. As Dreier himself holds, moral judgments are about what to do, judgments of taste are not. One cannot always refrain from acting, and therefore one might have to act based on one's own moral standards in a case where many moral communities are relevant. But since judgments of taste aren't likewise about what should be done, the same mandatoriness of choosing one standard over another doesn't apply. One is in no way paralysed from acting or thinking if one simply accepts that another person's judgment of taste is true relative to them, false relative to one's self. Nothing mandates evaluating judgments of taste made by others from one's own perspective. To do so is irrational, rude and egoistic.

Harman's (1975; 1996; 2000) account of how an enlightened relativist ought to speak seems like the coherent view to hold. Let me first set aside a worry that a semantic relativist might have in taking Harman as an example of a relativist. The authors who write about moral relativism typically do not go into the details of the semantics. Harman's account can be expressed either as a form of contextualism or semantic relativism of "non-indexical contextualist" kind, i.e. where the relevant parameters of the circumstance of evaluation are determined by the context of utterance.[44] However, in its relevant aspects it's

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[44]Here is Harman's statement about what he calls the "logical form" of moral judgments:

> In order to be somewhat more precise, then, my thesis is this. As used by the relevant sort of speaker, 'Ought (A, D, C, M)' means roughly this: given that A [the agent] has motivating attitudes M and given C [considerations regarding the case], D [a type of action] is the course of action for A that is supported by the best reasons. In judgements using this sense of 'ought', C and M are often not explicitly mentioned but are indicated by the context of utterance. Normally, when that happens, C will be 'all things considered' and M will be attitudes that are shared by the speaker and audience. (Harman, 2000, 10)

exactly the kind of view that we are discussing. It takes the truth of moral judgments to depend on moral frameworks and it discusses how an enlightened relativist ought to speak.

Harman holds that our moral judgments always implicitly refer to the morality that we and our interlocutors implicitly agree to live by; let us call that *a community*. The making of those judgments presuppose (note, not necessarily semantically) that the person whose actions we are evaluating accepts that morality. If the person concerned does not accept the moral framework relative to which we are speaking, we are misusing language (Harman, 1978). Hence Harman thinks that it doesn't make sense for a relativist to judge the actions of those outside of her community as right or wrong.

So a Harmanian relativist who encounters a person from a morally different community would realise that a discussion is impossible unless they explicitly restrict their conversation so that it concerns only one community. That indeed seems to be the *rational* thing to do. If there's nothing but relative truth and everyone speaks correctly, then there are no reasons to try to impose one's parochial viewpoint to others (we will consider the Gibbardian idea of normative communication as aiming at coordination in the next chapter). And note that this is not an incoherent form of relativism since it doesn't say that it's a *moral* requirement that one lets others believe their own moral truths. Rather, it's a requirement of rationality, and moral relativism is not committed to relativism about rationality. (Of course one could be a relativist about rationality too, but the views we discuss are not committed to that.)

One can make the same argument from the point of view of language. A judgment that's only relatively true requires that it's evaluated or assessed from a particular perspective. As Lasersohn (2005) holds, when we evaluate a judgment from an "acentric" perspective the judgment cannot get a truth-value. If a person knows that all perspectives are equally valid as is held by the relativists we have discussed, then there's no reason to privilege any one of them. The fact that a perspective is one's own does not give a reason either to privilege it. It would give a subjective reason if one were ignorant of the existence of other perspectives but the forms of relativism we are discussing presuppose that speakers are enlightened relativists.

Hence, when a moral judgment is made in a conversation where there are competing, relevant moral frameworks, the judgment should not be evaluated

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Kölbel (2004) discusses Harman's relativism as an example of group contextualism.

from any particular perspective since there's no reason to choose one over any other. Rather, the judgment remains without a truth-value. Therefore, when one encounters relatively true judgments, for example the judgment "One ought not kill strangers", a rational relativist acts differently depending on whether the judgment is made within the community or in a a situation where there are several incompatible moral communities. Within one's own community, if one accepts its morality one judges the statement relative to it and acts accordingly. But in interacting with other communities one has to acknowledge that a merely relatively true judgment provides no guidance as to what ought to be done.[45]

Returning to Scanlon's statement that moral relativism must allow for coherent moral judgments and actions, Harman's view does so as long as one remains within one's own moral community. However, there is nothing unintelligible about moral relativism which holds that when moral communities must interact, they are outside "the realm of reasons" until they figure out common rules of conduct. And doing that in effect means creating a new moral community which makes moral judgments possible. Before that happens it is a plausible relativist commitment that one doesn't have reasons to act one way or another.

Now, there might be cases where one has to act in a way that is deemed wrong by agents from other moral frameworks and the act has negative consequences to those agents. That might be because self-preservation would mandate it and it would be impossible to negotiate a new moral framework into being. But even then the enlightened relativist understands that he has acted wrongly from the point of view of the others and since their point of view is equally valid, he may expect trouble. There is no reason to privilege one's own morality just because it's one's own. This is one way to understand what follows from relativism which is compatible with Harman's account.

11.3.2 Enlightened Relativists and Judgments of Taste

Now, let us consider how the view applies to relativism about taste. Harman's relativism holds that the truth of moral judgments depends on the moral framework of the speaker's community (if the speaker accepts its morality). In the case of relativism about taste, truth depends on the perspective of the speaker. If our Harman-inspired considerations are correct regarding rational enlightened relativists we get the following picture of communication about taste. When people

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[45]For a discussion of what can be done when different but equally valid normative frameworks clash, see Gibbard (1990, Ch. 10-11).

know that they share their tastes they can make judgments of taste without making the perspective explicit. If they presuppose a shared taste but it turns out that they don't agree about the truth of a particular judgment, then they will correct themselves by either adding a perspective or by choosing a sentence that expresses their experiential state, e.g. "I like x".

When they are in a company of someone who either turns out to have a different taste or is known to have a different taste, the relativist will refrain from making judgments where the perspective isn't made explicit. With judgments of taste the situation with many perspectives is much less complicated than with moral judgments. In the latter case there is need to create a new moral system that allows speakers to be able to decide on actions. But in the case of taste there is no equivalent problem since we can always replace judgments of taste with judgments about our experiential states.

Finally, let me add that from what I've argued for it doesn't follow that a rational relativist couldn't be frustrated or annoyed with others whose perspectives don't agree in the relevant respects. For example, Raz (1994) argues that we cannot at once take both the detached perspective from which we see other moral frameworks as equally valid as our own, and the engaged perspective from which we ordinarily think and act. His example is about valuing a contemplative and patient life versus valuing decisive action and swiftness. Even if one accepts and appreciates the other mode of life from the detached perspective, from one's engaged perspective one cannot help but to be hostile to the mode of life incompatible with one's own. Given that such emotional reactions towards incompatible perspective are unavoidable, could that justify the egocentricity that semantic relativists have defended?

No. Feelings of hostility or frustration neither justify nor explain why people would systematically try to impose their own perspective on others. Similar conflicts between reason and feelings take place all the time. Suppose you are calmly working at home when the neighbours start to drill the walls or their baby begins her ear-splitting screaming. You might get frustrated or angry, but at the same time you know very well that there is nothing wrong with their actions. And someone having a different taste than you is hardly a reason for deep frustration. If relativism about taste is true, then it's possible that *sometimes* we act out of frustration or egoistic desires to impose our own taste and therefore disagree with someone even while knowing that they've spoken the truth. But only supposing that speakers are extreme egoistic brutes could the relativist explain the fact that disagreements about taste are so commonplace.

11.4 Revisiting the Relativist Criticism of Contextualism

We've encountered a lot of criticism of the different contextualist accounts, many of which were put forward by relativists. However, in light of the fact that at the level of thought people must be representing the values of the parameters it turns out that many of the core problems of contextualism are problems for relativism too.

Let us first return to the question of disagreements of taste to see why radical relativism is not in any better position to explain them than contextualism, or than other forms of relativism for that matter. We've already seen in connection with the argument against speaker-centered contextualism that both Kölbel and Lasersohn hold that it cannot account for disagreements of taste. MacFarlane agrees with the criticism:

> But the contextualist solution has a price. If in saying "apples are delicious" I am saying that they taste good to me, while in saying "apples are not delicious" you are denying that they taste good to you, then we are no more disagreeing with each other than we would be if I were to say "My name is John" and you were to say "My name is not John." Intuitively, though, it does seem that we are disagreeing. We certainly take ourselves to be disagreeing. (MacFarlane, 2007, 18)

As we've seen, focusing on "what is said" is not helpful when discussing relativism; what matters is the contents of thoughts. So when I say "Apples are delicious" what am I thinking according to the radical relativist? Let us suppose that radical relativist is true. Then we, the competent users of assessment-sensitive language know that the truth *for me* of that utterance depends on *my* context of assessment. And when you deny what I said, the truth of that *for you* depends on *your* context of assessment. To repeat MacFarlane's words again: "If you say "skiing is fun" and I contradict you, *it is not because I think that the proposition you asserted is false as assessed by you* in your current situation" (MacFarlane, 2007, 30; emphasis added).

In short, you believe "*Apples are delicious* is true for Sanna, false for me" (or perhaps, "For Sanna apples are delicious, for me they are not"). You think I've spoken truly for me, falsely for you. Now why would that be any more genuine disagreement than the disagreement that the contextualist gets? There is nothing incompatible whatsoever in you believing "*Apples are delicious* is

true for Sanna, false for me", and there is no incompatibility in me believing "*Apples are delicious* is true for me" and you believing "*Apples are delicious* is not true for me". Radical relativism isn't any closer to genuine disagreement than its contextualist or relativist rivals.

Another problem that contextualism faces is that people treat judgments of taste as if they expressed perspectiveless contents. We've discussed three consequences of that in Ch. 8: *Flexible Contextualism.* First, speakers report judgments of taste across contexts without making the perspective of the past context explicit. Second, speakers report agents who make apparently conflicting judgments of taste in different contexts as disagreeing. And third, speakers retract their past judgments of taste even though they were true in the original context of utterance.

Prima facie it might seem that relativism can solve the problems given the perspectiveless lekta that could serve as the common content in those cases. However, if we look at the cases from the point of view of thoughts we see that relativism faces the same problems. For example, retractions are basically just disagreements with one's past self. Since at the level of thought one thinks e.g. "It was true for me 10 years ago that oysters were disgusting", why would one now say that one was wrong?

Let us look at another example which contextualism has trouble with. Kölbel (2009, 391-2) criticises speaker-centered contextualism as follows. Anna and Bob are (apparently) disagreeing over the tastiness of whale meat:

(175) (a) Anna: Whale meat is tasty.
  (b) Bob: Whale meat is not tasty.

Since they are not contradicting each others according to contextualism, Anna can evaluate Bob's utterance as true. However, it's not felicitous for Anna to say "What Bob said is true". Since Bob did speak truly, why can't Anna acknowledge that?

The argument applies equally against the relativist. Anna knows that Bob is speaking the truth *at his perspective.* So why is it not felicitous for Anna to say either "What Bob said is true" or "What Bob said is true for him"? The problem is even worse for the relativist since there should be two possible ways to affirm the truth of perspectiveless utterances: *true* or *true for x*. However, neither of them is a felicitous response for Anna to make in the above disagreement.

Another criticism against contextualism that also applies to relativism comes from Kölbel's (2004) defence of moral relativism. In Ch. *1: Judgments of*

Personal Taste we saw that the simple subjectivist has to explain the different behaviours of judgments of taste and judgments about grounding experiential states. Similarly, Kölbel discusses subjectivism about moral judgments and points out an important difference in the following judgments:

(176) Blair ought to go to war.

(177) My moral code requires Blair to go to war.

Kölbel notes that someone who disagrees with the speaker can reject the former while accepting the latter. However, according to speaker-centered contextualism the two utterances by the same person should express roughly the same content. Kölbel claims that relativism doesn't have such problems since the content of the former does not refer to moral codes even though it's truth depends on them.

Again, the problems of relativism become apparent when we look at the thought contents that a hearer of the two utterances has. Suppose Bob hears Anna say "Blair ought to go to war". He comes to believe "Anna's moral code requires Blair to go to war " (or perhaps, "*Blair ought to go to war* is true from Anna's moral perspective"). Later he hears Anna say "My moral code requires Blair to go to war." Does Bob come to believe something different than before? No.

So in what sense can the relativist say that a hearer can *reject* one of the contents while *accepting* the other? The claim makes sense only if they stipulate a sense of *acceptance* and *rejection* which have nothing to do with truth. What Bob may reject is merely the non-truth-evaluable lekton "Blair ought to go to war", not the Austinian propositions that consists of the lekton plus Anna's moral perspective. The latter content is what Bob actually comes to believe *and he does accept that.* So only by using an artificial sense of *rejection* can the relativist say that the hearer may reject the utterance.

But to talk of acceptance or rejection of a lekton is like talking of acceptance or rejection of a sentence. Both notions are equally artificial. So if the relativist claims to get certain predictions by their notion of lekta, the contextualist can likewise use sentences as the things that speech acts like reporting or retractions target. The relativist says that Bob can reject Anna's utterance of "Blair ought to go to war" and accept her "My moral code requires Blair to go to war" because they express different lekta. Likewise the speaker-centered contextualist could say that Bob rejects *the sentence* used to express the former, and accepts the

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sentence used to express the latter. Of course he believes both *contents*, but like the relativist, the contextualist can deny that acceptance and rejection target fully truth-conditional contents.

11.5 Summary of Chapter 11

The aim of this chapter was to evaluate whether relativism has consequences on the level of thought. The question is extremely important since predictions about language use must explain what speakers take themselves to be doing. A mere formal semantic account predicts nothing without a pragmatic story. I first showed that Perry's distinction between thoughts that *concern* and object or that are *about* an object cannot be adopted by the relativists. Perry meant the distinction to correlate with representation and non-representation of some truth-conditional element, whereas relativists don't accept that there are such non-represented elements. I then revisited Perry's criticism for why relativism doesn't help with the problem of essential indexical and argued that the same criticism can be made against contemporary relativists.

The second part of the chapter asked whether relativism can rely on egoism as an explanation for why people would privilege their own perspective in evaluating judgments. I argued that there are no reasons for an enlightened relativist to behave in egocentric ways when discussing relatively true judgments. We've seen that given the connection of moral judgments and actions it may be unavoidable at times to act on the basis of one's own moral framework even when it means harmful consequences for others. But only very strong reasons like the preservation of one's self may justify the action. In contrast, taste doesn't have such direct links to action, and not having a shared taste perspective doesn't prevent action in any way. Only by supposing that speakers are egoistic brutes who don't care about what is true for others can the relativist explain why speakers would insist on evaluating the judgments of others from their own point of view and disagreeing with those judgments.

Now, given that people do disagree about taste, what should we conclude about the viability of relativism? I think it's ruled out that people are enlightened relativists since we have no reason to suspect people of massive, stupid egoism. In fact most of our criticism of relativism is a consequence of the idea that speakers are supposed to be enlightened relativists. So why do all the semantic relativists suppose that? The reason is simple. The main motivation for relativism has been its alleged ability to explain why people disagree about

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taste. But if relativists argued that people aren't aware of the truth of relativism, then the explanation of disagreement would rely on the idea that speakers are really just talking past each others without realising it. But that's precisely their criticism of contextualism.

That speakers aren't fully aware of the truth-conditions of their utterances is the feared "semantic blindness" position that epistemic contextualists has been criticised of (see e.g. (Hawthorne, 2004; Schiffer, 1996). If the relativists held that language users are somewhat ignorant of the truth-conditions of their judgments, they are making a move which, once again, can be likewise adopted by the contextualists who would then have an equally good explanation of disagreement. We will discuss "semantic blindness" again in Ch. 14: *Perspectivism.*

12 Normative Disagreement

In this chapter we evaluate whether disagreements of taste are best understood not as disagreements over the truth but as practical or normative disagreements. In chapter 10: *A Closer Look at Relativist Accounts* we saw that MacFarlane (2007) ultimately appeals to disagreement in attitude as an explanation of why contradictory lekta give an impression of disagreement. In our discussion of relativism it became clear that relativists have no other account of disagreements of taste since at the level of thoughts speakers and hearers represent not merely lekta, but lekta as true or false relative to various perspectives. Moreover, we've seen that egoism isn't a plausible explanation for why speakers would systematically privilege their own perspective.

In the beginning of the chapter I summarise Ayer's and Stevenson's accounts of moral and aesthetic disagreements which are the forerunners of contemporary accounts of normative disagreement. Ayer held that the disagreements come down to differences in values or preferences whereas Stevenson took them to show differences in attitudes. Allan Gibbard (1990) builds on the foundations of Ayer and Stevenson in his account of moral disagreement as disagreement over systems of norms. MacFarlane talks of disagreement in attitude and co-ordination, notions which come from Gibbard to whom MacFarlane also refers regarding a possible evolutionary explanation of why we don't like controversy.

The second section evaluates whether relativists could adopt the idea of disagreements of taste as disagreements in attitude. First I give an overview of Gibbard's account of moral communication in order to evaluate whether it provides a plausible model for how people use judgments of taste. Section 12.2.2 discusses the account that comes from combining MacFarlane's relativism with Gibbard's account of the use of normative language, and argues that contextualist accounts are equally suited to adopt the Gibbardian view. Section 12.2.3 argues that Gibbard's account cannot be used to make sense of discussions and disagreements about matters of taste.

The second part of the chapter (section 12.3) discusses other accounts of disagreements of taste which rely on normative disagreements. Section 12.3.1 evaluates Recanati's (2007) and Sundell's (2011) views which hold that disagreements of taste aim to influence which standards of taste some relevant group ought to have. Section 12.3.2 discusses Richard's (2004; 2008) account which holds that when one disagrees about taste one aims to make the participants to the conversation *reconceptualise* the issue in question. The final section argues

that discussion about concepts makes sense in what I call *Socratic disagreements*, that is, disagreements over the nature of some phenomenon like justice. However, I argue that if speakers believe relativism to be true as Richard holds, then from their point of view there is no reason to engage in Socratic disagreements.

12.1   Emotivists on Disagreement

Let me begin by summarising the emotivist solutions to the problem of disagreement of taste, defended by A. J. Ayer (2001) and C. L. Stevenson (1944; 1963). According to Ayer, moral and aesthetic judgments are not assertions and they do not aim to make truth-evaluable statements. Rather, their function is to *express emotions* and thereby to arouse the same feelings in others. Here is Ayer's description of what goes on when one makes a moral judgment:

> The presence of an ethical symbol in a proposition adds nothing to its factual content. Thus if I say to someone, 'You acted wrongly in stealing that money', I am not stating anything more than if I had simply said, 'You stole that money'. In adding that this action is wrong I am not making any further statement about it. I am simply evincing my moral disapproval of it. It is as if I had said, 'You stole that money', in a peculiar tone of horror, or written it with the addition of some special exclamation marks. The tone, or the exclamation marks, adds nothing to the literal meaning of the sentence. It merely serves to show that the expression of it is attended by certain feelings in the speaker. (Ayer, 2001, 110).

In Ayer's words, moral and aesthetic expressions are "pseudo-concepts" which is unfortunately as detailed as his linguistic theory gets.[46] With respect to predicates of taste an emotivist would hold that a judgment of taste such as "Tripe

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[46]Ayer's view bears some resemblance to Kant's remarks about judgments of taste. Kant also took judgments of taste not to involve concepts but he held that speakers behave pragmatically as if they did: "The beautiful is that which, without concepts, is represented as the object of a universal satisfaction." (Kant, 2000, 5: 211 / 96). These judgments resemble judgments made with concepts since the speaker presupposes that everyone would accept the same judgment:

> Hence he will speak of the beautiful as if beauty were a property of the object and the judgment logical (constituting a cognition of the object through concepts of it), although it is only aesthetic and contains merely a relation of the representation of the object to the subject, because it still has the similarity with logical judgment that its validity for everyone can be presupposed. (Kant, 2000, 5: 212 / 97)

soup is disgusting" has no truth-conditions but is just another way of expressing particular kinds of negative feelings towards tripe soup, akin to sticking out one's tongue or making faces.

We saw in Ch. 1: *Judgments of Personal Taste* Moore's (1922) criticism according to which subjectivism cannot explain why there are moral disagreements. Ayer was aware that Moore's criticism applied to his account as well. Since emotivists hold that value judgments don't express propositions they must explain why there appear to be disagreement while no contradictory judgments have been made. Ayer claims that normally moral disagreements are not disagreements over moral values but over facts about the cases, such as what was the agent's background knowledge and motives, or more generally, which actions have which consequences.

However, if the disagreement persists once the speakers agree on all the factual issues, it means that they endorse different systems of values. But Ayer holds that a system of values cannot be rationally argued for, only insisted upon. As he puts it: "It is because argument fails us when we come to deal with pure questions of value, as distinct from questions of fact, that we finally resort to mere abuse." (Ayer, 2001, 115). The disagreement that remains once the facts are set straight is not a matter of anyone being wrong, it is simply an expression of different values or preferences. Why different people have different systems of value is a question for psychology, not philosophy.

Now, whether or not Ayer's explanation is plausible for moral disagreement is not of our concern but it has some plausibility regarding matters of taste. If we replace his talk of systems of value with tastes, there is certainly some truth to the claim that tastes cannot be rationally argued for. For example, when we discussed the example of the taste of the horse lasagne (section 1.1 on page 17), we saw that ultimately there isn't anything left to say if one likes its taste and the other doesn't. So according to the Ayerian view of disagreements of taste, the disagreement over "Horse lasagne is delicious" does not concern the truth of a claim where *delicious* attributes a property. Instead the judgment expresses positive feelings towards horse lasagne, and the one who disagrees with it does not share those feelings.

However, in evaluating Ayer's proposal we need to separate two different claims. One claim is that tastes or moral values cannot be rationally argued for, which is the claim we have admitted is somewhat plausible with respect to taste. But that is not enough to explain what goes on in a disagreement of taste. It also needs to be the case that people know that tastes or moral

values cannot be rationally argued for, and that they thereby take each others to be merely expressing preferences instead of giving arguments (once they are beyond disputing the relevant facts).

The second claim is far from obvious, especially in the case of moral values. Even if the first claim were true it would be a discovery of philosophers and *not* reflected in the behaviour of ordinary speakers. There is no evidence that everyone actually believes in a kind of folk emotivism. But again, with taste the claim has some plausibility at least. As mentioned, *De gustibus non disputandum est* is a live proverb which might be a consequence of some people realising that taste is not within the realm of rational argumentation.

C. L. Stevenson (1944; 1963) who defended emotivism for ethical and aesthetic terms had a more elaborate explanation for why compatible propositions give an impression of a disagreement. He treats ethical judgments as not including only beliefs but broadly speaking pro or con attitudes, or what he calls *being for* or *being against*. The attitudes are reflected in the *emotive meaning* of moral expressions. Emotive meaning is a dimension of meaning which expresses an attitude for or against, and it typically co-exists with a descriptive meaning.

Correspondingly Stevenson distinguishes between disagreement in belief and disagreement in attitude. The former disagreement takes place when two persons have incompatible beliefs, i.e. they believe propositions that cannot be true at the same time. The kind of disagreement that Moore talks about is a verbal expression of disagreement in belief: speakers express propositions which cannot both be true. Disagreement in attitude in contrast does not require contradicting beliefs but merely contradicting attitudes.

Stevenson describes disagreement in attitude as follows: "Two men will be said to disagree in attitude when they have opposed attitudes to the same object –one approving of it, for instance, and the other disapproving of it –and when at least one of them has a motive for altering or calling into question the attitude of the other." (Stevenson, 1944, 4). Like Ayer, Stevenson is aware of the role of facts in ethical arguments, so that sometimes coming to agree in beliefs causes agreement in attitude as well. However, often that is not enough and two agents may disagree in attitude despite of agreeing in belief.

In Ch. 2: *The Evaluative Dimension of Judgments of Taste* we took predicates of taste to be thick (in William's terminology) or evaluation-added (in Sibley's terminology) terms. We analysed the evaluative component as attributing something like a disposition to cause a positive or negative experiential state. If we compare Stevenson's emotive dimension of meaning to that analysis

we see an important difference. Stevenson reduces evaluativeness to the attitude of being for or against which is conventionally associated with an expression. Hence, an evaluative expression like *good* does not attribute anything. Instead it expresses that a speaker has a pro attitude towards an object, and it invites the hearer to share the attitude.

Let me now give some examples to illustrate how the emotivist view differs from the view that evaluative judgments don't merely express but they also attribute properties. When one expresses an attitude one is making manifest an emotional state that one is having. Furthermore, given the empathy humans usually feel towards each others and expect from others it is natural that one wants to share the emotion. However, when one is making an evaluation one is not expressing but asserting, and the main role of assertion is to impart information (and also to submit one's beliefs to be assessed for truth by others). An evaluation typically conveys or expresses emotion too but that is not its primary or only aim.

To give a simple example of the roles of expression and evaluation, suppose two people are travelling by car at night when an elk runs to the road. The driver breaks, manages to stop in time and exclaims "holy sh**!" to express her fear. For whatever psychological reasons she will expect the passenger to share the emotion. But suppose the passenger happens to be a war photographer with nerves of steel who remains untouched by what happened. The situation shows the different emotional responses of the persons, nothing more. That may of course cause them to disagree in attitude, for example if the driver is shocked by the passenger's calmness which she considers to be a failure to grasp the genuine risk they were in.

Now suppose that the driver had said instead "That was scary", to which the passenger replies "I don't think so. I've seen much worse". Here we intuitively have something more than a mere expression of emotions. The speakers are making an evaluation of the dispositions of the situation in which they were in, namely whether it causes fear or not. The passenger's response poses a challenge to the driver to rethink her evaluation of the scariness of the situation.

In the rest of the chapter we will consider whether a judgment of taste is more like the expression of emotion rather than an evaluation of the dispositions of objects or events. Allan Gibbard (1990) has incorporated Ayer's and Stevenson's views on moral disagreements in his expressivist framework, and Gibbard's discussion of disagreements has influenced many contemporary developers of perspective-dependent accounts on taste.

12.2 Relativism and Gibbard's Theory of the Use of Normative Language

12.2.1 Gibbard on Normative Language

Gibbard (1990) is an expressivist, that is, he thinks moral judgments don't express truth-evaluable propositions but mental states of the speaker. However, his account of moral language has two core components. First, he develops the expressivist account including a formal framework, and second, he offers an account of the aims and use of moral language. We focus mostly on the latter; let us call it *Gibbardian pragmatics of normative language*.

First, let me summarise what Gibbard takes moral and other normative judgments to express. The background for the account is his view about normative judgments as judgments about the rationality of feelings. The rationality in question should be understood as "subjective" rationality, that is, what it makes sense to do from the agent's limited point of view. Subjective rationality guides actions in that one will try to do what one considers rational. Gibbard takes rationality to be connected to the norms that one accepts so that whether something makes sense to do depends on whether it is permitted by the norms that the agent accepts.

Norms that one accepts are also connected to particular kinds of feelings. For example, norms of morality are norms for the rationality of guilt and resentment. Hence, if someone acts in a way that's not permitted by the system of norms that *I* accept, then it's rational for me to feel resentment towards the agent and to think that she ought to feel guilt. The same combination of norms and feelings one ought to have extends to other normative domains besides ethics. For example, aesthetic norms are norms for the rationality of different kinds of aesthetic appreciation. This is the idea of *apt feelings* in the title of Gibbard's book *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*. We think different situations merit different sentiments, and our normative judgments are judgments about which feelings are apt in which cases.

Returning to our discussion of emotivism above, Gibbard's account differs significantly from Ayer's or Stevenson's emotivism in his connecting feelings with rationality. The emotivists hold that normative judgments are merely expressions of pro or con attitudes whereas Gibbard takes them to be about the rationality of those attitudes. This brings us to his account of the use of normative language. Gibbard holds that unlike interjections, normative judgments

invite others to share a sentiment or attitude. Gibbard can explain the difference between the two by saying that interjections are mere expressions of feelings whereas normative judgments are about the rationality of feelings. Hence Gibbard avoids the problem that expressions of emotions like "Damn!" or other interjections play a different conversational role than normative judgments like "That was wrong".

Gibbard argues that the point of normative talk is to coordinate our feelings:

> The key to human moral nature, I suggest, lies in *coordination* broadly conceived. The need for complex coordination stands behind much of the way language works in our thoughts, in our feelings, and in social life. It figures centrally in our emotional dispositions, especially for such morally significant emotions as outrage, guilt, shame, respect, moral admiration, and moral inspiration. Matters of coordination, in the picture I shall sketch, stand squarely behind the psychology of norms, and hence behind what is involved in thinking something rational or irrational. (Gibbard, 1990, 26)

When we talk about what one ought to do or what is right or wrong in a given situation we may influence each others by our emotional responses, including using emotionally laden language. These evaluations of hypothetical or actual situations which coordinate our normative systems Gibbard calls *normative governance.*

> Here, then, in brief, is the proposal. Normative discussion might coordinate acts and feelings if two things hold. First, normative discussion tends towards consensus. The mechanisms here, I shall propose, are two: mutual influence, and a responsiveness to demands for consistency. Second, the consensus must move people to do or feel accordingly. That is where normative governance comes in. (Gibbard, 1990, 73)

In short, Gibbard's account of normative language builds on the foundation that we have a biologically determined need to coordinate our thoughts and actions. We may influence each others' systems of norms by (a) taking a stance on behalf of some norm, showing our emotional reactions and using emotional language, and by (b) demanding coherence from the judgments of others.

The second component is more important than it may seem at first. We can think of a normative system as a list which ideally will state for every possible

action whether it's forbidden, optional, or required. In evaluating a particular moral case one has to try to be systematic and give the same verdict regarding any other relevantly similar case. But as we know from thinking about real life situations there are typically many relevant moral or nonmoral dimensions which may pull our evaluations to different directions or bias our judgments.

Moreover, ordinary agents do not possess complete moral systems; our systems of norms do not give a verdict for every possible action. Coherently evaluating the unclear cases given an incomplete system of norms is hence part of the demands of coherence. Being morally coherent is hard, and we may suppose that a large part of moral discussions are aimed at sorting out our own and others' systems of norms and what follows from them. Indeed, Gibbard thinks that philosophical discussions are continuous with ordinary normative discussions.

12.2.2 Relative Truth and Coordination of Attitudes

One reason why Gibbardian pragmatics of normative language is relevant to us is MacFarlane's (2007) claim that assessment-sensitive expressions are meant to create controversy since it encourages coordination. I've argued that relativists including MacFarlane don't have an account of disagreements of taste any more than contextualists do. Hence, in this section we need to consider two issues. First, can adopting Gibbardian pragmatics of normative language help the relativist? And second, if it can, is MacFarlane's relativism better suited for adopting Gibbardian pragmatics than moderate relativists or contextualists? Let us begin with the first question.

Here is an outline of a relativist account of judgments of taste with Gibbardian pragmatics of normative language. In talking about matters of taste people know that there is nothing beyond relative truth and that everyone is normally saying the truth (to them). However, given our biologically driven need to coordinate our feelings and actions we are not happy if we don't share our attitudes. Therefore, when we discuss matters of taste we aim to influence others and to coordinate our feelings.

We do this by taking a stance in behalf of some normative position (e.g. that Italian food is the most delicious in the world), for example by making a judgment of taste such as "There is no better food than pizza". We can also use emotive language –no doubt at least some predicates of taste like *disgusting* or *delicious* are emotionally laden– or we can show our emotional reactions by our expressions and behaviour. We also insist on coherence, although this

component seems to play a negligible role in contrast to moral judgments.

So far so good. What is unclear is how to accommodate MacFarlane's suggestion that assessment-sensitive expressions would be somehow specifically suited to create controversy in contrast to context-sensitive expressions. To repeat his words: "Assessment-sensitive expressions are designed, it seems, to foster controversy, where use-sensitive expressions preclude it." (MacFarlane, 2007, 30). As we have emphasised when discussing the accounts of Kölbel, Lasersohn and MacFarlane, if predicates of taste are circumstance- or assessment-sensitive, speakers have to be able to fill in the relevant perspective at the level of thought. The formal semantic differences created by assessment sensitivity hasn't been shown to correspond to any difference at the level of thought or understanding. And what we should note about the relativist view with Gibbardian pragmatics outlined above is that relative truth plays no role in explaining the point of disagreements.

This brings us to the second question: is relativism better suited to adopt Gibbardian pragmatics of normative language than for example moderate relativists or contextualists? There is no reason to think so. A speaker-centered contextualist holds that when one makes a judgment of taste of the form x is F, the judgment is true iff x is F from the perspective of the speaker. That is the view which figures in the relativist literature as the prototypical form of contextualism that cannot explain disagreements of taste. But echoing MacFarlane (2007), the speaker-centered contextualist can argue as follows:

> If you say "skiing is fun" and I say "skiing is not fun", it is not because I think that the proposition you asserted is false given the affective attitudes you now have. Instead, I hope to change these attitudes. Perhaps, then, the point of disagreements of taste is to foster *coordination* of contexts. We have an interest in sharing standards of taste, senses of humor, and epistemic states with those around us.

A speaker-centered contextualist account coupled with Gibbardian pragmatics of normative language would be very similar to the relativist view sketched above. In making judgments of taste people know very well that what has been expressed refers to the speaker, and that normally they speak the truth. However, we want to share our attitudes. Hence we discuss matters of taste in order to coordinate our feelings and actions. We do this by taking a stance by e.g. making a judgment of taste and so on and so on –the details regarding discussions about taste are exactly as in the relativist view since they come from

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Gibbard and have nothing to do with the semantic framework that one might prefer.

In other words, if one wants to make sense of disputes of taste by adopting Gibbardian pragmatics of normative language, there isn't anything explanatorily relevant that the relativist can say but that a contextualist couldn't. This point can be emphasised by considering clear cases of disagreements in attitude where there is no content under dispute. Here is an example.

(178) (a) Agnes: I love *fois gras*.

(b) Bob: How can you possibly like it? The geese have been tortured to produce it.

(c) Agnes: Well, maybe it's wrong to produce it but it still tastes great.

(d) Bob: I think it's disgusting, I can't believe you enjoy it.

This kind of dispute shows that there is no problem in holding that people can try to influence each others' attitudes even when they acknowledge that the other one is speaking the truth and there isn't any putative assessment-sensitive expressions involved. Hence, one can perfectly well be a speaker-centered contextualist with Gibbardian pragmatics of normative language (or a flexible contextualist if one finds a way to avoid the problems posed in Ch. 8: *Flexible Contextualism*). Moreover, a contextualist has an advantage over the relativist in having entirely ordinary context-sensitive semantics for predicates of taste. If the only explanation of disagreements of taste comes from Gibbardian pragmatics of normative language, there is no motivation for relativism.

We've mentioned before that both relativism and contextualism have trouble in explaining why people retract their past judgments. Gibbardian pragmatics of normative language may be useful in explaining that as well. Suppose I now love pickled eggs but didn't use to. Even if I've spoken truly in the past in saying that pickled eggs are disgusting, I do well to retract that judgment now since it encourages coordination of attitudes. If my aim is to influence others it makes sense to claim that I was somehow mistaken about my own taste rather than to acknowledge my past correctness. After all, if I want others to find pickled eggs delicious I shouldn't happily admit that even I used to hate them. By saying that I would be flagging the acceptability of different points of view, the opposite of coordination. That's devious of course, but perhaps the desire to coordinate trumps sincerity. So retractions can be considered as another manoeuvre in a normative conversation if one finds Gibbardian pragmatics of normative language attractive.

Adopting a broadly Gibbardian view of the aims of normative discussions can in principle be done by relativists and contextualists alike. But in fact it doesn't really make sense to be a relativist with Gibbardian pragmatics of normative language. If the explanation of the linguistic data comes from Gibbardian pragmatics of normative language there's no motivation to move to relativism in the first place. Indeed, if one finds Gibbard's pragmatic account compelling and one is unhappy with the standard truth-conditional views like contextualism, Gibbard's expressivism or more recent forms of expressivism (see e.g. Yalcin (2007; 2012)) might be a more promising story regarding the contents of normative judgments. Unfortunately there is no space to discuss those views here.

12.2.3 Why Gibbardian Pragmatics of Normative Language Is Not the Answer

We've seen that Gibbardian pragmatics of normative language doesn't help the relativist since if one likes the view it is better to adopt ordinary contextualist semantics. But whether anyone should adopt Gibbardian pragmatics of normative language for discussions about taste is another question. I think Gibbard and the earlier emotivists are right in emphasising our desire to share our attitudes or feelings, and surely sometimes a disagreement of taste is merely an attempt to influence others as in the example about *fois gras* above.

However, the story about coordination makes much less sense as an account of judgments of taste in general than it does as an account of moral judgments. In this section I argue that judgments of taste are not similar enough to moral judgments in the relevant respects. Consequently, even if one thinks that Gibbardian pragmatics of normative language is at least partly the right account of our use of moral language, it doesn't explain our use of the language of taste.

Gibbardian pragmatics for moral judgments makes sense since we have major incentives to coordinate our moral thoughts and actions with others. In forming any kind of a society we need to agree on its rules for acceptable behaviour which makes moral judgments the foundations of our social lives. Given the need for a society, moral discussions are crucially important because they allow us to decide on how one ought to act. Making moral choices is also difficult so talking about morality helps us make our moral frameworks better. When we expose our views to others they may see inconsistencies where we ignore them.

In a society people don't only need rules, they need plans of action for various

possible situations. Moral discussions allow us to plan in advance by imagining hypothetical situations and to decide what is the right course of action to take, were that situation to materialise. Even if Gibbard is right in holding that there's a biological need to coordinate, we don't need to look at some distant past to see that moral conversations are as relevant as ever in helping us to figure out how we ought to act and feel. Our view of the world is shaped by our normative system but it also permeates the simplest guidelines for action. One's normative system plays a role in deciding such mundane issues as whether it's ok to do less chores at home than one's parter or whether one should give money to a beggar.

Now, let us compare moral conversations to discussions about matters of taste. If we look back into the humans' hunter-gatherer past we might say that it was important to coordinate thoughts about which things were edible and which were poisonous. But that's about the only similarity there is to moral conversations. There are two essential differences between morality and taste. First, we don't need to coordinate with others regarding tastes. Second, the methods that make us coordinate our moral judgments do not work with the case of taste. Let us look at each in turn.

As we've seen, trying to coordinate our moral thoughts is essential since normative systems determine not only how we interact with others on daily basis but also how our societies are organised. Coordinating our tastes in contrast is of little importance. The cases where coordination of personal tastes matters are quite limited: what to cook, where to eat or drink, what to do during leisure times or holidays (and perhaps which movie or TV program to see or which music to listen to though these may rather fall to the side of aesthetic judgments). Moreover, the people who we need to coordinate with are limited to the people with whom we do the above things, that is, friends, partners and family. It might be nice to coordinate attitudes with those who accompany us in our leisure time but it's far from essential to our lives.

However, couldn't one object that perhaps it's very important indeed to coordinate, given the importance of the above leisure activities to many people nowadays? Maybe it's not essential for our survival but given the easy lives many people lead nowadays things like taste may be of utmost importance. As the example about *fois gras* illustrated sometimes we care a lot about the tastes of others, especially when we find them offending. Now, it should be emphasised that the *fois gras* case is not merely a matter of taste but a moral matter. Coordination of tastes may matter a lot if the coordination ensures

coordination of related moral attitudes, like condemning the production of *fois gras*. Korsmeyer (2012) even argues that true connoisseurs cannot separate the moral dimension of foods and drinks from their taste in which case a connoisseur cannot find delicious something whose production they consider unethical. Since food and its taste are closely connected to ethical choices (Hirvonen, 2013), we should set aside the cases where an attempt at coordination of tastes is a consequence of an attempt of coordination of moral values. However, one should keep in mind that perhaps questions of taste and morality cannot be clearly separated in many cases.

Whether or not there are people who would like to coordinate their taste with others, judgments of taste cannot be coordinated by the methods that Gibbard says guide coordination of moral thoughts. As we saw, according to Gibbard normative discussions coordinate acts and feelings because of two features. First, any normative conversation tends towards consensus because we influence each others by taking stances, having emotional reactions and by demanding consistency. Second, if a consensus is reached it should change people's feelings and actions to match the consensus. Discussions about what ought to be done in a hypothetical situation aim at that.

Suppose that there is a disagreement of taste for example about the taste of anchovies. Anna thinks they are disgusting, Bengt thinks they are delicious. Both have taken their stance and elicited their emotional reactions by the choice of their words and perhaps by some suitable facial expressions. Do they have a chance at changing each others' minds? Hardly. No matter how much time, effort, eloquent language, arguments or manipulation one uses to convince you that anchovies are delicious or disgusting, if you've tasted them recently and know how they taste like, whatever they say won't make you change your mind. And the same goes for other judgments of personal taste.[47]

Demands of consistency don't work in the case of taste either. Judgments of taste are not like moral judgments which have to cohere both with underlying broad moral principles and with judgments about other relevantly similar cases. We don't make judgments of taste on the basis of principles. On the contrary, if one did, one could be accused of not having understood the point of judgments

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[47]Here it's again worth to point out the difference between the predicates mentioned above that are the prototypical predicates of taste, and certain others which many have included as predicates of taste, for example *stylish, cool,* or *fashionable.* I don't think the latter depend as much on personal tastes as the former (though they are probably used sometimes more subjectively, sometimes more objectively, just like predicates of personal taste). Regarding them the Gibbardian account seems much more plausible given the role of the community in shaping what is considered stylish, cool or fashionable.

of taste which is to "exercise taste", i.e. to make a judgment based on experiences of the object in question. Finally, there is hardly anything akin to "normative governance" regarding taste, that is discussing hypothetical cases in order to decide how one ought to act or feel in them. One may always speculate about say, the taste of anchovy ice cream but one's judgment of taste about it cannot be settled before tasting it.

This brings us back to our discussion about the grounds of judgments of taste and of moral judgments. We've seen that normally it's infelicitous to make judgments of taste without having been in the grounding experiential state whereas moral judgments can be made merely on the basis of imagination. So it's no surprise that talking barely makes a difference with our judgments of personal taste since they are grounded in direct, personal experiences. My thoughts about say, fairness may be partly grounded in feelings but we also recognise that sometimes our feelings may be misplaced. But it makes little sense to think that our ordinary experiences about whether something is enjoyable or delicious would be misplaced. We may recognise that a certain food would taste delicious if we got used to its taste, or that some activity would be fun if we knew better how to do it. But that doesn't mean that we're mistaken in currently finding periwinkle disgusting or driving a car not fun.

12.3   Disagreement Over Concepts

There are other philosophers who have explained disagreements of taste as normative disagreements. Recanati (2007) and Sundell (2011) both hold that the truth of judgments of taste depends on the taste of some relevant group, though Recanati prefers a relativist semantics whereas Sundell defends contextualism. In Ch. 8: *Flexible Contextualism* we saw that a view which takes the relevant perspective to be that of a group can explain most disagreements as disagreements over how the group judges the object or event in question. However, there are certain kinds of ordinary disagreements for which that explanation doesn't work, and both Recanati and Sundell have argued that those are over how the group *should* judge the matter.

In Ch. 8: *Flexible Contextualism* we also saw the problems of views which take the truth to depend on a group. The truth-values can be totally unintuitive to the speakers who are unable to track the truth, and there is a permanent mismatch between the grounds of making judgments of taste and what determines the truth of those judgments. Richard (2004; 2008) defends a relativist view

which avoids those problems since he holds that all disagreements of taste are normative disagreements –they are about how best to *conceptualise* things.

Richard defends his view primarily for gradable adjectives, but in his (2004) he argues that the same explanation holds for predicates of taste (his (2008) account of predicates of taste is more complex). Now, in Ch. 3: *Gradability and Perspective Dependence* we saw the Barker (2013) argued that the vagueness of gradable adjectives can explain the faultless disagreements that judgments of taste give rise to. Recanati, Richard and Sundell likewise argue that at least some judgments of taste are not about the tastes of the group but about how the predicate of taste in question ought to be used, either in the particular context or more generally.

In the following sections we will discuss whether one could explain all disagreements of taste as attempts to influence how one should use predicates of taste. We will first look at Recanati's and Sundell's group accounts and then Richard's speaker-centered relativism.

12.3.1 Disagreeing to Influence the Group's Standards

We've seen that Recanati (2007) is among the critics of the notion of faultless disagreement. Moreover, he doesn't think it makes a difference regarding the explanation of disagreements whether an element of truth-conditions is part of the content or of the circumstance of evaluation. Recanati defends a Kaplan-style moderate relativism but his motivations come from considerations about the philosophy of mind. Despite of his relativism he explains disagreements mostly in a classical way as being over the truth of an Austinian proposition.

Like other relativists Recanati holds that a lekton does not contain a perspective. But instead of defending the usual speaker-centered relativism, he holds that the lekton's truth depends on the perspective of the speaker and the community in which the speaker and the hearers belong. Recanati also adds that how the standards of the community are determined can be flexible so that sometimes it's e.g. the taste of experts that matters. Hence his view is like flexible contextualism except that the perspective is not part of the content.

However, there are disagreements that the view cannot explain as disagreements over the truth of the expressed content. In the problematic cases two speakers who are speaking in behalf of the community disagree because one of them judges in a way that she knows to differ from the judgments of the community. She thus seems to be knowingly saying something false. Recanati's

explanation is that the standards of the community are never fixed. Hence rather than intending to say that "according to the standards of the community, p" the speaker is taking a stance, holding that the standards *should* be such that they make p true.

Sundell (2011) discusses a similar case in response to Lasersohn's (2005) criticism of group contextualism. In a standard disagreement person A says p and person B responds *not-p*. As we've seen, group contextualism or relativism can say that A thought that p was true given her taste and her beliefs about the taste of B. But in fact p is not the case given the taste of A and B, so B corrects her. Now, Lasersohn points out the following problem. If we take the same disagreement but reverse the order of the judgments the same explanation no longer works. Let us look at Sundell's examples; we'll call the first, standard disagreement *the Eggo Waffle* and the second *the reversed Eggo Waffle*.

(179) (a) Alphie: Eggo Waffle Cereal is delicious.

(b) Betty: Nuh uh, Eggo Waffle Cereal is not delicious. (Sundell, 2011, 268)

Sundell explains the Eggo Waffle in the standard group contextualist way, saying that the disagreement is about whether Eggo Waffle Cereal is delicious to the group which consists of Alphie and Betty. Here is the reversed case which illustrates the problem pointed out by Lasersohn:

(180) (a) Betty: Eggo Waffle Cereal is not delicious.

(b) Alphie: Oh yes it is! (Sundell, 2011, 283)

Again the group consists only of Alphie and Betty. But now, given what Betty said Alphie knows that the cereal isn't delicious according to the group's standard. Consequently his utterance cannot be explained the same way as the Eggo Waffle.

Sundell echoes Recanati in holding that judgments of taste don't merely describe but they also take a stance on what the contextual standards ought to be. He holds that cases like the reversed Eggo Waffle can be explained as a *metalinguistic* disagreement where Alphie is trying to influence the group's standards. Here is how Sundell describes the situation:

> In addition to its descriptive effects, Alphie's utterance has meta-linguistic effects regarding the appropriate usage of *delicious*. In particular, his utterance conveys the information that in the present

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context, the relevant standard is (or at least should be) such that Eggo Waffle Cereal does satisfy it. [...] In (1) [(179)], Betty points out that Alphie is mistaken in his claim about how the group standard rates Eggo Waffle Cereal. In (34) [(180)] by contrast, Alphie intentionally excludes Betty from that group. (Sundell, 2011, 283)

In Ch. 3: *Gradability and Perspective Dependence* we saw that Barker (2013) emphasised that disagreements over judgments with vague predicates may be about the context in the sense that the judgments aim to influence the context. Sundell refers to Barker's (2002) earlier defence of the same position and claims that the reversed Eggo Waffle is an instance of such disagreements over the context.

However, there are crucial differences between Barker's cases and the reversed Eggo Waffle. The core of Barker's disagreements over the context is that with vague predicates there is indeterminacy over the cutoff point in the context. Given the symmetry of the speakers' epistemic situation they can try to influence where the cutoff point is set since there are many acceptable cutoff points. Thus, as we saw when discussing Barker's view, he distinguishes two features that give rise to disagreements over the context: (i) irrelevance of non-linguistic facts in solving the issue, and (ii) epistemically symmetrical situation of the discourse participants.

Now, the reverse Eggo Waffle doesn't have the first of these features. Betty's taste is a relevant non-linguistic fact in solving the issue of what is the standard of deliciousness in the context. The difference between Sundell's and Barker's accounts is that Barker doesn't think that predicates of taste are perspective-dependent in any way. Indeed, we criticised Barker's account on the grounds that by explaining disagreements of taste on the model of other vague predicates it fails to take into account the role of personal experiences as the grounds of judgments of taste. But Sundell, like Recanati, thinks that the group's perspective determines the truth.

The disagreement in the reversed Eggo Waffle is hence not due to indeterminacy of acceptable cutoff points. As Sundell says, Alphie responds the way he does because he excludes Betty from the group. But in the context of *Betty's* utterance where the group still consists of Betty and Alphie, there is no acceptable cutoff point for deliciousness such that Eggo Waffle counts as delicious. Alphie is thus saying something he knows to be false given the context of Betty's utterance. He is effectively *changing* the context by excluding Betty from it,

thereby ending the common discussion. For Betty it wouldn't make much sense to continue a conversation where her opinions have been ruled out as irrelevant. The explanation is thus similar to Recanati's and it relies on taking a stance on what the group's standards *ought* to be, rather than aiming to accommodate a judgment which fits within the group's actual but vague standards.

Before we consider the plausibility of taking disagreements of taste as disagreements over what the standards ought to be, we should remember the problems of a view which holds that judgments of taste depend on the taste of a group. First, there are the problems that became apparent when we looked at the details of Glanzberg's flexible contextualism. These include the unintuitiveness of the truth-values of judgments of taste, speakers' inability to track the truth, and the a mismatch between the intuitive grounds of making judgments of taste and what determines the truth of those judgments. Moreover, Sundell's and Recanati's views have the bizarre consequence that two disagreements which are identical except for the order of the judgments (as illustrated by the Eggo Waffle and the reversed Eggo Waffle) require an entirely different kind of explanation.

Given the problems that group contextualism and relativism have, it is better to give up the idea that the truth of judgments of taste depend on a group and explain all disagreements as normative disagreements. In the section below we consider Richard's view which gives up the idea that truth depends on a group but which takes disagreements of taste to be normative disagreements.

12.3.2 Disagreement Over How to Conceptualise Things

Richard's (2004; 2008) account avoids the problems of group perspectivalism since he holds that the truth of judgments of taste depends on the speaker. Richard defends a relativist semantics but he combines it with an account of assertions as taking a stance on what the concept in question means in the context. It should be noted that Richard (2004) defends his view for all gradable adjectives so his main examples are about the use of *rich* rather than about a predicate of taste.

Richard's arguments for relativism come partly from considerations about the problems of contextualism and partly from considerations about gradable adjectives. Since gradable adjectives don't have determinate extensions there are many equally good sharpenings of them. Richard holds that thinkers who accept different sharpenings of some vague concept are all equally correct –hence

relativism. However, when there is disagreement over the truth of a judgment that contains a vague expression it's *not* because the speakers take the other to have spoken falsely. Rather, they aim to influence how the other conceptualises the issue.

Richard gives the example of disagreement over whether a person is rich. Even when the comparison class is fixed there are many acceptable cutoff points for what counts as rich. The disagreement is about trying to make the other change their understanding about richness. Let me quote Richard's description of what goes on in such cases:

> Suppose that I assertively utter 'Mary is rich', when it is not antecedently settled for conversational purposes whether Mary is in the term's extension. My statement, that Mary is rich, is as much an invitation to look at things in a certain way, as it is a representation of how things are. In saying that Mary is rich, I am inviting you to think of being rich in such a way that Mary counts as rich. If you accept my invitation –that is, if you don't demur, and carry on the conversation– that sets the standards for wealth, for the purposes of the conversation, so as to make what I say true. It is this idea –that an assertion can be as much an invitation to conceptualize things in a certain way, as a representation of how things are– that is missing from the picture of assertion on which the objection [to relativism] rests. (Richard, 2004, 226)

Except for Richard's commitment to relativist semantics, does his account of disagreements differ from Barker's who held that such disagreements are over the cutoff point of an expression in the context? Richard emphasises that the disagreement is not metalinguistic, and it's not merely over how the expression ought to be used in the context. Rather, it's about the *concept*: for example, about what it is to be rich. Richard holds that such disputes are not over facts but about "ways of looking at things", of conceptualising certain phenomena. And since he holds that the truth of vague claims is relative to individuals his view has the advantage that judgments made in different contexts can be taken to conflict whereas a story which takes disagreements to be over the context cannot explain that.

Recanati and Sundell held that in certain disagreements speakers take a stance on what the group's standards should be. Richard's account is quite similar except that he doesn't think the standards of the groups play any role

which is an advantage given the problems of group views highlighted when discussing flexible contextualism. But both kinds of views hold that a speaker is taking a stance on how a certain phenomenon, say deliciousness, should be understood, even when they know that others are speaking the truth (either given the group's current standard or given their concepts).

The question we need to answer is whether that is a plausible account of disagreements of taste. First, what is the point of reconceptualising if the concepts that speakers have are equally accurate or reasonable? Here is Richard's answer:

> Suppose that you and I conceptualize some matter in different ways. Perhaps you find things funny that I do not; or I find a certain way of being in the world sexy while you don't [...] I can try to think my way into your way of thinking about things, or you can try to do this with mine. One or the other of us may find benefits in the reconceptualization. It may be easier to process certain information, or make predictions. It may make us happier, or more satisfied, or just strike us that things make more sense in one or another way if we think as the other does. If one of us finds such benefits, we may trade in our old way of thinking of humor, sexiness, maturity, or knowledge for the new one. As I see it, such Gestalt shifts don't have to be a matter [sic] shifts in the overall *truth* of one's world view.

Richard's answer seems to be that even if the various conceptualisations are equally correct from the descriptive point of view, there are other reasons besides truth or information sharing that may influence one to change one's viewpoint. That seems right about many topics. For example, the proverbial glass can be equally truthfully described as half full or half empty, but the person who sees it half full may thereby be happier.

12.3.3 Socratic Disagreements

The worry with Richard's account is that given our different tastes, the story of reconceptualising might not make much sense with judgments of personal taste. Let us first think a bit about the idea of reconceptualising. Concepts are about things in the world, and it's not clear whether it's possible to distinguish between disagreements over how to conceptualise a certain phenomenon and

how to understand that phenomenon. Part of trying to understand the nature of a certain phenomenon is to inquire into the language used to talk about it.

Philosophy of language typically forms a part of any metaphysical inquiry. For example, when we want to know what is justice, we need to look at different cases and observe which ones we would intuitively call instances of justice or injustice. We then try to construct a theory which makes sense of our usage as much as possible. Let us call *Socratic disagreements* the kind of disagreements which aim to understand better the nature of some phenomenon.

The disagreements that Richard describes look like Socratic disagreements. But can we have Socratic disagreements about taste if relativism is true and we know it to be true? It doesn't seem to make sense to conceptualise the world the same way as someone who actually doesn't share our taste. Here's an illustration. Suppose you and I know that tastes are relative. We're both equally good at drawing landscapes but I find it boring whereas you find it very enjoyable. You are enthusiastically talking about landscape drawing to which I say "It's not fun". You disagree and try to convince me as follows: "But isn't it a great feeling when the landscape begins to take shape in the drawing and you feel like your lines are coming to life?". I can see that that's how you experience it, but to me it's just tedious work which leaves me cold. Since I don't enjoy drawing landscapes, you have no chance of convincing me by describing me your experiences. It would make no sense for me to reconceptualise my understanding of fun so that drawing landscapes is included, given that *I don't enjoy it*.

The point is that if we know that relativism is true about taste, then we also know that people's tastes differ. Therefore we should also know that if they disagree with us there's no point in trying to convince them. In the case of taste we know that the differences in our judgments is not merely due to different conceptualisations but due to our different experiences. Since a relativist holds that those experiences make our judgments true, trying to make someone change their mind amounts to convincing them to accept beliefs that don't really fit how they are. The reasons Richard gives for reconceptualising –seeing things from a different point of view and so on– are absent with judgments of taste, and therefore it isn't a good explanation for why we disagree about taste. I should emphasise that I think Richard's account might work perfectly well with aesthetic expressions or expressions that are about taste but have less to do with direct personal experience, e.g. *stylish*. These considerations apply equally to Sundell's and Recanati's theories.

There is one caveat to make regarding the scope of my argument. Richard

(2004) does hold that the truth of judgments about gradable adjectives (and *know*) depends on the speaker. However, since he defends the account mainly for other adjectives than predicates of taste, he might not think that there is any extra taste or perspective dependence in the case of taste predicates besides the subjectivity they have due to their vagueness. If his view is that predicates of taste are relatively true just because of the vagueness they exhibit, then his view faces the same criticism that we made against Barker (2013) in Ch. 3: *Gradability and Perspective Dependence.* Finally, I should add that the criticism of his view is only targeted to judgments of taste, and whether his relativism works for other gradable adjectives is outside the scope of our discussion.

12.4   Summary of Chapter 12

This chapter evaluated accounts which hold that disagreements of taste are not about whether those judgments are true or not. We first had a look at Ayer's and Stevenson's emotivist accounts of disagreements which have influenced contemporary views on evaluative expressions and disagreements. We then considered whether Gibbardian pragmatics of normative language would be helpful in explaining disagreements of taste. MacFarlane states that the aim of disagreements of taste is ultimately to coordinate our tastes, not to disagree over the truth of the contents in question. I've given three arguments for why adopting the Gibbardian pragmatics doesn't help the relativist.

First, a contextualist can equally adopt Gibbardian pragmatics and since contextualist semantics is well understood and traditional, it's better to be a contextualist than a relativist if –as I've argued– the semantics plays no role in explaining the linguistic data. Second, whereas we can see why we would want to coordinate our views on morality, it's hard to understand why anyone would want to coordinate personal tastes. And third, I've argued that the methods that Gibbard says we use to coordinate our moral beliefs do not work in coordinating our tastes. To conclude, Gibbardian pragmatics of normative language is designed to explain the general features of conversations about moral matters, but conversations about taste are not relevantly similar to them. We don't really have a need to coordinate with our tastes and hence it's just not plausible that disagreements of taste are all about attempts at coordination.

There's also a more general worry regarding Gibbard's expressivism. He may be right about the general features of normative conversations and of our desire to coordinate, but we still need to understand why normative conversations have

those features and why we want to coordinate. After all, a simplest explanation would be that coordination is merely a by-product of going through reasoning which allows us to converge in believing the truth.

The second part of the chapter looked at Recanati's, Sundell's, and Richard's accounts of disagreements of taste. Recanati's and Sundell's views are highly similar to Glanzberg's group contextualism whose problems we've seen earlier. Moreover, their accounts end up having to give two very different explanations to two kinds of disagreements whose only difference is the order in which the conflicting judgments are made. Richard explained disagreements of taste as re-conceptualisations of the issue under question. I've argued that discussions over concepts make sense as Socratic disagreements. But when the truth is relative and the speakers know it –as Richard thinks is the case– Socratic disagreement makes little sense.

This chapter concludes our discussion of relativism and contextualism. Since both accounts in their various forms have proved unsuccessful, we will next consider a theory which gives up perspective-dependent semantics and consequently opts for an error theory of taste discourses.

Part IV

Alternatives to Contextualism and Relativism

13 An Error Theory for Discourses About Taste

In the previous two parts of the thesis we saw that neither contextualist nor relativist accounts are satisfactory. The major problem with the views discussed in the previous chapters is the lack of a successful general explanation for disagreements of taste. In order for us to explain why people disagree about taste we need to understand disagreements from the point of view of the speakers. In other words, we need to know what is it that they take themselves to be doing.

What I will argue for in this chapter is that disagreements of taste are best explained as people aiming to have a *Socratic disagreement*, as I called disagreements over the nature of some phenomenon. However, a Socratic disagreement only makes sense either when the proposition in question isn't perspective-dependent, or the speakers don't take it to be perspective-dependent. I argue that indeed, speakers do not take predicates of taste to be perspective-dependent which explains why they disagree. This chapter presents arguments to show that the folk view about taste is objectivism.

Now, given the assumptions that the contents of expressions are determined by people's beliefs and intentions and that objectivism is the folk view, then predicates of taste should get perspective-independent semantics. However, since we've rejected taste objectivism as an untenable metaphysical view, there are no objective taste properties that can make perspective-independent judgments of taste true. Therefore, positive judgments of taste come out false. Such an error theory is familiar from metaethics where many have argued for a similar clash between apparently objectivist judgments and non-objectivist metaphysics.

The chapter has two main aims. The first is to argue that objectivism is indeed the folk view since it best explains most of the linguistic data. The second aim is to put the error theory forward as a serious alternative to the currently defended views. In the next chapter we will have a closer look at the metasemantics behind error theories and I will argue that the error theorist's interpretation of intention-based metasemantics is not a good one. Therefore I

will ultimately reject the error theory, but if one endorses their metasemantic approach it's better to adopt an error theory of taste discourses than either contextualism or relativism.

13.1   Objectivism as the Folk View About Taste

In Ch. 2: *The Evaluative Dimension of Judgments of Taste* we discussed taste objectivism which holds that objects or events have taste properties which do not depend on the perceptions of anyone. We saw that the view was metaphysically implausible and concluded that taste properties depend on the responses of creatures. Nevertheless, we should not expect that metaphysical truths are somehow inherent either in people's conceptions of things or in language which reflects the former.

Indeed, semantics and metaphysics don't always match. Thus, even if objectivism about taste is false it might nevertheless be the folk view about taste, i.e. the beliefs of the majority of the speakers about taste may hold that truths about taste do not depend on variable perspectives. Recent perspective-dependent theories hold that the falsity of objectivist metaphysics is not an esoteric fact but something that everyone is supposed to know. If the falsity of objectivism is indeed known by everyone, then non-perspectival semantics would be implausible as it would assign contents that the speakers wouldn't take themselves as asserting, and those contents would also be false.

However, we have seen that perspective-dependent theories in the form of contextualism and relativism are not successful. Therefore we need to consider seriously the possibility that the way people talk about taste is a consequence of their believing in objectivist metaphysics. This section argues for that conclusion by looking at the kinds of discussions people have about taste, and of the role of critics and experts on taste in our cultures. The next section focuses on disagreements and argues that they are best explained as Socratic disagreements, the notion of which I introduced in section 12.3.3.

The arguments I give thus rely on the best explanation of various uses of judgments of taste. Currently such considerations are the best evidence we have for folk theories of taste since we don't know what people really think about matters of taste. Some experimental psychologists and philosophers have began to address the issue and I discuss their studies in the Appendix. However, I argue that each of the studies either has some flaws or it doesn't show what the authors claim it does. Therefore the existing experimental data is at best

suggestive.

Let me now offer some considerations in order to show that a lot of the ways people talk about taste makes best sense if we suppose that the underlying folk theory of taste is objectivism. Note that we need not suppose that people have some clearly formulated view in their mind or that they are aware of the consequences of that view. Rather, my claim is that most judgments of taste are made with the vague assumption that tastes are relevantly similar and that there are non-relative truths about questions of taste, no matter how hard or even impossible it is to discover them.

First, think about the long discussions people have surrounding matters of taste. For example, I've been impressed with the conversations one can induce in Italians by asking them questions like "Which is the best kind of pasta?". Or watch the French talk hours and hours about food and try making sense of it thinking that they're all just talking about their own taste. Or, imagine that you're having a meal at a relative's or a friend's place and they ask you how the meal was. If people were subjectivists about taste it should be ok to say "I didn't like it". But by saying that you would actually be implicating that *the food wasn't good*, objectively speaking, thereby insulting the cook.

The very idea of good and bad taste makes sense only on the background of objectivism: if taste was just a matter of personal likes and dislikes, what would it mean that someone has a bad taste? Admittedly, we can talk of bad taste ironically or as an exaggeration. But nevertheless, there is even a a certain amount of consensus regarding what counts as bad taste. For example Stern and Stern (1990) offer a fascinating look into visual and cultural phenomena that are broadly considered to be of bad taste –ironically of course, but if taste was merely a personal matter, talk of bad taste would not work, even ironically. It is worth pointing out that what is considered bad taste is certainly linked to a class society and to ideas of distinguishing one's self from the lower classes (Bourdieu, 1984). Nevertheless, that sociological truth is unlikely to be any more obvious to people than are metaphysical truths about taste.

The importance of matters of taste is shown in the pleasure we take in discussing and disagreeing over the values of things: which foods or drinks are good and why, which clothes are pretty or stylish, which activities are most fun. Serious discussions about taste certainly make most sense if we suppose folk objectivism. The point of explaining to someone why one shouldn't add ketchup to a bolognese sauce is typically not because one personally doesn't like it, but that there is something inherently (gustatorily) bad about the combination.

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By convincing another of what one considers to be a truth about taste (e.g. "There shall be no ketchup in bolognese sauce") one aims to make them better off. That's the point of truths: they're informative, and knowing truths usually makes life easier. In contrast, truths about one's personal taste are irrelevant to pretty much anyone else. Supposing that judgments of taste are always subjective fails to make sense of the importance we grant to discussions about taste in our lives.

Admittedly it is difficult to tell genuinely objectivist judgments from mere exaggeration or loose talk. But still, objectivism about taste is not only a an unreflective attitude people occasionally lapse into but a sort of default approach to taste which is manifest in various forms in our societies. Any travel guide is filled with authoritative statements about the gustatory or other taste-related values of places, activities, cocktail bars, pubs and restaurants, and the same holds of other guidebooks and reviews in general. People follow the advice because they trust that the critics are sophisticated, knowledgeable and able to discriminate the good from the bad. If the advice leads one for example to eat food that seriously displeases one, a typical response is to think that the critic doesn't know what she is talking about; she doesn't have a good taste, and shouldn't be working on a profession that requires it.

Let me give an example of the kind of cultural phenomenon that I take to manifest objectivism about taste. Here's a quote from an article by the French correspondent of the BBC news:

> Take one picture I saw recently (...) It was supposed to be a bitter-sweet comedy (...) What we got was two hours of inconsequential, plotless twaddle (...) Or take the comedy Le Vilain (The Villain) which has just come out. It is billed as an offbeat caper (...) my 14-year-old daughter and I both agreed, on emerging, that there was one minor drawback: it wasn't funny. (...) My point is that (...) what we had been led to believe was that these films were actually pretty remarkable. (...) It was the serious critics in Le Monde, Le Figaro and elsewhere, who used adjectives like *hilarious*, *tender*, *burlesque*, *complex*, *original*."
> (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/8474488.stm)

The quote is from an article that aims to show how the French culture is doing poorly because they refuse to see its poorness, and instead even the serious

critics praise mediocre cinematic works. The author is so confident in his own and the 14-year-old daughter's abilities of discerning what is genuinely funny that he concludes that all the critics are either self-deluded or intentionally misleading because they want to maintain that French movies are still great. The author even admits later in the article that others in the audience did find it funny: "I may not have found Le Vilain funny, but a lot of people in the audience were in stitches." Still, that doesn't deter him from holding that the movie just wasn't funny.

Again, ironic or not, the journalist's very argument on the poor state of French culture relies on his own ability to track the funniness of films (an ability he considers superior to the abilities of all those others in the audience who were in stitches). If subjectivism about taste was indeed the default view as most philosophers hold, the author would have simply concluded after the film that his sense of humour is different from that of the French. But instead, he goes for an elaborate conspiracy theory of lying critics because he believes that they really do evaluate the film as he does –as not funny.

I hold that the above examples are evidence for the view that objectivism is the folk view. But I also want to add that there shouldn't be anything surprising that it is the folk view. After all, our tastes are pretty much alike. Compare matters of taste to some clearly objective matters of fact like whether a certain economical or historical theory is correct. In the latter case there are major epistemological obstacles in finding out the truth, but clearly there is a truth. Likewise we may suppose that it's difficult to find the truth about taste but often we do agree, and when we don't, we need to keep on searching for the truth.

We know that with matters of taste education and experience change us and make our tastes more refined. So it is a rather natural assumption that we would converge in our tastes if only we had the same experiences, and therefore diverging judgments can be interpreted as manifesting for example lack of experience. Now, I've mentioned that we don't have any actual data about people's beliefs about taste, and my above considerations are based on limited observations. Nevertheless, the idea that objectivism is the folk view of taste explains all the uses I've mentioned and therefore should be taken seriously.

Are there arguments aiming to show that objectivism is not the folk view? MacFarlane (2014) argues that people realise the falsity of objectivism because of its epistemological consequences:

Although I have known some objectivists about "tasty", most people seem to recoil from the view. They do not think that there is a "fact of the matter" about whether a thing is tasty in the way that there is a fact of the matter about whether it is red or deciduous or acidic. What underlies this intuition, I suggest, is a realization that if "tasty", like "poisonous", expresses an objective property of things, then our ordinary methods for deciding which things to call "tasty" are radically defective. What methods are these? To a pretty good first approximation, we call a food "tasty" when we find its taste pleasing, and "not tasty" when we do not. (MacFarlane, 2014, 4)

Let us try to spell out MacFarlane's argument a bit. He says that if we suppose that objectivism were true, then we would have to conclude that relying on our own tastes as the grounds for our judgments of taste is a very fallible method to find out the objective taste properties. Why? Presumably because we disagree about taste a lot, and if objectivism is true, in every disagreement of taste at most one can be correct. Perhaps the idea is that if we believed in objectivism we would be much more careful in making our judgments because we would know the large possibilities of error. But we do make judgments of taste all the time on the basis of our own tastes.

First, if that's the argument I think MacFarlane intellectualises people too much. Being often wrong would only deter the careful types from making assertions. And there are normally no consequences of making a judgment of taste that turns out to be considered false and therefore there's no reason to be cautious. Secondly, there is no conflict between the idea that we make judgments on the basis of our own taste and that objectivism is true; all we need is the assumption that normally our senses correctly track the value properties of things. Now, people are known to think of themselves as better than most others in all kinds of domains, so it wouldn't be surprising that they think their taste is superior. And since in a genuine disagreement of taste it's very hard to conclude who if any is right, people won't often be shown wrong. MacFarlane's claim about the radical defectiveness of the ordinary method is thus an exaggeration.

We should also distinguish between a justified and a true assertion. Even if objectivism were true, we still wouldn't have other methods besides our own taste to use (besides the word of authority but that's mostly not available). Since in most cases its the best method there is, and as said, its verdicts nor-

mally aren't proven to be false, it would seem that people are justified in making judgments of taste. In that sense even an objectivist could admit that a judgment of taste is "faultless". But it doesn't follow that every judgment of taste is true; that depends on whether the agent indeed tracks the value properties.

To give an analogy, imagine that there were a society most of whose members perceived colours somewhat (but not radically) differently, and no authority to say whose colour perception was the accurate or normal (compared to other humans) one. These people would know that things are red, green, blue, or so on, and they would do their best given their variant perceptions to figure out which objects have which colours. Even if they would very often disagree, they wouldn't give up on the belief that the objects have their true colours, even if they were fallible in attributing them. And if their opinions would often converge, they would be justified in using their vision as the grounds – albeit fallible grounds– for their judgments. The objectivist view on taste and disagreement is pretty much like that.

Thus, the objectivist will hold that one may be justified in taking something to be fun or delicious given one's limited previous experiences, but whether something is fun or delicious is not just a matter of one's current likes and dislikes. Experience can teach us, and just as we come to change many of our beliefs regarding the "objective matters of fact" (e.g. that the funny furniture in the living room is called *a chaise longue*, or that whales aren't fish), we come to change our beliefs about taste.

13.2   Disagreements of Taste As Socratic Disagreements

Let us return to the notion of *Socratic disagreements* introduced in the previous chapter. I will argue that disagreements of taste aim to be Socratic disagreements and we engage in them because we believe in an objective truth about matters of taste. In other words, disagreements of taste are Socratic in the sense that just like Socrates' discussions aimed to uncover truths about difficult to grasp phenomena like justice, disagreements of taste are likewise attempts to find out truths about taste.

Let me first give a speculative story for why we have Socratic disagreements about taste in the first place. Predicates of taste are learnt like any other predicates. Suppose a child who is learning new words hears judgments of personal taste, for example "This pizza is delicious" or "There's a fun movie in the TV tonight". What is first observable to the child is merely that the people

appear to like the pizza and that they laugh or seem amused when watching the movie. And supposedly, once the child is old enough to participate in such reactions, they realise that the predicates apply to things that cause such reactions. So whenever the child is amused by something she says it's fun, and when something tastes really good, it's delicious.

But now, tastes differ so eventually there must come a time when the child encounters someone who isn't similarly amused and who disagrees with the child's judgment. "What is going on?" asks the child herself, puzzled. Clearly the game they were playing is fun since *she* is amused. She might insist that the game is fun and think that her friend is stupid. But then again, how does the child know that she was using the predicate correctly? After all, she only ever observed people's external behaviours, thinking that those correlate with their inner responses. But fun things don't always correlate with smiling or laughing (roller coasters come to mind here). Moreover, she will notice that things she used to think were fun are not fun anymore and she thinks that's because she now knows better. So perhaps the occasional disagreements makes her aware of the possibility that she doesn't always know whether applying *fun* is appropriate.

Generally, the words of our language are governed by *public* conventions. Therefore we don't think that our private impressions are enough to fully determine how to apply predicates of taste either. We might take our private impressions merely as guides to the relevant properties, but the correctness of the attributions is a public matter, just like with any other predicate that we apply to objects outside ourselves. Moreover, we discuss matters of taste because we assume –sometimes reasonably, other times not– that our tastes are relevantly similar, and that therefore we can calibrate the uses of our words beyond our rough private impressions. Disagreements are cases where we take our own experiences as evidence for our own point of view but where we are nevertheless seeking for the objective truth, not the truth about how we experience the object.

The problem with the method is that the Socratic inquiry will never find *the* truth about taste: even though our tastes may be roughly similar, they are not similar enough so that there could be a unique truth about matters of taste. And maybe that is why disputes about taste are sometimes perfectly reasonable, sometimes entirely intractable. A reasonable dispute can take place if the speakers are similar and engage in something like a calibration of the words –not necessarily permanent calibration, but at least for the purposes of

the conversation. Or they may even practice a long-term inquiry into what should be meant by *delicious* as applied to different foods. But if the speakers are not relevantly similar and they don't realise that, the discussion is bound to be confused.

For example, suppose two people discuss the taste of Brussels sprouts. One of them happens to be a supertaster and the other a taster.[48] Neither of them like the vegetable but the supertaster finds it nasty and horrible, the taster merely somewhat unpleasant. The taster thinks that the supertaster is just exaggerating whereas the supertaster thinks the taster is being overly meek in her opinions about the vegetable that is obviously terrible. There is really no way for ordinary people to track such differences: both of them would agree that the Brussels sprouts taste bitter, but there isn't a fixed scale on what level of bitterness deserves to be called *very* bitter, or *nastily* bitter. So they might think they are trying to find out the truth about Brussels sprouts. There isn't anything that would make them realise that their different opinions are not just due to the way they conceptualise *bitter,* but also to how bitterness tastes to them.

To conclude, I think the most sensible story of disagreements of taste is that they are Socratic disagreements which aim to discover the truth about the nature of the object or event in question. We assume that our tastes are similar and that is often true. When we are lucky and we do experience the object or event in a similar way our discussions may be perfectly rational. If we do disagree, it might be because we don't conceptualise things in exactly the same way. But more often it's because we just don't have the same experiences and our tastes are too different for us to be able to discuss the matter. But since we don't realise that, our disagreement may be intractable, endless, and make little sense.

Now, let me address some possible objections. First, one can point out that contradicting judgments of taste don't systematically give an impression of a disagreement as we saw with the cases by Cappelen and Hawthorne (2009) in Ch. 8: *Flexible Contextualism.* That's true, and in section 13.5.1 below I take up what I said when discussing the cases and argue that any successful theory must distinguish between objectivist and subjectivist uses. The former give rise to Socratic disagreements whereas the subjectivist uses typically don't lead to

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[48]In section 2.3 we looked at the data about genetic variation in tasting bitter flavours as evidence against objectivism about taste. Supertasters taste many foodstuff as extremely bitter, tasters somewhat too bitter, and non-tasters not too bitter.

disagreements at all.

A second objection goes as follows. As I say in my speculative story above, a child learns that a predicate of taste is applied when they cause a certain reaction in one, for example that of amusement. Doesn't this mean that they learn precisely the perspective-dependent theory that MacFarlane was advocating: "To a pretty good first approximation, we call a food "tasty" when we find its taste pleasing, and "not tasty" when we do not." (MacFarlane, 2014). What I've argued above is that the experience is taken to constitute evidence for the judgment of taste, but it is not taken to be infallible evidence. For example, judgments about colours are made on the basis of one's personal experiences. Nevertheless we presuppose that objects have their colours and if we disagree about the colour of something we know that usually we just need to consult more people to find out the answer.

A third possible objection emphasises that we learn that our personal experiences about objects vary since that is manifested by ubiquitous disagreements. Therefore a person should realise at some point that there's just isn't enough similarity between our experiences for them to be evidence for objective properties of objects. Here it's important to point out in which way predicates of taste are different from colour predicates. Our colour judgments are grounded in our visual experiences and since there are plenty of examples of colours around us all one has to do is to learn to correctly name different instances of colours. If we did always disagree about colour attributions, we probably would conclude that colours are perspective-dependent.

In contrast, with taste we don't have such prototypes of e.g. what is *delicious*. Therefore there is more room for discussion and reflection over whether something should count as being delicious. Therefore, a disagreement doesn't need to manifest a clash of experiences. For example, suppose one calls a certain pizza *delicious* but a disagreement arises leading to a discussion which shows that the hearer disqualifies the pizza from being delicious because the crust is too thick. Maybe the speaker hadn't really paid attention to the thickness of pizza crusts before, and she may begin to think that a certain kind of crust is indeed essential to a delicious pizza. In such a case the disagreement does lead one to re-conceptualise *delicious* as applied to pizzas. The disagreement thus wasn't just due to two clashing experiences, but to one person not paying attention to a relevant experience that is part of the overall experience of the pizza, namely the consistency of the crust.

13.3   From Objectivist Folk Theory to Perspective-Independent Contents

Suppose that objectivism is the folk theory of taste. Above I was mainly describing the different ways that judgments of taste are used, remaining neutral on the semantic contents of judgments of taste. However, many philosophers hold that the speakers' beliefs and intentions and the meanings of expressions are intimately connected. For example, Gricean metasemantics holds that it is the intentions of the speakers that ultimately determine the contents of utterances (Grice, 1989). Here is Neale's description of the Gricean view on meaning determination:

> The important metaphysical question is this: what *determines* what a speaker said on a given occasion? And the Gricean answer I subscribe to is this: certain specific *intentions* the speaker had in producing his utterance. These intentions are referential and predicational, and they are severely constrained by the speaker's tacit grasp of syntax, of the meanings of the words he uses, and of the way rational, co-operative beings function, his beliefs about the audience, about the context, and about the topic of conversation, and probably a whole lot more. (Neale, 2007, 359, footnote 7)

If intentions are essential to utterance contents, then one could argue that the objectivist beliefs influence the contents of judgments of taste. If a speaker believes in objectivism, he intends to make an objectivist judgment, and – supposing that the constraints described by Neale above are observed– the predicate of taste in the judgment will get a perspective-independent content. And the Gricean approach doesn't only have consequences for particular utterances. Since we are supposing that objectivism is the default view of the speakers, the meaning of predicates of taste should be perspective-independent, as a consequence of the folk view.

The Gricean view is manifest in the following citations from Mackie which illustrate his move from what the speakers intend to talk about to the meanings of moral expressions:

> The ordinary user of moral language means to say something about whatever it is that he characterizes morally, for example a possible action, as it is in itself, or would be if it were realized, and not about, or even simply expressive of, his, or anyone else's, attitude

or relation to it. But the something he wants to say is not purely descriptive, certainly not inert, but something that involves a call for action or for the refraining from action, and one that is absolute, not contingent upon any desire or preference or policy or choice, his own or anyone else's. (Mackie, 1977, 33)

I conclude, then, that ordinary moral judgments include a claim to objectivity, an assumption that there are objective values in just the sense in which I am concerned to deny this. And I do not think it is going too far to say that this assumption has been incorporated in the basic, conventional, meanings of moral terms. Any analysis of the meanings of moral terms which omits this claim to objective, intrinsic, prescriptivity is to that extent incomplete [...]. (Mackie, 1977, 35)

If one agrees with Grice's and Mackie's views on metasemantics as being determined by what a speaker intends to say, and one agrees that folk objectivism best explains people's uses of judgments of taste, then one has an argument for perspective-independent semantics for predicates of taste. The argument holds that given that people believe taste properties to be independent of perspective, the meaning or semantic value of predicates of taste has to be perspective-independent too.

The line of reasoning that leads to the view is familiar from the defenders of an error theory of moral judgments. One of the presuppositions that we've made together with other theorists of taste is that taste objectivism is false. If one also accepts that speakers intend to make objectivist judgments, and that speakers intentions determine meaning, one can argue for an error theory of judgments of taste. In the next chapter we return to the issue of metasemantics but let us next look at how an error theory of taste discourses is like.

13.4 Error Theory for Taste Discourses

Suppose that we conclude that the best explanation for the way people talk about matters of taste is their underlying objectivist beliefs. A natural conclusion is that perspective-independent semantics is correct nevertheless given that speakers intend to make perspective-independent judgments. However, since objectivist judgments attribute taste properties that aren't instantiated we end up

with an error theory about taste discourse. The possibility isn't considered in the literature, and for example Lasersohn dismisses it as follows:

> I assume that our primary goal is to give an analysis of sentences containing predicates of personal taste which assigns them a coherent semantics, [footnote 4: Therefore I do not consider "error" theories, which assign such sentences incoherent or automatically false readings.] (Lasersohn, 2005, 650)

But there are no reasons to dismiss error theories out of hand since for many expressions they are clearly the best choice. And indeed, taking for granted certain premises an error theory of judgments of taste seems quite plausible.

First, let us look at error theories generally. *An error theory* usually refers to a theory that holds that some particular expression or an area of discourse has truth-conditional semantics and is used to make non-fictional assertoric judgments, but these systematically fail to be true.[49] The most well-known error theories are metaethical views which hold that our basic moral vocabulary is in a fundamental way flawed and consequently positive attributions of moral predicates (e.g. *Killing is wrong*) are either false or don't get a truth-value (depending on some further commitments; for a discussion, see Joyce (2001, ch. 1)). This characterisation is vague and incomplete but for our purposes the basic idea of the view should be clear enough.[50]

What kind of flaws of language then lead to systematic falsehoods? The typical problem is that the relevant judgments aim to predicate a non-fictional property but the predicate has an empty extension.[51] Examples of such expressions include scientific terms like *phlogiston* and terms that belong to failed explanatory schemes like astrology and numerology, or various belief systems that posit supernatural things like spirits, witches or magic –atheists of course include religions in this category. Some have defended an error theory for predicates referring to abstract objects including numbers (Field, 1980).

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[49]The label has also been used of "semantic blindness" views which take the speakers to be somewhat ignorant of the truth-conditions; see Schiffer (1996); Stanley (2005a).

[50]For the problems involved in trying to spell out an error theory, see Kalderon (2005, ch. 3).

[51]We won't discuss the differences and similarities between utterances about fictional properties or entities and utterances about merely non-existent properties or entities. It's possible that a theory about fictional language could be applied to utterances about the latter, hence making the allegedly erroneous utterances true, but true about fiction rather than the real world. Joyce (2001) argues that moral language fails to state truths and hence ought to be reinterpreted as talk of fiction. Kalderon (2005) argues that despite of the failure of moral language to state truths that's not what we do anyway: rather, we engage in fictional discussions when we talk about morality in order to express our non-cognitive attitudes.

Other popular candidates for an error theory are epistemic expressions and most importantly the verb *know*. Skepticism has been and is still a serious alternative (see e.g. Unger (1975)). Finally and most relevantly for our purposes, one can be an error theorist for expressions that purport to denote a property which turns (or turned) out to be a relation. Examples include judgments about mass, movement and simultaneity (Boghossian, 2006), and moral expressions (Mackie (1977); Joyce (2001)).

An error theory of taste discourse is an instance of the last type. The view holds that given that objectivism is the folk view of taste, predicates of taste have perspective-independent semantics. Perspective-independent semantics is thus taken to be a consequence of the concepts that the speakers have. But, there are no objective taste properties that can make the perspective-independent judgments true. Therefore a judgment like *Jellied eels are delicious* is false since nothing has the perspective-independent property of deliciousness.

An error theory might seem excessively radical. Could it really be that we can have apparently perfectly coherent discussions over some topic while actually saying mere falsehoods? The answer is yes, as evidenced by the large numbers of mistaken empirical assumptions which are slowly being replaced by the discoveries of the sciences. Just the example of religious beliefs is enough to make the point. Even a religious person will have to admit that *billions* of people hold masses of false beliefs about religion since not all religions can be true, and an atheist holds that even more people are constantly being guided by a very large number of false beliefs.

At the core of an error theory is the claim that people's beliefs about some domain are inconsistent or false. Generally it does seem that people hold a very large number of false empirical beliefs, and they do use expressions intending to refer to something whereas those expressions in fact either refer to nothing or at least they don't refer to the things they imagine the expressions to refer to. Therefore the mere imputing of error to people shouldn't be in itself objectionable. If one accepts that objectivism is the folk theory of most people, and that meanings are determined by the beliefs people have, then the case for an error theory is very strong indeed.

Finally I should make a caveat and point out that certain expressions which some theorists take to be predicates of taste, for example *funny, stylish, fashionable* or *cool* might be candidates for a view where the relevant property is taken to be dependent on the responses of the experts. Such a view would give up the intuition of many relevant perspectives, but it wouldn't be an error

theory since it would take the truth to depend on the tastes of some privileged individuals. The above expressions do not seem "personal" the same way as e.g. *fun* or *delicious*, because the judgments about the former are not grounded merely in one's experiential states. Doerfler (2012) defends a view like that for *funny*, and Pountain and Robins (2000) argue that certain attributions of *cool* to persons are true in virtue of a certain specific psychological attitude which makes its holder cool (in contrast to the more "personal" uses of *cool* with which the speaker expresses her approval or appreciation).

Before we get to some objections to an error theory of taste discourses, let me summarise the argument thus far. First I've argued that people's uses of judgments of taste, including disagreements of taste, are best explained by taking them to hold an objectivist theory of taste. Second, the Gricean view which holds that people's beliefs and intentions determine meanings is very widespread and often accepted without much argument. If one holds the Gricean view and that the folk theory of taste gets the metaphysics of taste fundamentally wrong, then an error theory looks plausible. I haven't said much about the metasemantics since that will be the core topic of the next chapter, but let us for the moment set the issue aside. I will next consider some possible objections to an error theory and answers to them.

13.5 Objections to Error Theory of Taste

13.5.1 Subjectivist Uses

Above I illustrated the objectivist uses of judgments of taste, made with the presupposition that there is an objective truth about taste. But I've argued in Ch. 8: *Flexible Contextualism* that at the other extreme there are subjectivist uses where one merely aims at stating something about one's own taste. For the moment we don't need to take a stance on whether the difference is also a semantic difference, but we are supposing that there is a pragmatic difference between the two uses. For simplicity, let me speak interchangeably of judgments and uses of judgments so as not to get bogged down to questions of the judgments' content.

One makes an *explicitly* subjectivist judgment of taste by using various linguistic tools for subjectivising one's judgment, for example:

(181) To me curry wurst is delicious.

(182) I find curry wurst delicious.

Now, I've argued that some judgments of taste are pragmatically or truth-conditionally equivalent to explicitly subjective judgments, despite of superficially being ordinary judgments of taste like "Curry wurst is delicious". Arguably, subjectivist judgments are revealed by the speaker's behaviour in situations where a disagreement might arise or one's past judgments are brought up. For example, subjectivist uses won't give rise to serious, ongoing disagreements. Let me illustrate. Suppose Alice finds oysters disgusting. She is now at a restaurant with Bob where we can imagine the following exchange to take place:

(183) (a) Alice (pointing at oysters): Look, oysters! They're disgusting.

      (b) Bob: No they're not, they're delicious.

      (c) Alice: I find them pretty gross.

Suppose that in (183a) Alice only intended to express her own disgust towards oysters. Since she didn't make an explicitly subjective judgment Bob can negate the sentence she used. However, since Alice never meant to talk about anyone else's taste she doesn't insist on the disgustingness of oysters and instead she reformulates her judgment in an explicitly subjective form in (183c). By doing that she signals that she isn't disagreeing with Bob but only making a statement about her own taste. The exchange (183a) - (183b) is an instance of the kind of "faultless disagreement" that the relativist and contextualist theories typically focus on. Alice and Bob are making judgments that seem to contradict, but we feel that both are entitled to their opinion and neither is at fault.

In some situations one's past, conflicting judgment of taste may be brought up. As we saw, MacFarlane (2009; 2014) has used the fact that people may retract their past judgments of taste if they've now changed their minds as an argument for the assessment sensitivity of predicates of taste. However, an account of predicates of taste must also explain why sometimes people don't retract their judgments. Here is an example. Some years have passed since Alice and Bob's previous dialogue. Alice has come to love oysters, and she is again in a restaurant with Bob who doesn't know about her change of heart.

(184) (a) Alice: Oysters are so delicious!

      (b) Bob: What? Last time we met you said they're disgusting.

      (c) Alice: I know, my taste has changed. They were disgusting to me then.

Here Alice again emphasises that her previous judgment was about her taste back then, rather than taking back what she said as false.

Now, in what kind of situations are predicates of taste used subjectively? First, a person who thinks that "there's no disagreeing about taste" will only make subjectivist judgments of taste. She intends to only speak about her own taste and consequently she only discusses matters of taste in the Socratic sense when they know their interlocutor have a relevantly similar taste and thus they can disagree with the aim of mutual conceptual calibration.

A subjectivist speaker doesn't retract her past judgments either, unless she realises that her taste was temporarily aberrant. Note that a person may be a subjectivist about some area of taste, for example what is fun, but an objectivist about something else, say deliciousness. However, subjectivist uses aren't limited to people who are convinced of the truth of subjectivism. If one is an objectivist about taste, one may make a subjectivist judgment when one only wants to talk about one's own taste.

Now, it's controversial that there are both subjectivist and objectivist uses of judgments of taste, but I've argued that the distinction allows for the best explanation for all the linguistic data. The distinction can also account for different intuitions about disagreements, and for the way speakers behave in disagreements. For example, Francén (2010) argues that even though we take there to be disagreements of taste, on reflection we realise that the disagreement isn't really about anything whereas with for example moral judgments the sense of disagreement persists:

> I think, however, that our intuitions about disagreement are different in the case of taste than in these other cases: even though we sense disagreement here [in a dispute over the deliciousness of a pie], on reflection we (or most of us at least) also think that it is not a disagreement over some fact about the pie. We think instead that what is displayed in conversations like this are differences in standards of taste. Erica likes the taste of the pie, Jacob doesn't. We think that there is no difference over and above that: the conversations do not signal that Erica and Jacob disagree about whether the pie has some property independent of the relation it stands in to their standards of taste; neither does it signal that they disagree about the relation it stands in to their standards of taste respectively. So, we feel on reflection, there is nothing they really disagree about, in the sense of having conflicting beliefs about some matter of fact—they merely differ as to what pleases their palates. (Francén, 2010, 21).

Francén here illustrates the point of view of a subjectivist speaker, the reflective "us" which probably includes philosophers and other people who think about the issue slightly more theoretically. Maybe *we* feel that there is nothing that Erica and Jacob are disagreeing about and that they are merely displaying their different tastes. Nevertheless, *they* may very well take themselves as having a genuine, meaningful debate about the deliciousness of the pie.

Now, in the previous chapters I argued that neither contextualism nor relativism can make sense of all the data, as they can only account for the cases that support the subjectivist interpretation. But then there are all the cases of ongoing disagreements, retractions and so on that I've highlighted. A nonperspectival semantics with an error theory has a great explanation for the latter, but is as such unable to account for the subjectivist uses. However, the problem is less serious than that of contextualism and relativism. If one holds that predicates of taste are semantically perspective-dependent and that speakers know it, it's extremely difficult to explain the objectivist uses as we've seen. But if one holds that predicates of taste are semantically perspective-independent, and can always hold that the subjectivist uses exist thanks to pragmatics.

In section 8.5 I argued that a pragmatics-based flexible contextualism is one way to explain the subjectivist uses of judgments of taste. A view that is rich enough to account for all the data is a perspective-independent semantic account of predicates of taste coupled with a truth-conditional pragmatics according to which the subjectivist uses are true in virtue of free enrichment. Hence, such a hybrid view would accept that the error theory is true for the objectivist uses where speakers don't have a perspective in mind, but in conversations where the speaker intends make subjective judgments and the hearer correctly interprets them, thanks to free enrichment their judgments get to be true.

13.5.2 How Could Our Judgments of Taste Be False When They Make Total Sense?

Another objection to an error theory of judgments of taste goes as follows: "Clearly it's devastating to realise that all of our positive judgments of taste –both beliefs and utterances– are false. If an error theory is true for some expressions, then we need to either revise the vocabulary or to give it up entirely. But there doesn't seem to be anything wrong with our ways of talking about taste, so there must be something wrong with the claim that our judgments are

false." In other words, an error theory argues that a whole domain of discourse is somehow flawed. But if at the same time we are totally happy with those discourses and find them useful, then doesn't that show that the error theory is wrong?

Now, suppose that we the theorists, accept that in fact an error theory for some group of expressions is true. What then? If the error is due to an entirely mistaken explanatory scheme, for example astrology, there's no need to try to salvage it in any way. It should be entirely given up and the expressions should be recognised as referring to something merely fictional. However, the situation is very different with expressions that were or are taken to denote a certain property, it has turned out that no such property exists but that there is something systematically present when those property attributions are made. This is the case with the talk of motion, simultaneity and duration, perhaps with moral expressions, and we are considering it as a view about taste predicates. With these expressions the error is not total, and hence we should aim at revision rather than elimination of the vocabulary in question.

However, even without revision false judgments of taste would be useful. Let us consider how communication is affected if an error theory is true for some area of discourse. First, think of the well-known and commonplace cases of utterances with questionable truth-values. There are no zombies, yet I can successfully convey something quite specific by remarking to a friend who's had a rough night that he looks like a zombie. Did I say something true? There are no zombies so literally speaking it's not possible to look like a zombie. Nevertheless, the friend would understand what I mean, and we all understand judgments made about Pegasus, Donald Duck, demons and telepathy.

When people didn't yet know that witches don't exist they still had perfectly interpretable discourses about witches. Most of their utterances about witches were of course false (e.g. "The witch who lives next door has left a dead marmot on my doorstep", "I must have been cursed by a witch" etc.), but they partly managed to communicate what they wanted: beliefs about witches, those dangerous beings with supernatural powers. They failed in the other aim of communication, that of stating truths. Thus, we need to first consider two consequences of communication: the sharing of information, and the beliefs that are conveyed. The content of the judgment is the main source of information whereas the making of the judgment allows the hearer to infer that the speaker believes in the content of the judgment.

If everyone in the linguistic community shares the same false beliefs, com-

munication works as if the judgments were true. For example, If you and I are believers in witches and you tell me you have been cursed, I become alarmed and maybe recommend you to contact another witch who will perform a counter-curse. No communication breakdown takes place because we share our strange set of false beliefs. And that is the situation regarding objectivist judgments of taste: the speakers are embarked on their common search for the unattainable goal, the objective truth about taste.

As theorists we can thus say that since all the objectivist speakers are un-wittingly engaged in the same fiction about objectivist truths about taste, their discussions make perfect sense to themselves even if their judgments are in fact false. Communication only fails if the speakers disagree about what exists, which is why a discussion about taste between an objectivist and a subjectivist maybe somewhat confused. There is also a third dimension of judgments to consider: the pro-attitudes they may convey. Since judgments of taste are evaluative judgments, they inform others both of one's beliefs and of one's attitudes. For example, if one tries to make an objectivist judgment by saying "Champagne is the most delicious drink in the world", the making of the judgment allows the hearer to know that the speaker enjoys champagne even if the judgment is false.

Now, if one is a subjectivist, how should one interpret objectivist judgments? One should simply reinterpret objectivist speakers as if they were making a judgment about their experiential state, i.e. a subjectivist judgment. Given that we know that people normally make judgments of taste on the grounds of their own experiences we can't go far wrong in interpreting them as making a subjectivist judgment instead of an objectivist one.

So even if an error theory is true for both judgments about witches and of judgments of taste, what makes the situation with taste happier than that of the witch-believers is that the utterances of taste objectivists are not far from the truth, in that there are closely related reinterpretations which makes them true. Objectivism is thus close enough to being true without it causing any real disruptions in our ordinary lives.

And arguably, a very large number of our ordinary statements are not quite true anyway. For example, is France hexagonal and Italy boot-shaped? Was it really 3pm or four past three when you answered the question about what time it was? Do you really know what you'll do next summer given everything that might happen and interfere with your plans? Exaggeration and sloppiness are commonplace but both contribute to falsehoods: our utterances are very often false but nearly true. Does it matter whether that is due to a slight

conceptual error, exaggeration or sloppiness? I can't see why it would as long as the falsehood is close enough to truth.

13.6   Summary of Chapter 13

In this chapter we began the project of finding a suitable alternative semantic account for contextualism or relativism. In the end of the last chapter I argued that the idea of trying to influence how others conceptualise matters really comes down to what I called *Socratic disagreement*, that is, inquiries into the nature of things, including the concepts we think with. Socratic disagreements make perfect sense in a quest for truth but not if truth is relative.

This chapter presented an argument for an error theory of taste discourses. The starting point was to argue that most of the uses of judgments of taste can be best explained by taking the speakers to believe in objectivism about taste. That includes explaining disagreements of taste as Socratic disagreements whose aim is to find an perspective-independent truth about questions of taste. Now, if one accepts that the folk theory about taste for most speakers is objectivism, an error theory begins to seem plausible, given that a very common approach to how predicates get their meaning what the speakers intend to say by those predicates. If the majority of the speakers intend to make objectivist judgments of taste then naturally predicates of taste have perspective-independent semantics. However, since the folk theory gets the metaphysics wrong the judgments end up false.

In the end of the chapter I considered two objections to an error theory for taste. The first one is the existence of subjectivist uses. Certainly the error theorist has to account for them, and one way to do it is to hold that they are due to pragmatic free enrichment. The second objection was the claim that an error theory is implausible because if our judgments of taste were indeed systematically false we couldn't communicate so well with them. I've argued that the truth or falsity of utterances is only one aspect of communication. Moreover, according to the error theory judgments of taste are not entirely off the mark as say, astrological judgments are, and therefore they are close enough to truths to also be informative.

The case I've made for the error theory has been rather uncritical. That is because I think that the main objection to it comes from metasemantics and requires a separate discussion. That is one of the aims of the next chapter where I will argue that the Gricean metasemantics that underlies an error theory for discourses about taste should be understood in a more externalist way.

14 Perspectivism

In the previous section I flagged that ultimately where I think the error theory goes wrong is in its metasemantic commitments, in other words in its presuppositions about how the contents of expressions are determined. Previously we encountered the topic of metasemantics in Ch. 8: *Flexible Contextualism* when we discussed two possible metasemantic accounts for context-sensitive expressions. This time the question is broader and concerns the determination of contents of expressions more generally.

The problem in discussing the topic is that the theorists we have discussed are mostly silent about their metasemantic commitments. However, the contextualists and relativists we have discussed rule out that speakers could be ignorant of the truth-conditions of expressions, as we've seen in their commitment to the Principle of Semantic Competence (section 9.3.2 on page 139). This commitment is reflected in relativists criticism of contextualism, arguing that they can only explain disagreements of taste by taking speakers to be "semantically blind", i.e. as being mistaken about the truth-conditions of judgments of taste. It's not entirely clear why one would accept the Principle of Semantic Competence, but I suggest that it is a natural consequence from a certain understanding of the Gricean intention-based metasemantics.

The main aim of this chapter is to argue for another interpretation of the Gricean metasemantics. The focus is on how we can tell which intentions a speaker has. I give examples to show that people may be mistaken about their own intentions. Thus, rather than believe people's self-attributions of intentions, the best method for attributing them intentions is by looking at their behaviour more generally. We should take them as having intentions that best explain their actions. What determines the contents of expressions are those intentions, and consequently it is well possible that a speaker doesn't know what she means. What typically explains people's actions the best are their true beliefs about some phenomenon that they are causally related to. Thus, as long as there is something that their beliefs systematically track, that thing should be what they intend to talk about, even if they had false beliefs about what they are referring to.

I argue that the metasemantic approach explains how predicates of taste can get perspective-dependent contents even though people are ignorant of their perspective dependence. I call the resulting view *perspectivism*. The view thus combines the truth-conditions of simple subjectivism with the explanation of

people's linguistic behaviours coming partly from their tracking perspective-dependent properties, and partly from their mistaken objectivist folk metaphysical / semantic theory. Once I've presented the view I summarise how it explains the intuitions about taste that we started with in the beginning of the thesis, as well as the linguistic data. I conclude with a comparison of the views we have discussed.

14.1   How to Tell What a Speaker Intends

The last chapter argued that if the folk view on taste is objectivism, then the semantics of predicates of taste should be perspective-independent. The step in the argument that we didn't yet discuss in any detail was how one gets from a folk view on some topic to an account of the meanings of certain expressions. The underlying view on meaning determination has been most famously defended by Grice (1989), and it holds that the meaning of expressions is inherited from the speakers' intentions to refer to certain things in the world.

We saw that Mackie's defence of moral error theory relies on a Gricean theory of meaning. Let me repeat the quotes from Mackie:

> The ordinary user of moral language means to say something about whatever it is that he characterizes morally, for example a possible action, as it is in itself, or would be if it were realized, and not about, or even simply expressive of, his, or anyone else's, attitude or relation to it. But the something he wants to say is not purely descriptive, certainly not inert, but something that involves a call for action or for the refraining from action, and one that is absolute, not contingent upon any desire or preference or policy or choice, his own or anyone else's. (Mackie, 1977, 33)

> I conclude, then, that ordinary moral judgments include a claim to objectivity, an assumption that there are objective values in just the sense in which I am concerned to deny this. And I do not think it is going too far to say that this assumption has been incorporated in the basic, conventional, meanings of moral terms. Any analysis of the meanings of moral terms which omits this claim to objective, intrinsic, prescriptivity is to that extent incomplete [...]. (Mackie, 1977, 35)

The line of thought behind an error theory for judgments of taste is the same. Ordinary speakers believe that taste qualities are objective, as illustrated by the way they use judgments of taste. When they make judgments of taste they intend to attribute objective taste qualities, not to express their subjective attitudes. Therefore, the meaning of predicates of taste is perspective-independent. But since there are no objective taste qualities, judgments of taste are false. The way speakers have come to mean objective taste properties by predicates of taste is via the common belief that taste properties are objective. They intend to express those beliefs by their judgments of taste.

In broad outline the Gricean picture of meanings being determined by intentions seems right. But how do we actually know which intentions a speaker has? The clear cases are ones where the speaker intends a freely enriched proposition, for example if they intend the sentence "I haven't had breakfast" to mean they haven't had breakfast that morning. In those cases the speaker can always make the enriched proposition explicit if she is misunderstood or asked what she meant. I've argued that with subjective uses of judgments of taste the speakers are able to do that.

However, those are cases where a sentence is used with the intention that it expresses something beyond its conventional meaning. But we need to also look at cases where a speaker intends to express exactly the content that a sentence in a context is conventionally taken to have. For example, a person who says "Anchovies are delicious" normally intends to mean whatever that sentence means. We can't just ask speakers what they intend to say by the sentence because they wouldn't be able to tell. And not only that, they would probably come up with an inaccurate folk semantic account of what the judgment means.

One way to attribute intentions to speakers is by looking at their shared beliefs about some domain and to take the terms from that domain to incorporate those beliefs. That is Mackie's method which moves from the folk theory of morality to the meanings of moral terms. But the approach doesn't take sufficiently into account the referential intentions that speakers have. They might intend expressions to convey certain beliefs but they also intend to talk about phenomena in the world, for example what is right and wrong. In Mackie's theory those intentions are frustrated. Let me next argue for a different method of attributing intentions.

14.2 Intentions Explain Actions

What I want to argue for is that the best method to know the intentions of speakers is by observing their behaviours, including their judgments and other linguistic behaviours. We then attribute those intentions that best explain the person's behaviour. In other words, speakers might not always be in a privileged position to tell which intentions they have. For the sake of clarity, let me distinguish between two types of intentions. I'm supposing that there are the cases where the explanation of the person and their own explanation of themselves match. In those cases the intentions that best explain their actions are also the intentions that they would say they have. Let us call these *transparent intentions*. But additionally there are intentions that a speaker wouldn't know that they have but which should be attributed to them because those intentions make the best sense of their actions. Let us call them *nontransparent intentions*.

Let me give some examples of nontransparent intentions. Take referential intentions: an agent intends to refer to a certain object in the world by the use of some word. Now, what one refers to doesn't only depend on one's mental description of the object. For example, suppose that Lucy thinks there are two separate individuals, the Shady Stalker and the Charming Stranger who are in fact a unique individual called Bob. It's night and Lucy is walking home, noticing a shadow lurking nearby. She calls a friend and says "The Shady Stalker is here again!". If asked who she intended to refer to she would describe the properties of the Shady Stalker, and she would explicitly deny intending the person with the Charming Stranger's properties. However, we who know better can tell that Lucy intended to refer to Bob who is both a charming stranger and a shady stalker. In this case the best explanation of her linguistic behaviour comes from attributing to her the nontransparent intention to refer to Bob.

Now, Lucy has a false idea of *how* the person who she is referring to is, but she is nevertheless referring to Bob with all his properties. Her referential intention thus succeeds in refererring to a worldly entity, despite of false beliefs about that entity. Now, an intention-based metasemanticist might try to argue that given Lucy's confusion, she didn't in fact succeed in referring to anything. After all, when she said "The Shady Stalker is here again" she really didn't intend to refer to the charming stranger who spoke to her at a bus stop and that she had a coffee with the other day. But since there is no man who is merely the Shady Stalker and not also the Charming Stranger, her judgment that the former is there again is false.

However, the view becomes quite implausible when we see the amount of error it would generate. Suppose Lucy's friend runs to her rescue. Lucy points to Bob, saying "He is the Shady Stalker!" According to the view we are considering, *the Shady Stalker* refers to no one so her judgment is false. Suppose Lucy never finds out that the stranger and the stalker are the same. Then *all* her beliefs about "both" would be false since her referential intentions are such that neither definite description (or name) gets to refer. That just seems wrong. After all, if Lucy were to find out the truth, she would rather realise that she *had been talking about the same man all along*, not that she hadn't manage to talk about anyone. Indeed, I think that the Lucy who has learnt the truth is in the position of the knowledgeable theorist who can now better explain her past self by attributing nontransparent intentions she didn't know she had.

Suppose we accept that Lucy, despite of her confusion, did manage to refer to Bob. What is it that makes her refer to Bob despite of her transparent intentions to refer to a person who doesn't have all of Bob's properties? The natural answer is her causal relations with Bob. He has caused Lucy's thoughts about him, and under whichever description Lucy thinks about him she does intend to refer to *that man* she has met, Bob. Now, these same considerations about reference determination apply to predicates too. Suppose that there is some object in the world that people are causally connected to, for example bears. People intend to talk about those things, and create a convention to call them *bears*.

Now, imagine that people held false beliefs about bears. For example, the Finns used to believe that bears are sacred and that they've descended to the Earth from the constellation of Ursa Major. A bear shouldn't be called by the term *karhu* which refers to bears (at least nowadays; we don't want to beg the question) since it was thought that it might hear it and come to the speaker. To fool the bears Finns invented many new words which also refer to the bear, thinking that it won't understand those. (Haavio, 1967) Did *karhu* mean bear even though Finns intended to refer to a sacred creature with a magical origin by the word?

Suppose that we take very seriously the intentions that the ancient Finns would attribute to themselves. Imagine that Tapio's sheep has been killed at night and he correctly suspects that the killer is a bear. Carelessly he cries out "My favourite sheep has been killed by a bear!". What Tapio thinks he intends to talk about is a bear-like animal who is otherwise exactly like a natural bear is, but it's also sacred, its forefathers descended from the skies, and it understands

that *karhu* is used to talk about it. So should we say that Tapio's utterance is false since there is no such thing that killed his sheep? I don't think so.

If we want to understand Tapio's behaviour we do best to take him as referring to a profane creature with the usual evolutionary origins rather than to a magical creature. After all, it's not a magical creature that caused anyone to have the word *karhu* but bears. Also, Tapio's beliefs about bears are caused by bears, and therefore his predicate should refer to them. He is right to think that a bear killed his sheep, he would be wrong to think that a sacred creature killed his sheep.

I've given the above examples to show that attributing intentions should come from a broader theory that explains people's actions. The examples show that people should be interpreted as intending to refer to some object in the world that has caused the thoughts about it, even if they have false beliefs about it or they wouldn't recognise themselves as having the said intentions. But the same considerations apply also when we think of how the words of a language come to have their meanings. There too we have to think of what the people were intending to name. For there to be a language in the first place there has to be physical objects that people can commonly refer to. If there wasn't such external "anchoring" for words, how could people know what others intend to refer to by their words which don't yet have a conventional meaning?

I take these considerations to have the following consequences. What a person intends is not always transparent to them. The best method to attributing intentions to a person is by looking at their behaviour and attributing them intentions that best explain their actions. But most importantly, the same holds regarding intentions to name things. When we explain what people who name stuff intend to talk about, the reference has to be something causally relevant that other people can be in causal contact too. Thus, only in exceptional cases should we hold that a term fails to refer, since normally a term can be introduced only if there is an object that causes beliefs about it.

Of course there are cases where the people are highly confused and they try to name something which fails to be causally explanatory, for example supernatural beings. In those case it is indeed difficult to say what the meaning of those terms are, and how the terms came into being. However, I will argue that with judgments of taste there are properties that cause people's judgments of taste, and those properties should be the referents of predicates of taste.

14.3 Predicates of Taste Refer to Perspective-Dependent Properties

The method to attribute intentions thus needs to look at agents and interpret them as having those intentions that make the best sense of their behaviour. Now, an error theorist of taste could say that that is what they are doing. After all, as was argued for in the previous chapter, the reason for thinking that people are objectivists is that it best explains their linguistic behaviour. Folk objectivism certainly best explains certain linguistic behaviours, for example why people disagree, retract and make cross-contextual reports.

However, not all of people's behaviours are explained by taking predicates of taste to have perspective-independent contents. What is it that causes people to have beliefs about matters of taste? Or what causes people's actions such as seeking chocolate and avoiding anchovies? It can't be objective taste properties since those don't exist. On the contrary, people come to make judgments of taste because of their experiential states. In Ch. 5: *The Grounds of Judgments of Taste* we saw that people make judgments of taste on the basis of their experiential states. What their beliefs track are thus perspective-dependent properties, for example that haggis has the disposition to cause them feel disgust, or that playing badminton has the disposition to cause them enjoyment.

So what is it that a person intends to talk about when they make a judgment of taste? They intend to attribute the property whose presence they've experienced and which caused them to have their belief. And that is a perspective-dependent property. Therefore, given our metasemantic approach, predicates of taste should have as their referents those perspective-dependent properties. In other words, just like simple subjectivism holds the semantic content of a predicate of taste refers to the speaker. For example, Anna's judgment "Tar flavoured sweets are delicious" is roughly equivalent in content to "For Anna, tar flavoured sweets are delicious". However, their intention to refer to a perspective-dependent property is a non-transparent intention so speakers wouldn't attribute it to themselves.

Those properties exist so we avoid an error theory. By taking the contents of judgments of taste to be perspective-dependent we explain why people judge the way they do, and what makes their judgments true. Perspective-dependent properties also gives reasons for non-verbal actions. For example, if Anna thinks "Pizza is delicious" then she also has a *pro tanto* reason to eat pizza. Why is that? Because she believes that pizza is delicious on the grounds of having

been in an experiential state of gustatory pleasure as a consequence of eating pizza. But again, her belief is a reason for her to eat pizza only if we interpret its content as "Pizza is delicious *to Anna*". In contrast there is no necessary relation between beliefs about objective taste properties and motivation.

14.4 Intention-Based Metasemantics and Semantic Competence

It might come as a surprise that I argue that judgments of taste have the content that simple subjectivism takes them to have. After all, the problem of simple subjectivism was pointed out already in Ch. 1: *Judgments of Personal Taste*. The issue was of course that simple subjectivism can't explain why people disagree since it holds that in a disagreement of taste speakers utter compatible propositions. However, where my view differs from simple subjectivism is in taking speakers to misinterpret judgments of taste.

We concluded that predicates of taste refer to perspective-dependent properties since those properties are the ones that cause people's judgments and actions. But it is us the theorists who attribute those intentions which makes the intentions non-transparent. Speakers fail to attribute themselves the right intentions but moreover, they might attribute themselves intentions that they don't have, namely intentions to refer to objective taste properties. The fact that people believe in folk objectivism causes them to have a folk semantic theory that matches their flawed metaphysical view. I've argued that where Mackie went wrong is in taking people's explicit judgments about morality as a guide to their intentions. But people are not the best judges of their own intentions.

The case of speakers misinterpreting their referential intentions regarding judgments of taste is analogous to the case of Lucy and Bob who is both the Shady Stalker and the Charming Stranger. Lucy intends to refer to Bob when she speaks of the Shady Stalker, but she would explicitly deny that she intends to refer to the Charming Stranger. She would say things like "The man I'm talking about is not charming and he's not the man I had coffee with." But she would be wrong.

Likewise, an ordinary speaker might insist: "When I make a judgment of taste I don't intend to say only how things taste to me. I intend to talk about how things are *objectively, in themselves*!". But she would be wrong: she has no access to such properties. She is simply mistaken on the nature of taste properties and consequently, of what she intends to talk about. That speakers

so misinterpret themselves and others is what explains that they disagree about taste, retract their past judgments and make cross-contextual reports.

In earlier chapters we encountered the Principle of Semantic Competence which held that speakers master the meanings and truth-conditions of the words in their language. Does my view imply that speakers are semantically incompetent? Well, first we have to ask what exactly the Principle of Semantic Competence precludes. Obviously, speakers aren't expected to be able to give anything like necessary and sufficient conditions for the application of some term. However, they are expected to be able to correctly apply ordinary terms and to correctly judge the truth-values of judgments when they know the relevant facts.

Let me give some examples of arguments that rely on semantic competence. Diana Raffman argues on the basis of semantic competence that the extensions of vague predicates must depend on what she calls *psychological contexts*:

> Since our actual applications of vague predicates vary with psychological context, it follows that if the (true) extensions of these predicates do not thus vary, then we are linguistically incompetent in their use. But of course we are not incompetent in the use of these words. (Raffman, 1994, 66)

She thus holds that given our semantic competence we apply vague terms correctly. Therefore, all that is needed is an account which explains how a predicate's threshold is determined in a particular context so that it can make the judgments true.

Epistemic contextualism has been criticised on the basis that it must posit some "semantic blindness", i.e. ordinary speakers make mistaken truth-value judgments of knowledge claims and they treat the claims as if they were context-insensitive. The problems are similar to those faced by contextualism about taste, discussed in Ch. 8: *Flexible Contextualism*. For example, people would report knowledge claims made in two separate contexts as disagreeing even if the standards of knowledge in them were different, and they would retract their true past knowledge claims if they wouldn't be true according to the standards of the current context. But such behaviour is not compatible with speakers knowing that *know* is context sensitive.

Schiffer (1996) criticises epistemic contextualism on the basis that it predicts speakers to be somewhat ignorant of the context sensitivity of the verb *know* but that is simply unacceptable (note that Schiffer calls that aspect of epistemic

contextualism an "error theory"):

> I conclude that, as far as I can see, there is no plausible semantic theory that will resolve sceptical paradoxes in the way the Contextualist requires. If the proposed semantics were correct, then the extreme error theory would be needed to explain why we appear to have a paradox in the first place. But that error theory has no plausibility: speakers would know what they were saying if knowledge sentences were indexical in the way the Contextualist requires. (Schiffer, 1996, 328)

Stanley (2005a) compares the behaviour of *know* to all kinds of context-sensitive expressions and concludes that since none of them behaves like *know*, it cannot be context-sensitive. Now, one might think it's possible that an expression's extension is context-sensitive but in a way that is much less transparent to speakers than indexicality or other forms of obvious context sensitivity. However, both Schiffer and Stanley consider that as a *reductio* of the position.

Perspectivism bears obvious similarities to epistemic contextualism and one could try to criticise it because it accepts the existence of semantic blindness. But I think that the Principle of Semantic Competence shouldn't be accepted in the first place. Given the Gricean intention-based metasemantics the principle may seem to just follow from it. Since intentions determine meanings, of course people know the meanings since they know their intentions. But I've argued that people don't know their intentions. They are not in a privileged position to know their intentions better than others, and therefore they may be mistaken about meanings as well. Hence, if one accepts the method of attributing intentions that I've argued for, one accepts that people may well be semantically blind.

Thus my view is committed to the possibility of semantic blindness. But there are also excellent independent arguments for the existence of semantic blindness. If people are as semantically competent as the critics of semantic blindness take them to be, then how come ordinary language and reasoning leads to so many paradoxes? For example, an unsuspecting subject presented with a sorites series would come to conclusions that they themselves would recognise as paradoxical. Peter Unger's work (1975; 2006a; 2006b) is a masterful example of solid arguments from ordinary language that lead to conclusions no ordinary person would accept, such as the non-existence of ordinary objects and persons.

Another example of people's semantic incompetence comes from their behaviour regarding knowledge claims. As mentioned, epistemic contextualism pos-

its semantic blindness of the context-sensitivity of *know*. But as DeRose (2006) points out, ordinary speakers have to be semantically confused anyway. They make knowledge claims all the time but become skeptics when you present them with a skeptical argument. However, once they're out of the skeptical context they immediately forget about their newly discovered skepticism and go back to making knowledge claims.

I've argued that ordinary speakers display a confused set of behaviours regarding judgments of taste. They make judgments of taste on the basis of their own experiences but still disagree with others as if they were speaking about the same properties. Their behaviour makes sense when we accept that they intend to talk about perspective-dependent properties. But they misinterpret themselves and others as intending to talk about an objective property, and this misinterpretation causes them to disagree about taste. Nevertheless they are not at all as clueless as the error theory would have them. They systematically track natural, perspective-dependent properties; they judge truly on the grounds of their experiential states, and their judgments of taste provide perfect reasons for their actions.

In the previous parts of the thesis we saw that there isn't a single view which could explain all the uses of judgments of taste, make those judgments come out true and still accept the Principle of Semantic Competence. There has to be error somewhere, and I've argued that it's a mistake to believe in the Principle of Semantic Competence in the first place.

14.5 Revisiting the Intuitions and the Linguistic Data

Let me now summarise the view I defend, and then go through its explanation of the core data about the intuitions and uses of judgments of taste. Perspectivism holds that the contents of predicates of taste depend on the speaker's perspective. Hence, if Bob utters "Stalking people is fun", the content can be paraphrased as "Stalking people is fun for Bob". His judgment is true iff stalking people is fun for Bob. In other words, the truth-conditions are as in simple subjectivism, and judgments of taste are true or false only relative to a possible world.

In the first chapter I listed three intuitions that a theory of judgments of taste should accommodate. First one was the Intuition of Many Relevant Perspectives, which holds that the truth of judgments of taste may depend on various perspectives. Perspectivism can clearly explain that as perspectives

vary along with speakers. The second intuition was the Intuition of No Fault. That too is accounted for. Speakers make judgments of taste as a consequence of tracking perspective-dependent properties, so they normally speak the truth. The third intuition was that there are disagreements of taste. My explanation for disagreements is that they are misunderstandings, based on speaker's folk objectivism. People mistakenly think they are attributing objective taste properties and that therefore their judgments contradict. But in fact their judgments don't contradict and there is no disagreement over any content.

What is worth pointing out regarding disagreements is that only the objectivist speakers are thus confused. I've argued that we need to distinguish between objectivist and subjectivist judgments. According to perspectivism, subjectivist speakers are the ones who've got it right. They know the right metaphysics and thereby they understand that their judgments of taste depend on their own perspective. And as mentioned they don't disagree either unless they're certain that the person they're speaking with has a very similar taste which allows them to engage in conceptual calibration.

The explanation for retractions is the same as for disagreements. An objectivist speaker mistakenly thinks she was wrong in the past and that now that her taste has become more accurate she needs to retract her past falsehood. However, given perspective-dependence, her past judgment was (and is, of course) true. Her perspective just happens to be different which is why she now judges differently. Again, a subjectivist knows that her past judgments of taste are true so she will not retract them.

Cross-contextual disagreement and *says that* reports are equally a consequence of the speakers' mistaken objectivist folk semantics. They don't realise that the contents are perspective-dependent, and thereby they treat judgments of taste as if they were perspective-*in*dependent. Thus it is a mistake to report apparently contradicting judgments of taste made in different contexts as disagreeing, just like it would be a mistake to take them as contradicting in a single context.

In Ch. 5: *The Grounds of Judgments of Taste* I argued that sometimes the relevant perspective includes others besides the speaker, and in exceptional cases the speaker may take someone else's perspective entirely. How is that to be explained? I think that in those cases the context makes some perspective or perspectives particularly salient, and thereby the speaker may freely enrich their judgment so that it comes to express a proposition it normally couldn't express. For example, in the case where Anna and Craig are planning a camp for children, the children's perspectives are salient and relevant. Therefore, they can intend

their judgments to refer to the children's perspectives since the hearer can easily grasp that that is what is intended. However, as I argued in that chapter, the cases where a judgment of taste refers to some other perspective are rare.

Now, accepting that there is free enrichment brings up an interesting worry. If one can freely enrich judgments of taste by intending them to mean something other than they usually do, why don't the judgments of taste of objectivists get perspective-*in*dependent contents? After all, isn't that what they intend to say? Not quite. I've argued that there are transparent and non-transparent intentions, and transparent intentions are the ones that speakers can correctly self-attribute. But I've argued that the objectivist is mistaken about their intentions. They simply have a false belief that the property they intend to attribute is an objective property rather than a perspective-dependent one. Therefore an objectivist doesn't actually intend to make an objectivist judgment. Rather, they have a non-transparent intention to attribute a perspective-dependent property.

14.6 Conclusions

In the thesis we have discussed in depth three perspective-dependent theories –contextualism, relativism, and perspectivism– and the error theory which takes the semantics of taste predicates to be perspective-independent. What distinguishes perspectivism from the other two perspective-dependent views is that it distinguishes between the objectivist and subjectivist speakers, and holds that objectivist speakers misrepresent the truth-conditions of judgments of taste. It thus explicitly endorses that speakers are "semantically blind". As we've seen, the basic objection against speaker-centered contextualism has been that it can only explain the linguistic data by positing semantic blindness. But that move is considered both *ad hoc* and violating any reasonable metasemantics.

Now, the theorists of taste we have discussed are not explicit about their metasemantic commitments except in rejecting the possibility of semantic blindness. Therefore we cannot compare the metasemantic accounts that the views rely on. However, one common metasemantics is the Gricean intention-based view. I've discussed a version of the view which takes speakers to know their intentions, thereby being in a privileged position to say what they mean by their utterances. That is one metasemantics which might be behind the insistence on the Principle of Semantic Competence and the rejection of semantic blindness.

I've argued that the intentions that speakers attribute themselves are a consequence of their folk metaphysics and folk semantics. Therefore they might

be quite mistaken about their own intentions. The method I defended for attributing intentions looks at the behaviour of people and attributes them those intentions that make best sense of their actions. I argued that the worldly objects or events that systematically cause people's beliefs are usually what people intend to talk about. Those objects are the referents of their expressions even if speakers have mistaken views about how those objects are.

This method holds that since people may attribute themselves intentions that they don't actually have, they may also be mistaken about what they mean by their utterances. Hence the possibility of semantic blindness is a consequence of the metasemantics I've advocated and there is thus nothing *ad hoc* about accepting its existence. Moreover, I think perspectivism gives a very coherent picture of the various linguistic data, explaining them as a consequence of either folk objectivism or subjectivism.

In contrast, contextualism and relativism are unable to get most of the linguistic predictions right, given that they hold that speakers know predicates of taste to be perspective-dependent. And that was the reason that many contextualists and relativists have ultimately either defined surprising notions of disagreement or argued that disagreements of taste are something like normative disagreements. I've argued that disagreements of taste are not even disagreements. However, people believe that they are expressing contradictory propositions which makes them believe that they are disagreeing. Perspectivism thus avoids having to rely on or to invent non-standard accounts of disagreements as well.

In sum, I've argued that perspectivism is a view which accounts for all the intuitions and predicts the right data. The theory relies on one version of the intention-based metasemantics on the one hand, and on the folk objectivist story on the other. I take one of the virtues of the theory to be its explanation of the linguistic data from the point of view of the speakers. Given folk objectivism and its consequent perspective-independent folk semantics, speakers interpret judgments of taste as objectivist judgments. I've argued that that makes best sense of the various roles of judgments of taste in our societies and daily lives. Nevertheless, whatever people think they are doing when they make judgments of taste, their judgments end up being only about their own tastes. And therefore, *de gustibus non disputandum est*, as the Romans already knew.

15   Appendix: Experimental Data on Intuitions

15.1   Intuitions of Relationalism

Cohen and Nichols (2010) made a survey of intuitions regarding whether the subjects thought certain expressions express relational properties. Their target is intuitions about whether colour is relational, which they define as follows: "Let colour relationalism be that form of colour realism according to which colours are constituted (partly) in terms of relations to subjects (possibly inter alia)." (Cohen and Nichols, 2010, 218). In addition to colour words *red* and *green* they tested intuitions about *rectangular, round, sweet, bitter, sour* and *delicious.* We are interested in especially the last word, though *sweet, bitter* and *sour* are not that different from the typical predicates of taste as we will see.

The method was to present the subjects with a scenario with aliens who have learnt English to native-level fluency, but whose perceptual systems are somewhat different which sometimes causes them to disagree with humans whether a certain term applies. The subjects are asked to judge in disagreements over the application of the above words whether only the alien or only the human is right, or if instead neither is incorrect. Here is an example of a scenario they offered and of the alternative answers the subjects had to choose from:

> Andrew the alien and Harry the human view a ripe tomato in good light, at a distance of 1 metre. Harry says that the ripe tomato is red, while Andrew says that the very same ripe tomato is not red (in fact, he says it is green). Which of the following do you think best characterizes their views? (Check one and give a brief justification for your answer.)
>
> (1) The tomato is red, so Harry is right and Andrew is wrong.
>
> (2) The tomato is not red, so Andrew is right and Harry is wrong.
>
> (3) There is no fact of the matter about unqualified claims like 'the tomato is red'. Different people have different visual experiences when they look at the same object, and it is not absolutely true or false that the tomato is red. (Cohen and Nichols, 2010, 222).

The take the third answer to show intuitions in favour of relationalism. The survey showed that the relationalist intuition was had by almost all (98.5%) of the subjects in the case of *delicious,* by a vast majority (72.5%) with *sweet, bitter* and *sour*, by about half (47%) with colour terms and one third (30.9%) with *rectangular.*

What might have slightly biased the subjects is that the third answer is very elaborate and offers a good justification for why it would be the "right" answer. So rather than testing existing intuitions it offers a plausible-sounding theoretical point of view that the subjects may be drawn to irrespective of what they previously thought. However, even if that is the case, the bias should be equally present in all of their answers so one can conclude at least that the subjects are not relationalists to an equal degree about the different qualities.

Another issue that might have affected the generality of the results is that the scenarios use aliens who have been stipulated to have different perceptual systems. But suppose that two humans disagree about matters of taste or colours. Do they think that each is equally correct since they have different experiences? It is perfectly possible that one of them has a somehow *worse* perception of the relevant object, due to e.g. colour blindness, lack of training in discerning flavours, habituation to huge quantities of salt or sugar and so on. So the results do not show that people are relationalists also within human perceptual capacities.

Folds-Bennett and Nichols (2003) tested children between 4 and 6 years of age to find out whether they had relationalist intuitions regarding judgments about something being *good, bad, beautiful, yummy, fun, boring* and *icky.* Their method was to first ask the child if they agreed that a particular object is e.g. yummy; if they agreed, they were asked the following "preference dependence" question:

> You know, I think grapes are yummy too. Some people don't like grapes. They don't think grapes are yummy. Would you say that grapes are yummy *for some people* or that they're yummy *for real*? (Folds-Bennett and Nichols, 2003, B27).

If they answered that grapes are yummy for some people, that was taken to indicate a relationalist intuition. Almost all the children chose the first answer in the preference dependence question, i.e. that things are yummy, fun, boring and icky for some people. In contrast, with aesthetic or moral properties most held that things are e.g. good "for real". Regarding moral properties there are some clear methodological problems with the survey, but we need not worry about moral expressions.[52] What is interesting is that the children seem to

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[52]The *for some people* in *good / bad for some people* does not work exactly the same way as it does with the other expressions since there is another, competing reading. Where *F* stands for a predicate, we can paraphrase *F for some people* roughly as *F according to some people*

have an intuition that favours relationalism about matters of personal taste, but also that they favour non-relationalism about aesthetic judgments.

15.2   Intuitions of No Truth-Value

Cova and Pain (2012) made a survey of intuitions regarding various judgments of taste containing the following expressions: *beautiful, good* and *disgusting* (in the gustatory sense), *pleasant* and *unpleasant* (to touch) and *ugly.* They gave the subjects dialogues of two friends who are disagreeing over various topics such as whether Proust is the author of *In Search of Lost Time*, whether a pasta with ketchup is good or whether the scream of a turkey is ugly. Moreover, they had scenarios with judgments about beauty or ugliness of works of art or design, natural objects and human beings to see whether there was a difference between people's intuitions regarding different subject matters.

The subjects had to choose between four answers regarding which of the two friends is right:

1. One of them is right and the other is not.
2. Both are right.
3. Both are wrong.
4. Neither is right or wrong. It makes no sense to speak in terms of correctness in this situation. Everyone is entitled to his own opinion." (Cova and Pain, 2012, 245).

The answers were scored according to a "normativity" scale from 0.0 - 3.0 with 3.0 the maximum normativity, meaning that the subjects would answer (1). Answer (4) gave the least scores on the normativity scale. The subject's answers on the factual questions like whether Proust wrote *In Search of Lost Time* scored close to 3.0, whereas their answers to the questions on taste scored less than 0.5, and there was no significant difference between their normativity scores.

Based on criticism of the tests they made an additional survey which was meant to rule out a bias of the results based on the subjects having to make judgments about judgments, rather than straight aesthetic judgments. In the survey the subjects first had to think about a work of art that they think is beautiful. They then had to imagine someone disagreeing with them about the judgment, and again they had to choose between the four alternatives of who is right. The results mirrored those of the survey described above.

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but with *good / bad* it can also mean *does good to some people* which is the most natural reading of for example *doing sports is good for you.*

Cova & Pain also received criticism on not testing comparative judgments, but they have been tested by Goodwin and Darley (2008) who asked the opinion of the subjects of judgments such as "Shakespeare was a better writer than Dan Brown" and "Miles Davids was a better musician than Britney Spears". The subjects had three options; the judgments were either (i) true, (ii) false or (iii) "just an opinion or an attitude". Rather surprisingly, 84% chose (iii) when asked about Shakespeare vs. Dan Brown and 96% with Miles Davis and Britney Spears.

These results are interesting, not least because there was no difference between people's attitudes towards judgments of personal taste and aesthetic judgments. The results with the comparative judgments are quite surprising too. However, the surveys have some problems in their design. First, let us look again at the answers the subjects had to choose from in the Cova & Pain survey:

1. One of them is right and the other is not.
2. Both are right.
3. Both are wrong.
4. Neither is right or wrong. It makes no sense to speak in terms of correctness in this situation. Everyone is entitled to his own opinion." (Cova and Pain, 2012, 245).

The last answer seems primed to be chosen: it is long and explanatory and sounds very reasonable. In contrast the first three answers offer no explanation for why that answer would be the "right" answer and the subjects are not offered a chance to justify their choice. So for (4) to fit with the others, it should rather be just "Neither is right or wrong". The design thus seems to show a bias from behalf of the authors.

Secondly, it is not clear what judgments about the people being *right* or *wrong* tell us about the cases. *Right* and *wrong* can be used in many more ways than *true* or *false* can. For example, a dance teacher can ask a student to show the *third arabesque* and if the student shows the right position she can answer *that's right* but not *that's true*. *Being right* can also be attributed to persons in evaluating their actions. For example, suppose Arwen and Aragorn are fighting and Arwen throws a glass of water on Aragorn's face after he calls her *You dumb elf.* Bilbo, witnessing the scenario may evaluate Arwen by saying *She was right; he deserved it.*

This illustrates the possibility that in the survey the subjects are not taking a stance on the truth-evaluability or the truth-values of the judgments, but on

the speakers as agents. It is perfectly consistent to hold that one of the speakers says the truth in judging that the *Mona Lisa* is beautiful, therefore the other says a falsehood, but that neither of them is wrong in making their judgments. And indeed, the first answer "One of them is right and the other is not." refers to the agents, not to the judgments (which will affect the subjects' interpretation of *both* and *neither* in the other answers). Hence, the subjects are made to think about the matter in terms of the qualities of the agents rather than the truth of the judgments. Therefore, all we can conclude from the survey is that the subjects think that people are not making mistakes as agents when they make contradicting judgments of taste; a strong intuition also among philosophers, as we saw in the previous section.

The comparative judgments survey by Goodwin and Darley (2008) is equally problematic with its three possible answers: (i) True, (ii) False or (iii) Just an opinion or an attitude. Again the third answer is longer and more elaborate. Furthermore, the *just* in (iii) implicates a contrast between the judgment being an opinion or an attitude and the judgment being true or false. That is puzzling since at least opinions are normally true or false (what is meant by *attitudes* is not clear). So how are the subjects to understand (iii)? Some possibilities include: "The judgement is an opinion or an attitude which is neither true nor false"; "The judgement is an opinion or an attitude and *thereby* neither true nor false"; "The judgment is opinion or an attitude whose truth or falsity we don't know"; "The judgement is an opinion or an attitude and thereby its truth value is irrelevant"?

These are just some possibilities, each of which would lead to a very different understanding of the results. Given these problems I think we cannot make any conclusions regarding the results of the surveys, besides perhaps that they show that the ordinary subjects share the intuition that no one is making a mistake, discussed in Ch. 1: *Judgments of Personal Taste.*

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