Nonindexical Contextualism

Ikke-indeksikalsk kontekstualisme

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Abstract

The application of relative truth to areas of natural language semantics is in vogue. For example, philosophers such as John MacFarlane, Peter Lasersohn, Max Kölbel and Tamina Stephenson have argued that relativism can do a better job at accommodating the semantic data from discourse about matters of taste than competing semantic theories.[1] In particular, relativists are quick to point out that unlike the rival contextualist semantics, the relativist semantics can offer a satisfactory account of disagreement in discourse about taste. In the present work I side with the relativists by drawing attention to disagreement data which contextualists cannot accommodate. However, the disagreement data does not unambiguously favor relativism. Nor does the assertion and retraction data which is often taken to motivate relativism. Rather, I contend that the best explanation of the disagreement, assertion and retraction data is provided by the more parsimonious semantics offered by nonindexical contextualism.

[1]See, MacFarlane 2014, Stephenson 2007, Lasersohn 2005, and Kölbel 2002.

Abstrakt

Det er på moten å anvende sannhetsrelativisme for å angi en tilfredstillende semantikk for naturlig språk. For eksempel har filosofer som John MacFarlane, Peter Lasersohn, Max Kölbel, og Tamina Stephenson argumentert for at en relativistisk semantikk er bedre egnet enn konkurrerende semantiske teorier til å forklare de semantiske data i diskurs om smakssaker. Særlig er relativister raske til å påpeke at i motsetning til den rivaliserende kontekstuelle semantikken kan en relativistisk semantikk redegjøre for uenighet i diskurs om smak. I arbeidet som foreligger tar jeg relativistenes side ved å trekke fram uenighetsdata som kontektualistene ikke kan redegjøre for. Uenighetstilfellene faller imidlertid ikke utvetydig relativistene til gode. Det samme gjelder tilfellene av hevdelse og tilbakekalling som ofte blir fremlagt som evidens for en relativistisk semantikk. I stedet argumenterer jeg for at den beste forklaringen på uenighet, hevdelse og tilbakekallingsdataene er gitt av den enklere semantikken som er kalt ikke-indeksikalsk kontekstualisme.

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1

Nonindexical Contextualism

1.1 Introduction

Taken at face value, the predicates of taste, e.g., 'tasty', 'beautiful' and 'fun', exhibit an idiosyncratic flavor unique to discourse about matters of taste. Consider the following sentences:

(1) Seaweed is tasty.

(2) Chopin is playing the piano.

The truth of (2) does not seem to depend on the idiosyncratic taste of some agent. On the other hand, the truth of (1) does seem to depend on the idiosyncratic taste of some relevant agent. If this assumption about the truth of (1) is correct, how can we enrich, say, a Kaplan-style semantic system to tackle discourse about matters of taste?

According to standard contextualism a sentence like (1) possess a form of indexicality,

i.e., (1) might express different propositions at different contexts of use. On this view the propositional content of (1), used at a context C by a speaker S would be *seaweed is tasty to S*. If the contention that (1) possess a form indexicality is true, we could provide correct semantics for (1) by minor tinkering on the much used semantic framework of David Kaplan. But modeling the semantics of the predicates of taste on the semantics of indexicals is not problem free. For example, if contextualism is true, it becomes hard to make sense of disagreement in discourse about matters of taste. The problem is that someone who uses (1) and someone who uses (3) seem to disagree.

(3)   Seaweed is not tasty.

But on the contextualist view it is not clear what the object of disagreement would be. A use of (1) by Plato would express the proposition that *seaweed is tasty to Plato*, whilst a use of (3) by Aristotle would express the proposition that *seaweed is not tasty to Aristotle*. Since Plato and Aristotle are expressing different and compatible propositions they can hardly be said to disagree on the contextualist picture.

The problem of lost disagreement will also emerge if we try out an expressivist account of (1). According to expressivism our initial assumption that (1) expresses a truth apt proposition is false. Instead of taking a use of (1) to express a proposition that somehow concerns the taste of the speaker, expressivists suggest that we take a use of (1) to express an attitude of appreciation for the taste of seaweed. But if that is the case, we once again face a case of lost disagreement because there is no proposition at all that can serve as the object of disagreement.

Proponents of nonindexical contextualism (henceforth NIC) propose to accommodate disagreement by expanding on the semantics Kaplan suggested for (2). According to Kaplan the propositional content of (2) is modally and temporally neutral; yet the truth

of (2) used at a context C depends on whether or not Chopin is playing the piano at the world and time of C.[1] Transferring this line of thought to (1), we can stipulate that the propositional content of (1) is not only modally and temporally neutral, but also, perspective-neutral. We could then explain the idiosyncrasy of (1) by evaluating the truth of (1) with respect to a world, time and perspective supplied by the context of use. This move does not only let us capture the idiosyncratic aspect of (1), but it also lets us explain why an utterance of (1) and an utterance of (3) seem to express a disagreement. If Plato were to use (1) he would express the proposition that *seaweed is tasty*, and if Aristotle were to use (3) he would express the proposition that *seaweed is not tasty*. Now, there is a proposition that Plato believes whilst Aristotle believes the negation of that proposition.

However, NIC is not a dominating position in contemporary semantics. Instead it is common to prefer the relativistic systems of semanticists like John MacFarlane, Peter Lasersohn, Max Kölbel and Tamina Stephenson.[2] These relativist systems all follow the strategy outlined above by employing an additional parameter to capture the idiosyncrasy of (1). Indeed, relativists too are quick to point out how the additional parameter makes it possible to deal with phenomena such as disagreement. But if both the semantics offered by NIC and the semantics offered by the relativists can accommodate disagreement, how then, can we adjudicate between relativism and NIC? This question serves as the starting point for our succeeding discussion of NIC.

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[1] Kaplan 1977: 522.
[2] See, MacFarlane 2014, Lasersohn 2005, Kölbel 2002 and Stephenson 2007.

1.1.1 Our Plan

Throughout this M.A. thesis my goal is to argue that NIC can better accommodate the semantic data from discourse about taste than the more prominent contextualist and relativist semantics. Hence, one the one hand, I aim to demonstrate that highly parsimonious semantics of contextualism cannot offer a satisfactory explanation of the relevant semantic data. On the other hand, I aim to demonstrate that the less parsimonious relativist semantics of Peter Lasersohn and John MacFarlane does not offer any clear-cut explanatory benefits when compared with NIC.

For the remainder of chapter 1, I outline and develop NIC. I start by showing how NIC deals with some simple sentences whilst highlighting important similarities between Kaplan's system in "Demonstratives" and NIC. Then I go on to give an account of how NIC deals with assertion and retraction.

In chapter 2, I focus on NIC versus contextualism. First, I briefly illustrate some of the familiar issues that standard contextualism face with respect to indirect speech reports. Subsequently, I turn to flexible contextualism and argue that flexible contextualists face issues with sentences containing multiple predicates of taste. Whilst the previous issues are significant in their own right, it is the phenomenon of disagreement that stands at the core of the debate about contextualism. Both standard and flexible contextualists struggle to provide an account of how it is possible for speakers to disagree about matters of taste. I explore two possible responses to the problem of disagreement on behalf of contextualism. The first and arguably most promising response on behalf of contextualism is provided by Torfinn Huvenes. Huvenes offers a view of disagreement where two parties can disagree not only by having conflicting doxastic attitudes, but also by having conflicting non-doxastic attitudes. I concede that Huvenes' reconception of disagreement grants the

contextualist an explanation of how there can be non-doxastic disagreement in discourse about taste. However, I argue that once we take into consideration a sufficiently broad range of data there are cases of disagreement which suggest that the disputing parties are disagreeing by virtue of having conflicting beliefs. If the data I draw attention to is legitimate, contextualists still lack the means to explain the doxastic variety of disagreement present in discourse about taste. The second contextualist response to the problem of disagreement is to reject the contention that speakers disagree about matters of taste. I show that this view does not sit well with the persistence of the disputes illustrated by the semantic data. Finally, I present an account of disagreement for NIC that can explain how two parties can disagree by having conflicting beliefs about some matter of taste. In conclusion, contextualists have posited some promising accounts of disagreement in discourse about matters of taste; nevertheless, these accounts are still facing a burden of recalcitrant data.

In chapter 3, I explore whether the semantic data suggest that relativism offers clear-cut explanatory benefits when compared to NIC. I start out by considering Peter Lasersohn's relativist system. Lasersohn motivates his brand of relativism by arguing that it can provide an account of disagreement in discourse about taste. However, I argue that NIC can provide a similar account of disagreement whilst positing less unorthodox semantic mechanisms. Subsequently, I turn to Tamina Stephenson's relativist semantics. Stephenson has drawn attention to disagreement data which she argues that neither the relativist semantics of Lasersohn nor the semantics offered by NIC suffice to accommodate. I object, that Stephenson's interpretation of the disagreement data is flawed. Furthermore, I argue that Stephenson's relativist semantics makes wrong predictions about the potential resolvability of disagreements in discourse about taste. Finally, I turn to MacFarlane's assessment sensitive relativism. MacFarlane motivates assessment sensitive relativism via

his account of disagreement and retraction. First, I object that MacFarlane's assessment sensitive account of disagreement does not offer any clear explanatory benefits when compared to the account of disagreement offered by NIC. Second, I turn my attention towards MacFarlane's account of retraction. MacFarlane has suggested that we need assessment sensitive relativism in order to provide a satisfactory constitutive norm for retraction. I argue that the relativist account of retraction does not sit well with the observation that there are competent speakers who do not intuit that they have an obligation to retract in the cases where the relativists retraction norm tells us that a retraction is mandatory. Finally, I propose an alternative account of retraction that better accommodates our intuitions about retraction. Thus, I contend that the semantic data does not suggest that the most prevalent relativist semantics offer any clear explanatory benefits when compared to NIC.

Of course, my defense of NIC is by no means exhaustive. Nonetheless, at the end of the MA-thesis I hope to have defended the view that NIC do have some potential advantages when compared to the prominent contextualist and relativist semantics.

1.2 NIC

Currently, the best developed versions of nonindexical contextualism are the versions of Nikola Kompa and John MacFarlane. Due to the prominence of MacFarlane's views in the debate about the predicates of taste my setup of NIC will draw mostly on MacFarlane's work. I do however deviate from both MacFarlane and Kompa where I find it fruitful to do so. For the remainder of chapter 1, I present the semantics of NIC and clarify what I commit myself to defend.

1.2.1 Contents and Circumstances of Evaluation

It is useful to think of NIC as an expansion of the semantics that Kaplan developed in the paper "Demonstratives".[3] Because of this, I start this section by outlining a Kaplan-style semantic framework. Then, I show how to expand Kaplan's framework in order to obtain NIC.

In Kaplan's framework expressions are associated with two sorts of meaning. The first sort of meaning is called content. In general the content of an expression can be represented as a function from circumstances of evaluation (world-time pairs in Kaplan's system) to appropriate extensions.[4] In the case of a sentence the content is a proposition and its extension at a circumstance of evaluation is a truth value. The second sort of meaning is called character. The character of an expression determines its content relative to a context and it can be represented as a function from contexts to contents. The view above can be illustrated by considering the following sentences:

(4)   I am a novelist.

(5)   Vincent van Gogh is painting.

The character of an indexical like the first person pronoun 'I' can be represented as a non-constant function from contexts to contents. This means that the content of 'I' might change from one context to another. By extension, the proposition expressed by (4) might change from one context to another. If Tolstoy utters (4) at a context C it will express the proposition that *Tolstoy is a novelist.* If Dostoyevsky utters (4) at C' it will express the proposition that *Dostoyevsky is a novelist.* Contrastingly, (5) contains no indexicals.

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[3] Kaplan 1977.

[4] Kaplan 1977: 502.

Because of this all uses of (5) will invariantly express the proposition that *Vincent van Gogh is painting*.

On Kaplan's theory, the propositions expressed by (4) and (5) only have truth values with respect to circumstances consisting of $\langle w, t \rangle$ pairs where w is a world and t is a time. [5] Why settle on circumstances consisting of $\langle w, t \rangle$ pairs? Kaplan takes the propositions expressed by (4) and (5) to be modally and temporally neutral. In other words, the propositions expressed by (4) and (5) are not about any particular world or time. Yet, they only have truth values with respect to world-time pairs. Thus, Kaplan settles on $\langle w, t \rangle$ pairs in order to accommodate the modal and temporal neutrality of the propositions expressed by sentences like (4) and (5). In general then, the parameters needed to do semantics for a language L will depend at least in part on the level of propositional neutrality expressed by the sentences of L.

We have seen that Kaplan takes propositions to have truth values with respect to circumstances of evaluation consisting of $\langle w, t \rangle$ pairs. But what circumstance of evaluation is relevant when evaluating the truth of (5) as used at C? According to Kaplan it is the circumstance of the context of use that is the relevant circumstance to consider when evaluating a use of (5) for truth:

> If C is a context, then an occurrence of ϕ in C is true iff the content expressed by ϕ in this context is true when evaluated with respect to the circumstance of the context.[6]

Notice the twofold role played by the context C in Kaplan's system. First the context and character determines the propositional content expressed by the use of a sentence. Subsequently the context of use initializes the parameters of the circumstance, setting

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[5]Kaplan 1977: 502.
[6]Kaplan 1977: 522.

them to be the circumstance of the context.

Now that I have outlined Kaplan's framework I can expand it in order to obtain NIC. Let's start by considering the following sentences:

(6)   Rhubarb is tasty.

(7)   Beatrice is beautiful.

Syntactically NIC treats 'tasty' and 'beautiful' as one-place predicates. In (6) the one-place predicate 'tasty' and the common noun 'Rhubarb' forms an atomic sentence. Similarly the one-place predicate 'beautiful' and the proper noun 'Beatrice' form the atomic sentence in (7). Under NIC the proposition expressed by a use of (6) at any context will be the proposition that *rhubarb is tasty*. That is, just plain tasty, not tasty to any particular individual or group of individuals. Similarly the proposition expressed by a use of (7) at any context will be the proposition that *Beatrice is beautiful*. That is, just plain beautiful, not beautiful to any particular individual or group of individuals. Hence, NIC takes the propositional content expressed by (6)-(7) to be taste-neutral in addition to modally and temporally neutral. How then, can we accommodate the widespread propositional neutrality posited by the semantics of NIC?

We saw above that Kaplan used circumstances of evaluation consisting of $\langle w, t \rangle$ pairs in order to accommodate the modal and temporal neutrality of the propositions expressed by sentences like (5). Moreover, it is worth noticing that Kaplan is open to the idea that the circumstances might include additional features if needed:

> By ['circumstances'] I mean both actual and counterfactual situations with respect to which it is appropriate to ask for the extensions of a given well-formed expression. A circumstance will usually include a possible state or

history of the world, a time, and perhaps other features as well.[7]

Proponents of NIC embrace Kaplan's idea that we can add parameters to the circumstances if needed. Thus, in order to accommodate the taste, modal and temporal neutrality of (6)-(7) we expand Kaplan's $\langle w, t \rangle$ pairs into $\langle w, t, g \rangle$ triples where w is a world, t is a time and g is a taste.[8] The propositions expressed by (6)-(7) are now taken to have truth values with respect to these expanded circumstances of evaluation. At this point we need to address the following question: what circumstance of evaluation is relevant to determine whether a use of (6) at a context C is true or not? We saw that Kaplan privileged the circumstance of the context of use and I contend that there is no need to stop privileging the circumstance of the context of use when dealing with the predicates of taste. Thus, proponents of NIC can define truth at a context in the following manner:

> An occurrence of ϕ at C is true iff the proposition expressed by ϕ at C is true at C, $\langle w_c, t_c, g_c \rangle$, where w_c is the world of C, t_c is the time of C and g_c is the taste of C.

On this view (6) would be true at C just in case rhubarb is tasty to the taste of the agent of C at the world and time of C. Similarly (7) would be true at C just in case Beatrice is beautiful according to the taste of the agent of C at the world and time of C. Notice the twofold role played by the context C in the system of NIC. First the context determines the propositional content expressed by a sentence at a context. Subsequently the context initializes the parameters of the circumstance, setting them to be the circumstance of the context.[9] Thus, NIC preserves the circumstance determining role of the context of use that is prominent in Kaplan's original framework.

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[7]Kaplan 1977: 502.

[8]MacFarlane 2014: 88.

[9]See, MacFarlane 2009: 4-7. MacFarlane 2014: 88.

Indeed, the taste parameter allows the proposition expressed by (6) to be true with respect to some taste g and false with respect to another taste g'. By doing so the taste parameter makes it possible to capture the apparent idiosyncratic aspect of the proposition expressed by (6), but does the evaluation of truth with respect to a taste parameter also wed NIC to truth relativism? This question is tricky to answer mainly because there is no consensus on what it takes for a semantic system to be genuinely relativistic about truth. It is however entirely clear that NIC takes propositions to have truth values with respect to circumstances of evaluation. If relativizing propositional truth to some n-tuple of individually shiftable parameters is sufficient to count as a truth relativist, then NIC is wedded to truth relativism. But the upshot of this view is not only that NIC is wedded to truth relativism, but that the majority of currently existing semantic frameworks are wedded to truth relativism.[10] Presumably then, taking propositions to have truth values with respect to an n-tuple of parameters is a quite sober idea. However, even if this much is conceded, one might still enquire if the taste parameter employed by NIC affects truth in a different way than the world and time parameters employed by Kaplan. I am inclined to answer no; the taste parameter does not affect truth in a different manner than the world and time parameters. The reason for this is, as I emphasized above, that NIC uses the taste parameter in much the same manner as Kaplan used the world and time parameters. That is, the taste parameter is set to be the taste of the context of use just like the world and time parameters are set to be the world and time of the context of use.

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[10]MacFarlane 2014: 50.

1.2.2 Assertion

In the previous subsection we saw how NIC tells us to evaluate the truth of the propositions expressed by the sentences in (6)-(7). In this subsection I present an account of assertion for NIC.

Consider that Annette confidently utters the following sentence:

(8)   Sisyphus is pushing a boulder.

What does it mean to say that by uttering (8), Annette also performed the speech act of assertion? In the literature there is a large plurality of potential answers to our question. Nonetheless, the account of assertion favored by MacFarlane is already playing a prominent role in the debate about the predicates of taste. Because of this it is useful to couch NIC with a pragmatic setup that draws heavily on MacFarlane's views about assertion.

Let's start out by embracing the traditional assumption that there is a distinction between the force and content of a speech acts. If Annette asserts (8), the content of her assertion is the proposition that *Sisyphus is pushing a boulder* and its force is assertive.[11] These traditional notions are useful in their own right, but they do not tell us whether a particular assertion of (8) is in tune with the norms that govern the use of language. Nor do they tell us what commitments speakers undertake by making assertions. We are going to explore each of these aspects of assertion in turn.

Presumably, there is a variety of norms that govern the manner in which speakers perform assertions. For example, norms of politeness, evidence and relevance seem to impact the way speakers assert. However, I am going to follow MacFarlane by assuming

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[11]MacFarlane 2014: 17.

that amongst the variety of norms that govern assertion there is a rule or potentially a set of rules that are constitutive of assertion. What does is mean to say that a rule is constitutive of assertion? Here it is useful to consider an analogy with board games. For example, in chess there is a rule which says that a player cannot castle if that players king is in check. This rule is constitutive of castling because nothing that is not subject to that rule can count as castling. Similarly, to say that a rule is constitutive of assertion is to say that anything that is not subject to the rule does not count as an assertion.[12]

In order to posit a plausible rule for assertion we need to get a grasp on *when* it would be permissible for an agent to assert (8). In Kaplan's framework the proposition expressed by (8) is time-neutral, despite having a truth value only with respect to a certain time. On this view (8) is correctly evaluated for truth with respect to a circumstance $\langle w, t \rangle$, the world and time of the context of use. Furthermore, it seems natural to assume that speakers are only permitted to assert (8) at C if the proposition expressed by (8) is true at the world and time of C. This line of thought can be generalized into he following constitutive assertion rule:

(A). At a context C, assert that p only if p is true at C.[13]

I have emphasized the similarities between the semantic system developed by David Kaplan in "Demonstratives" and the semantics offered by NIC. Most importantly I have highlighted that NIC uses the taste parameter much like Kaplan uses the world and time parameters. Because of the similarities it should be easy to transfer an account of assertion built to handle sentences like (8) in a Kaplan-style framework to cover sentences containing predicates of taste. With the previous remarks in mind, consider the following pair of sentences:

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[12]MacFarlane 2014: 101. See also, Williamson 2000: 239.

[13]MacFarlane 2014: 101.

(6) Rhubarb is tasty.

(7) Beatrice is beautiful.

NIC tells us that (6)-(7) are correctly evaluated for truth with respect to a circumstance $\langle w, t, g \rangle$, the world and time and taste of the context of use. If we superimpose (A) onto the semantics offered by NIC we get the result that a speaker will be permitted to assert (6)-(7) at C iff the propositions expressed by (6)-(7) are true at the world, time and taste of C. As far as I can tell this seems to capture the way that we generally assert sentences like (6)-(7).

We have seen that (A) tells us when speakers are permitted to make assertions. We can now turn our attention to the commitments that speakers undertake by performing assertions. The traditional view is that a speaker who makes an assertion undertakes a commitment to the truth of the asserted proposition. But it is somewhat unclear what it means to be committed to the truth of a proposition. MacFarlane has suggested that we can make the idea more precise by saying that a commitment to the truth of a proposition is comprised by the following set of commitments:[14]

(C1) Commitment to retract the assertion if and when it is shown to have been untrue.

(C2) Commitment to justify the assertion (provide grounds for its truth) if and when it is appropriately challenged.

(C3) Commitment to be held responsible if someone else acts on or reasons from what is asserted, and it proves to have been untrue.[15]

Out of the three commitments above, the commitment to retract is the most hotly debated one. What then, is a retraction? A retraction is a speech act that targets another

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[14]MacFarlane 2005: 318.

[15]MacFarlane 2005: 318. See also, MacFarlane 2014: 108.

speech act and the effect of a retraction is to disavow the commitments that flow from the original speech act. By retracting a question, one releases the audience from the commitment to answer the question, by retracting an assertion the retractor is released from the obligation to honor (C1)-(C3).[16]

We shall explore the issue of providing a constitutive rule for retraction later on when dealing with assessment sensitive relativism. For now, we are going to be satisfied by considering an example that concern retraction in discourse about matters of taste. First, suppose that John has asserted (6) in a conversation with Mary. Second, suppose that Mary and John meet again some years after their first conversation, but at this point, John no longer likes the taste of rhubarb:

(9) a. Mary: Years ago you said that rhubarb was tasty, right?

  b. John reply 1: Yes, but I take that back now.

  c. John reply 2: Yes, I used to love rhubarb, but now I don't.

In (9b) John is retracting by using the retraction marker 'I take that back'. In (9c) John does not retract. Instead he merely informs Mary that he does not like rhubarb anymore. As far as I can tell, both (9b) and (9c) are natural responses to Mary's question in (9a). At the very least I do not intuit that John is violating (C1) by choosing not to retract in (9c). Nonetheless, far from everyone in the debate about the predicates of taste share these intuitions about the dialogue in (9). According to proponents of assessment sensitive relativism we should intuit that John has an obligation to retract in (9).[17] Allegedly, this is a problem for NIC because the semantics of NIC cannot easily explain this purported obligation. I return to the issue of retraction in §3.6.

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[16]MacFarlane 2014: 108.

[17]MacFarlane 2014: 14.

Chapter 2

Contextualism versus NIC

2.1 Contextualism

2.1.1 Introduction

Contextualists of all stripes model the semantics of 'tasty' and 'beautiful' on the semantics of indexicals. For example, standard contextualists model the semantics of 'tasty' on the first-person pronoun 'I'. In order to appreciate the manner in which standard contextualists model the semantics of 'tasty' and 'beautiful' on 'I' it is useful to recall that the semantic content expressed by a use of 'I' at a context C is the agent of C. Hence, if Aristotle were to use (10) at C he would express the proposition that *Aristotle* misses summer:

(10) I miss summer.

Similarly, if Plato were to use (10) at C' he would express the proposition that *Plato*

misses summer. With the examples featuring 'I' in mind, consider the following sentence featuring 'tasty':

(11)   Licorice is tasty.

According to standard contextualists, a use of (11) by Aristotle at C_1 would have expressed the proposition that:

Licorice is tasty [to Aristotle].

Where the content within the brackets is supplied by the context of use.[1] On the other hand if Plato where to use (11) at C_2 he would have expressed the proposition that:

Licorice is tasty [to Plato].

The examples above outline the result obtained by modeling the semantics of 'tasty' on the first-person pronoun 'I'. However, not all contextualists agree that the predicates of taste ought to be modeled on 'I'. Flexible contextualists contend that a use of (11) does not necessarily build the taste of the speaker into the proposition expressed by (11). Instead it might be the taste of any contextually relevant agent. Suppose that Aristotle and Plato are eating licorice together at C. Furthermore suppose that Plato utters (11) at C. In such a case, flexible contextualists can contend that Plato's utterance of (11) at C might express one of the following propositions:

(12)   a. Licorice is tasty [to Aristotle].

        b. Licorice is tasty [to Plato].

        c. Licorice is tasty [to Aristotle and Plato].

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[1]Schaffer 2009: 179.

Whether Plato's utterance at C expresses the proposition in (12a), (12b) or (12c) is determined by contextual features. This way of thinking about the predicates of taste is much more akin to indexicals like 'nearby' and 'local' than 'I'.

The structural virtue of contextualism lies in its parsimony. Since the propositional content of (11) is perspective-specific neither standard contextualists nor flexible contextualists need to posit any taste parameter in order to evaluate the truth of (11). Hence, contextualists of most stripes can get by with a quite parsimonious n-tuple of parameters. A contextualist who is also a temporalist can employ a Kaplan-style $\langle w, t \rangle$ pair and define truth at a context in the following manner:

> An occurrence of ϕ at C is true iff the proposition expressed by ϕ at C is true
>
> at C, $\langle w_c, t_c \rangle$, where w_c is the world of C, t_c is the time of C.

Contextualists who endorse eternalism can make appropriate adjustments and replace the $\langle w, t \rangle$ pair with $\langle w \rangle$ in the definition above. Because contextualism is a highly parsimonious semantic theory there is a methodological incentive to favor contextualism over NIC and other more complex semantic theories. Why then, should we not embrace contextualism? It turns out that the different types of contextualism all face some problematic semantic data. In §2.2 I briefly explore how standard contextualists have a hard time with indirect speech reports. Then I show that even though flexible contextualists can handle the indirect speech reports, they have a hard time with sentences containing multiple predicates of taste. In §2.3 I show that both standard and flexible contextualism struggle to provide a satisfactory account of disagreement in discourse about matters of taste. In §2.4 I consider a promising response to the problem of disagreement championed by Torfinn Huvenes. Huvenes offers a view of disagreement where two parties can disagree about various non-doxastic attitudes in addition to their doxastic attitudes. I admit that Huvenes' account of disagreement offers the contextualist an explanation of how

there can be non-doxastic disagreements in discourse about matters of taste. However, I present some disagreement data which suggests that the disputing parties are disagreeing by virtue of having conflicting beliefs. If the data I draw attention to is legitimate contextualists are still lacking the means to explain how there can be disagreement in belief in discourse about taste. In §2.5 I show that expressivists face similar problems concerning disagreement as contextualists. In §2.6 I consider the view that there are no disagreements about matters of taste. I argue that this view is unsatisfactory insofar as the disputes in discourse about about matters of taste cannot be resolved by linguistic clarification. That is, the disputes are not easily explained as verbal disputes. In §2.6 I present an account of disagreement for NIC.

2.2 Speech Reports

Herman Cappelen and Ernest Lepore has designed a test for indexicality which is based on producing what they call an 'Inter-Contextual Disquotational Indirect Report' (henceforth indirect speech report). An indirect speech report can be defined in the following manner:

> Take an utterance u of a sentence S by speaker A in context C. An Inter-Contextual Disquotational Indirect Report of u is an utterance u' in a context C' (where $C' \neq C$) of 'A said that S'.[2]

Now consider the following case:

(13)   a. Mary at C: I wrote a poem on the train.

   b. John at C': Mary said that I wrote a poem on the train.

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[2]Cappelen and Lepore 2005: 88.

If Mary utters (13a) at *C* then Mary expresses the proposition that *she* wrote a poem on the train. Clearly John's use of (13b) at *C'* does not correctly report what Mary said by using (13a) at *C*. What John reports is that Mary said that *John* wrote a poem on the train, not that *Mary* wrote a poem on the train. Hence John's indirect speech report is false. If this is the result obtained by producing an indirect speech report of a sentence containing a standard indexical like the first-person pronoun 'I', then we should expect indirect speech reports of sentences containing similar indexicals to come out false. Consider a report of a sentence containing 'tomorrow':

(14)   a. Mary on Monday: Tomorrow Bobby Fischer will play Garry Kasparov.

        b. John on Tuesday: Mary said that tomorrow Bobby Fischer will play Garry Kasparov.

Clearly, John's report in (14b) is false. By using (14a) on Monday Mary asserted that Fisher would play Kasparov on Tuesday. On the other hand, John's use of (14b) on Tuesday reports that Mary said that the match would be on Wednesday. Finally, consider the following sentence:

    (6) Rhubarb is tasty.

If 'tasty' is an indexical modeled on the semantics of 'I', an indirect speech report of (6) should come out false just like the reports of (13a) and (14a) came out false. With this in mind we can make the following contextualist conjecture: an utterance of 'rhubarb is tasty' by speaker *A* at *C* cannot be reported by speaker *B* at *C'* as '*A* said that rhubarb is tasty'. NIC predicts the opposite outcome. According to NIC, any use of 'rhubarb is tasty' will express the same proposition. Hence, NIC predicts that an utterance of 'rhubarb is tasty' by speaker *A* at *C* can be reported by speaker *B* at *C'* as '*A* said that rhubarb is tasty'.

Here is the speech report:

(15) a. Mary at C: Rhubarb is tasty.

b. John at C': Mary said that rhubarb is tasty.

John's use of (15b) at C' reports exactly what Mary said by using (15a) at C. In other words, 'tasty' does not seem to behave like the first person pronoun 'I'. Similarly, standard contextualism predicts that an utterance of 'mountains are beautiful' by speaker A at C cannot be reported by speaker B at C' as 'A said that mountains are beautiful' whilst NIC predicts that the speech report should come out true. Here is the speech report:

(16) a. Mary at C: Mountains are beautiful.

b. John at C': Mary said that mountains are beautiful.

Again, John's indirect speech report is true. The data procured by using indirect speech reports pose a considerable problem for standard contextualism. But not all contextualists model the semantics of 'tasty' and 'beautiful' on the semantics of 'I'. Flexible contextualists can model the semantics of 'tasty' and 'beautiful' on the semantics of 'local' or 'nearby'. If Mary uttered 'Beatrice went to a nearby restaurant' at C_1 she would, roughly, express the proposition that *Beatrice went to a restaurant nearby L_1*, where L_1 is a location.[3] If John uttered 'Beatrice went to a nearby restaurant' at C_2 he would , roughly, express the proposition that *Beatrice went to a restaurant nearby L_2*. Modeling the semantics of 'tasty' and 'beautiful' on the semantics of 'nearby' helps the contextualist because it is possible to create true indirect speech reports of sentences containing 'nearby'.[4] Consider the following case:

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[3]Cappelen and Hawthorne 2009: 41-43.
[4]Cappelen and Hawthorne 2009: 39.

(17) a. Mary at C: Beatrice went to a nearby restaurant.

b. John at C': Mary said that Beatrice went to a nearby restaurant.

Here John's use of (17b) at C' seem to correctly report what Mary said by (17a) at C. How can that be? Herman Cappelen and John Hawthorne have argued that indirect speech reports of sentences containing 'nearby' are parasitic, in the sense that John's use of 'nearby' in (17b) takes on the semantic content of Mary's use of 'nearby' in (17a). Because John's use of 'nearby' is parasitic on Mary's use, it is possible for John to correctly report what Mary said even though 'nearby' is an indexical. If it is possible for John's use of 'nearby' to be parasitic on Mary's use of 'nearby', then it should be possible for John's use of 'tasty' to be parasitic on Mary's use of 'tasty'. Hence, flexible contextualism can handle indirect speech reports by virtue of parasitism. But abandoning standard contextualism in favor of flexible contextualism is not problem free. Jason Stanley has showed that flexible contextualists about the epistemic 'know' cannot handle multiple occurrences of 'know' within one sentence.[5] For the rest of this section I outline Stanley's original argument and expand it to cover 'tasty' and 'beautiful'.

Suppose that John is in Oslo, Norway. Furthermore suppose that John utters the following sentence:

(18) If you have a car, Sweden is nearby, but if you are on foot, Sweden isn't nearby.

Clearly, the two occurrences of 'nearby' are completed differently in (18). If other expressions like 'know', 'tasty' and 'beautiful' are modeled on the case of 'nearby' we would expect that different occurrences of 'know', 'tasty' and 'beautiful' can be completed differently in the same sentence. However, Jason Stanley has argued that treating the semantic

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[5]Stanley 2004: 138.

mechanism of 'know' much like the semantic mechanism of 'nearby' leads to problems when there are multiple occurrences of 'know' in one sentence.[6] Consider these examples:

(19)   a. Beatrice knows she has hands, but she does not know that she is not a bodiless brain in a vat.

          b. Beatrice knows she is a bodiless brain in a vat, but she does not know that she does not have hands.[7]

If flexible contextualism about 'know' is true, then we should be able to assert the sentences in (19) without any problems because the occurrences of 'know' can be completed differently. But as Keith DeRose has pointed out we would not assert such "abominable conjunctions".[8]

Similar issues arise with sentences containing multiple occurrences of 'tasty' and 'beautiful'. Suppose that John, Mary and Beatrice are eating licorice. Now consider the following sentence:

(20)   Licorice is tasty, but it is not tasty to me.

If flexible contextualism is true, John should be able to assert (20) with the first occurrence of 'tasty' meaning tasty to Mary and Beatrice and the latter occurrence of 'tasty' meaning tasty to John. But it is difficult to hear such a reading of (20). Similarly suppose that John, Mary and Beatrice are looking at the Mona Lisa. Now, consider the following sentence:

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[6]MacFarlane has also emphasized this point. See, MacFarlane 2009: 240.

[7]Stanley 2004: 138.

[8]DeRose 1995: 28.

(21)   The Mona Lisa is beautiful, but she is not beautiful to me.

Again John should be able to assert (21) with the first occurrence of 'beautiful' meaning beautiful to Mary and Beatrice and the latter occurrence of 'beautiful' meaning beautiful to John. Yet, it difficult to hear a reading of (21) with the occurrences of beautiful completed in such a manner.

Crucially, NIC can make sense of (20) and (21). According to NIC all occurrences of 'tasty' and 'beautiful' have the same semantic content. More so, the propositions expressed by (20) and (21) are evaluated for truth with John providing the relevant taste. Clearly, the semantics provided by NIC does not permit John to believe that the propositions expressed by (20) and (21) are true. Since (20) and (21) are not true, they are not assertible either.

2.3   Disagreeing about Matters of Taste

Suppose that Mary and John are listening to the *1812 Overture* by Tchaikovsky and that midway in the composition they have the following dialogue:

(22)   a. Mary: Tchaikovsky composed the *1812 Overture*.

   b. John: Yes he did.

The dialogue between Mary and John in (22) is a clear case of agreement. A simple explanation of the agreement in (22) can be provided by saying that there is a proposition, the proposition that *Tchaikovsky composed the 1812 Overture* and both Mary and John believe that proposition to be true. Following this line of thought we can describe the type of agreement illustrated by (22) in the following manner:

> Agree. Two parties agree only if there is a proposition that both parties believe.

Contrastingly, suppose that instead of (22), Mary and John had the following dialogue:

(23)   a. Mary: Stravinsky composed the *1812 Overture.*

           b. John: I disagree, it was composed by Tchaikovsky.

In (23) Mary and John are clearly disagreeing. The crucial question is: how do we explain the disagreement? An intuitive first step towards an explanation is to say that there is a proposition, the proposition that *Stravinsky composed the 1812 Overture* and Mary believes that proposition to be true whilst John believes that proposition to be false. In addition it seems like one of the disputing parties must be wrong. With our initial observations in mind we can tentatively describe the type of disagreement illustrated by (23) in the following manner:

> Two parties have an S-type disagreement if there is a proposition p such that one party believes p and the other party believes $\neg p$ and one party is at fault.

Based on the success of analyzing (23) in terms of S-type disagreement it is natural to conjecture that all cases of disagreement are cases of S-type disagreement. But consider that near the end of the *1812 Overture*, Mary and John have the following dialogue:

(24)   a. Mary: The *1812 Overture* by Tchaikovsky is a beautiful piece of music.

           b. John: I disagree, the *1812 Overture* is overly romantic.

Is there S-type disagreement in (24)? In (24) there seems to be a proposition that Mary believes to be true and John believes to be false. Yet, (24) differs from (23) in that no party seems to be making a mistake. It would certainly be odd to claim that John is flat out mak-

ing a mistake by finding the composition overly romantic. Conversely it would be odd to say that Mary is making a flat out mistake in finding the composition beautiful. Hence, it could be argued that (24) exhibits a kind of faultless or F-type disagreement:

> Two parties have an F-type disagreement if there is a proposition p such that one party believes p and the other party believes $\neg p$ and no party is at fault.

With such considerations in mind we can reformulate our question and ask: is there S or F-type disagreement in (24)? At any rate, the contextualist semantics makes it difficult to explain the disagreement in (24). Both S and F-type disagreement requires that there is a proposition Mary believes and John disbelieves. However, on the contextualist view Mary is expressing the proposition that the *1812 Overture* is beautiful to *her*, and John is expressing the proposition that *1812 Overture* is not beautiful to *him*. On the contextualist semantics then, there is no S or F-type disagreement in (24) because there is no proposition that Mary believes and John disbelieves. Hence, contextualism is prone to the following argument:

(1). The parties have an S or F-type disagreement. (Ass).

(2). If the parties have an S or F-type disagreement, there is a proposition such that one party believes that proposition and the other believes its negation. (Ass).

(3). If contextualism is true, there is not a proposition such that one party believes that proposition and the other believes its negation (Ass).

(4). There is a proposition such that one party believes that proposition and the other believes its negation. (from (1) and (2) by modus ponens).

(5). Therefore, contextualism is not true. (from (3) and (4) by modus tollens).[9]

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[9]This is a modified argument found in Huvenes 2012a: 19-20.

The problem of lost disagreement comes with a corresponding problem of lost agreement. Consider the following case:

(25)   a. Mary: Grapes are tasty.

        b. John: I agree, Grapes are tasty.

        c. i. Mary: The *1812 Overture* is beautiful.

            ii. John: I agree, the *1812 Overture* is beautiful.

As in the case of disagreement, the contextualist semantics makes it difficult to account for the agreement in (25). If Mary in (25a) expresses the proposition that grapes are tasty to *her* and John in (25b) expresses the proposition that grapes are tasty to *him*, Mary and John do not agree in (25a)-(25b), they simply believe two different propositions. The same goes for (25c-i)-(25c-ii). If contextualism is to be a viable semantic theory for the predicates of personal taste, the challenges we have mapped out must be answered. How can the contextualist respond? Roughly, there are two main options available to the contextualist. The first option is to argue that despite appearances there are no disagreements in discourse about matters of taste. Instead of disagreeing, two parties who engage in a dispute about matters of taste are merely talking past each other. That is, they are are having a verbal dispute. The second option available to the contextualist is to argue that despite some initial challenges contextualism can indeed accommodate disagreement in discourse about taste. We are going to explore both options in turn.

2.4 Abandoning the Doxastic View

Our previous discussion about S and F-type disagreement has implicitly assumed a conception of disagreement that Torfinn Huvenes has coined the *doxastic view*.[10] According to Huvenes the main tenets of the doxastic view can be illustrated by the conjunction of T1-T4:

> T1. Whether two parties agree or disagree is always a matter of which propositions they believe.
>
> T2. The objects of agreement and disagreement are propositions.
>
> T3. Two parties agree only if there is a proposition that both parties believe.
>
> T4. Two parties disagree only if there is a proposition p such that one party believes p and the other party believes $\neg p$.[11]

After identifying the core tenets of the doxastic view as T1-T4 Huvenes argues that one of the most promising contextualist responses to the problem of lost disagreement is to reject T1-T4 and opt for a reconception of what it takes for two parties to disagree. Roughly, the idea is that instead of taking two parties to disagree only if there is a proposition p such that one party believes p and the other party believes $\neg p$, we should draw on the ideas of Charles Leslie Stevenson and take two parties to disagree if they have conflicting attitudes.[12] Following this line of thought Huvenes suggests that we reject the doxastic view of disagreement in favor of the following three theses:

> Ta. Two parties agree just in case they have converging attitudes.
>
> Tb. Two parties disagree just in case they have conflicting attitudes.

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[10]Huvenes 2012a: 52.

[11]Huvenes 2012a: 52.

[12]Huvenes 2012a: 46. For Stevenson's view see Stevenson 1937, 1944 and 1966.

Tc. There is convergence and conflict among a wide range of attitudes that includes both doxastic and non-doxastic attitudes.[13]

Let us refer to the conjunction of Ta-Tb as the A-view of disagreement. According to the A-view we can disagree by having conflicting purposes, aspirations, wants, preferences, desires, hopes, etc.[14] With this conception of disagreement in mind, consider a dialogue concerning matters of taste:

(26) a. Mary: Dates are tasty.

  b. John: I disagree, dates are too sweet.

After the reconception of what it takes for two parties to disagree, the contextualist can argue that the parties in (26) are disagreeing because they have conflicting non-doxastic attitudes concerning the dates. This way of thinking about disagreement lends itself most easily to the view that the parties in (26) are not making any mistakes by having the non-doxastic attitudes they have.[15] Thus, contextualism can predict that the speakers in (26) have a kind of F-type disagreement.

At this point the contextualist has to show that the A-view is preferable to the doxastic view as an overall framework for thinking about disagreement. Otherwise, we would lack proper motivation to abandon the doxastic view of disagreement in favor of the A-view. In order to show that the A-view is preferable to the doxastic view Huvenes asks us to consider the following semantic data:

(27) a. Mary: I like this chili.

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[13]Huvenes 2012a: 68.

[14]Huvenes 2012a: 68. Huvenes 2014: 147.

[15]Huvenes 2012a: 74.

    b. John: I disagree, it's too hot for me.[16]

(28)   a. Mary: I like Dave's curry.

    b. John: I dislike Dave's curry.[17]

(29)   a. Mary: I want to go to the movies.

    b. John: No I would rather stay at home.[18]

Furthermore we have to make the following assumption about the data above:

    (Ass). The parties in (27), (28) and (29) disagree.

Here is the potential problem for the doxastic view. In (27), (28) and (29) there appears to be no proposition that one party believes and the other party believes the negation of that proposition. Hence, on the assumption that the parties in (27), (28) and (29) disagree, the doxastic view leads to a case of lost disagreement because the parties do not hold conflicting beliefs. Conversely, proponents of the A-view can easily explain how the parties in (27), (28) and (29) disagree. In (27) Mary and John disagree by virtue of having conflicting attitudes towards the chili, in (28) they disagree by having conflicting attitudes about the curry and in (29) they disagree by having conflicting attitudes about going to the movies. Thus, if we assume that the parties in (27), (28) and (29) are disagreeing, the A-view has significant advantages over the doxastic view.

How can a proponent of NIC respond to the argument above? First, it is important to appreciate that I am open to the idea that speakers can disagree by virtue of having conflicting non-doxastic attitudes. In fact, I am going to tentatively embrace the move

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[16]Huvenes 2012a: 87.

[17]Huvenes 2012a: 60.

[18]Huvenes 2012a: 56.

from the doxastic view to the A-view for the sake of this discussion. Thus, I concede that contextualists can explain the possibility of non-doxastic disagreement in discourse about taste. However, embracing the A-view might not vindicate contextualism from all charges concerning disagreement. There is still a potential worry that the disagreements in discourse about matters of taste concern the *beliefs* of the disputing parties. If this worry is legitimate, contextualists still owe us an explanation of how two parties can disagree by virtue of having conflicting beliefs about some matter of taste.

The line of argumentation that I have outlined above has been embraced by John Mac-Farlane.[19] MacFarlane maintains the view that speakers can disagree by virtue of having conflicting non-doxastic attitudes, but he also maintains that the disagreements that occur in discourse about matters of taste appear to be concerned with both non-doxastic and doxastic attitudes.[20] In order to procure evidence in favor of the view that two speakers can disagree by virtue of having conflicting beliefs about some matter of taste, MacFarlane considers data where speakers express disagreement about matters of taste by using disagreement markers like 'I don't believe that' and 'That is not true'. The point is that the pronoun 'that' used in these disagreement markers is usually anaphoric referring to a previously expressed proposition which suggests that the ensuing disagreement concerns the beliefs held by the disputing parties.[21] With the latter remarks in mind, consider the following dialogue:

(30)   a. Mary: Sushi is tasty.

        b. John option 1: I don't believe that.

        c. John option 2: That is not true.

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[19]MacFarlane 2009: 15.

[20]MacFarlane 2009: 7-15. See also, MacFarlane 2014: 131-136.

[21]MacFarlane 2009: 7-15. Peter Lasersohn makes a similar point, see, Lasersohn 2005: 657.

First, we have to notice that John's reply in (30b) concerns belief. Consequently, it is natural to assume that the demonstrative 'that' featuring in (30b) refers to the proposition expressed by Mary in (30a). Similarly, John's reply in (30c) concerns truth. Consequently, it is natural to assume that John's use of 'that' in (30c) refers to the proposition expressed by Mary in (30a). If both (30b) and (30c) contains a reference to the proposition that Mary expresses in (30a) it becomes difficult not to interpret the disagreement between Mary and John as a disagreement concerning belief.

How can the contextualist explain the doxastic disagreement in (30)? Neither the A-view, nor the contextualist semantics appear to offer the apparatus needed to explain doxastic disagreement. It seems then, that even when we embrace the A-view contextualists have a hard time accommodating examples like (30). However, not all contextualists accept that the data in (30) is legitimate. For example, Huvenes has pointed out is that it is not entirely clear that it is appropriate to use disagreement markers like 'That is not true' when expressing disagreement about matters of taste. [22] To appreciate the point made by Huvenes we have to compare the felicity of the disagreement markers in (31b) and (31c):

(31)   a.   Mary: Sushi is tasty.

     b.   John option 1: I disagree, sushi is not tasty. [23]

     c.   John option 2: That is not true, sushi is not tasty. [24]

According to Huvenes the use of 'I disagree' in (31b) appears to be felicitous whereas the use of 'That is not true' in (31c) appears to be slightly stilted.[25] This does not sit well with

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[22]Huvenes 2012a: 91.

[23]Huvenes 2012a: 92.

[24]Huvenes 2012a: 91.

[25]Huvenes 2012a: 91-92.

the view that the parties in (31a) have a disagreement in belief because a disagreement in belief should allow both (31b) and (31c) to be felicitous.

I agree with Huvenes that when the data in (31) is taken at face value the use of 'That is not true' in (31c) comes out somewhat stilted. Nonetheless, I contend that once we take into consideration a larger set of data there appears to be many cases were it is appropriate to use 'That is not true' in order to express disagreement about some matter of taste. Consider a context where John has been practicing his drawing skills. Mary finds John's drawings beautiful whereas John is dissatisfied about the result. With this context in mind consider the following dialogue:

(32) a. John: My drawings are terrible.

  b. Mary: That is not true, your drawings are beautiful.

In (32a) Johns asserts that he finds his own drawings terrible and as far as I can tell it is natural for Mary to use 'That is not true' in order to express her disagreement with what John asserted. It it also worth considering an alternative dialogue set in the same context as before:

(33) a. Mary: Your drawings are beautiful.

  b. John: That is not true, they are not very good.

In (33a) Mary asserts that John's drawings are beautiful. Once we keep in mind that John is quite disappointed with his drawings John's use of 'That is not true' in (33b) appears to be an appropriate response to Mary's assertion.

It is not hard to find similar cases involving uses of 'tasty' instead of 'beautiful'. Consider a context where John has baked some pastry. Mary likes the taste of the pastry whereas

John finds the flavor disappointing. With this context in mind consider the following dialogue:

(34)   a. John: My pastry is terrible.

        b. Mary: That is not true, your pastry is very tasty.

In this case too Mary's expression of disagreement in (34b) appears to be appropriate as a response to what John said in (31c).

Up until now we have been considering dialogues where the disagreement marker 'That is not true' is used directly as a response to a declarative sentence. It might be useful to take into consideration some more complex dialogues that contain optative and interrogative sentences in addition to declarative sentences. First, consider a dialogue that contains an optative:

(35)   a. Mary: Your drawings are beautiful.

        b. John: If only that were true.

In (35a) Mary asserts that she finds John's drawings beautiful. In (35b) John is expressing his wish that the proposition Mary asserted in (35a) were true. By expressing this wish John is also disagreeing with what Mary asserted.

Finally, consider the following disagreement which is instigated by the interrogative sentence in (36a):

(36)   a. Mary: Is it true that Steve's pastry is tasty?

        b. John: Sure, Steve's pastry is tasty.

        c. Tom: That is not true, Steve's pastry is horrible.

In (36a) Mary is explicitly querying whether the proposition that *Steve's pastry is tasty* is true. Thus, it is difficult to make sense of the ensuing disagreement between John and Tom as anything but a disagreement concerning the truth of the proposition that *Steve's pastry is tasty*.

Let us take stock at this point. We have tentatively embraced the A-view of disagreement. That is, the view that two parties can disagree by having conflicting attitudes. By embracing the doxastic view it becomes possible for contextualists to explain how there can be non-doxastic disagreements about matters of taste. On the other hand, the A-view might not vindicate contextualism from all charges concerning disagreement. We have seen that there are cases where the parties appear to disagree by virtue of having conflicting beliefs about some matter of taste. If this data is legitimate, contextualists are prone to the following argument regardless of whether the A-view holds good or not:

(1). The parties in (32)-(36) have a doxastic disagreement. (Ass).

(2). If the parties in (32)-(36) are having a doxastic disagreement, there is a proposition such that one party believes that proposition and the other believes its negation. (Ass).

(3). If contextualism is true, there is not a proposition such that one party believes that proposition and the other believes its negation (Ass).

(4). There is a proposition such that one party believes that proposition and the other believes its negation. (from (1) and (2) by modus ponens).

(5). Therefore, contextualism is not true. (from (3) and (4) by modus tollens).[26]

Thus, it appears that contextualists still owe us an explanation of how there can be doxastic disagreement in discourse about taste.

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[26]This is a modified argument found in Huvenes 2012a: 19-20.

2.5   Extension to Expressivism

Up until now I have argued that contextualists cannot provide a satisfactory account of disagreement. Insofar as expressivism is a parsimonious alternative to contextualism, it is worthwhile to show that expressivists face similar problems concerning disagreement as contextualists.

Traditionally, expressivism has mostly been defended as a thesis about moral expressions. Because of this, I start out by exploring what it is to be an expressivist about moral language and then I extend the treatment to discourse about taste.

Consider the following sentence:

(37)   You acted wrongly in stealing that money.

It is useful to conceive of expressivism as a bipartite theory. First, there is the negative claim that sentences like (37) do not express truth apt propositions.[27] Second, there is the positive claim that the primary function of sentences like (37) is to express attitudes.[28] Roughly, these two claims make up the core of the classical expressivism espaused by A. J. Ayer in *Language, Truth, and Logic*:

> 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

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[27]Jackson and Pettit 1998: 239.
[28]Jackson and Pettit 1998: 239.

> 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.[29]

Considerations about disagreement plays an important role as motivation for expressivism. In particular, expressivists have put much weight on the claim that endorsing expressivism makes it possible to explain why disagreements about moral issues are persistent.[30] Consider the following dialogue:

(38) a. Mary: Stealing the apples is immoral.

b. John: I disagree, stealing the apples is not immoral.

According to expressivists the parties in (38) might agree about all the facts concerning the stealing of the apples. For example, they might agree about how stealing the apples will affect the happiness of the relevant parties, they might agree about the potential societal impact of the theft etc. But even though the parties in (38) agree about all the relevant facts, they seem to disagree about whether or not the act of stealing the apples is immoral. Expressivists take this to suggest that Mary and John are not expressing any factual claims in (38).[31] Clearly, if the parties in (38) are not making any factual claims, we cannot explain the disagreement in (38) as a matter of what propositions the parties in (38) believe. Thus, in order to explain why the parties in (38) are disagreeing most expressivists endorse Charles Leslie Stevenson's idea that there can be disagreement in attitude:

> 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

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[29]Ayer 1959: 107.

[30]Jackson and Pettit 1998: 249-250.

[31]Jackson and Pettit 1998: 250.

disapproving of it and when at least one of them has a motive for altering or calling into question the attitude of the other.[32]

The idea then, is that the parties in (38) are disagreeing by virtue of having conflicting non-doxastic attitudes about stealing. Recall that in §2.4 I suggested that we ought to tentatively embrace the A-view of disagreement. Therefore we should readily concede that contextualists have the conceptual apparatus to legitimately claim that the parties in (38) are disagreeing by virtue of having conflicting non-doxastic attitudes about stealing.

We can now turn our attention to the following question: can expressivists explain the possibility of disagreement in discourse about matters of taste? To answer our question we must first extend our outline of classical expressivism for moral vocabulary to discourse about taste. Consider the following sentences:

(39)   Carrots are tasty.

(40)   Rivers are beautiful.

Transferring the negative claim of classical expressivism to (39)-(40) we get the result that uses of (39)-(40) do not express any truth apt semantic content. Transferring the positive claim of classical expressivism to (39)-(40) we get the result that uses of (39)-(40) serve to express attitudes, much in the same manner as smacking one's lips after a meal expresses one's attitudes without reporting one's attitudes.[33]With these remarks about (39)-(40) in mind, consider the following dialogues:

(41)   a. Mary: Carrots are tasty.

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[32]Stevenson 1944: 3.

[33]MacFarlane 2014: 15.

     b. John: I disagree, they are too bland.

In order to explain the disagreement in (41) expressivists can contend that the parties in (41) are disagreeing by virtue of having conflicting non-doxastic attitudes towards the carrots.

However, expressivists just like contextualists have problems explaining the disagreement present in the following dialogues:

(42)   a. John: My drawings are terrible.

      b. Mary: That is not true, your drawings are beautiful.

(43)   a. Mary: Your pastry is tasty.

      b. John: Unfortunately, that is not true.

(44)   a. Mary: Your drawings are beautiful.

      b. John: That is not true, they are not very good.

According to expressivists the utterances in (42a), (43a) and (44a) express but do not report the attitudes of the speakers. On this view then, the pronoun 'that' used in (42b), (43b) and (44b) is anaphoric referring to the attitudes previously expressed. This is problematic for the expressivist because we do not usually ascribe truth or falsity to non-doxastic attitudes.

It is also worth taking into consideration that the same problems are present in more exotic examples. an optative sentence:

(45)   a. Mary: Your drawings are beautiful.

      b. John: If only that were true.

According to expressivists Mary's utterance in (45a) is expressing but not reporting her positive attitude towards John's drawings. Thus, John's use of the pronoun 'that' in (45b) is presumably anaphoric referring to Mary's non-doxastic attitude. But again, this does not sit well with John's subsequent use of 'true'. We do not ordinarily call non-doxastic attitudes true.

Finally, consider the following disagreement which is instigated by the interrogative sentence in (46a):

(46)   a.   Mary: Is it true that Steve's pastry is tasty?

         b.   John: Sure, Steve's pastry is tasty.

         c.   Tom: That is not true, Steve's pastry is horrible.

In (46a) it is explicit that Mary's question concerns truth. But it is difficult to make sense of Mary's question and the ensuing disagreement between John and Tom if we take uses of 'tasty' to merely express ones attitude. Hence, expressivism in its traditional form has a hard time explaining discourse about matters of taste.

Of course, modern expressivists have developed more sophisticated versions of expressivism. In particular, the expressivist positions endorsed by Simon Blackburn and Allan Gibbard have given much traction to expressivism in the contemporary debate about moral discourse.[34] Nonetheless, I do not know of any prominent attempt to extend the ideas of Gibbard or Blackburn from moral discourse to discourse about taste. It remains to be seen then, whether modern expressivists can produce the apparatus needed to offer a satisfactory account of the disagreement cases that we have considered above.

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[34]Blackburn 1984, 1998. Gibbard 1990, 2003.

2.6   No Disagreement After All?

Some contextualists contend that despite initial appearances, we cannot disagree about matters of taste. Thus, when two parties are having a dispute about taste, there is no disagreement, but what we might loosely refer to as a verbal dispute. With this in mind, consider the following example:

(47)   a.   Mary: Licorice is tasty.

     b.   John: I disagree, licorice is not tasty.

According to Jonathan Schaffer the parties in (47) do not disagree.[35] Rather, the parties in (47) are engaged in a verbal dispute. The idea is that the dispute in (47) is verbal because Mary can resolve the dispute in the following manner:

(48)   a.   Mary: Licorice is tasty.

     b.   John: I disagree, licorice is not tasty.

     c.   Mary: Listen, I was just saying that *I* like it.[36]

Clearly, the idea that the dispute in (47) can be resolved in the manner illustrated by the dialogue in (48) sits well with the semantics offered by contextualism. On the contextualist view the proposition expressed by Mary in (48a) is the proposition that *licorice is tasty to Mary*. Because Mary is only talking about herself in (48a) John's response in (48b) is inappropriate with respect to the proposition expressed by Mary. Consequently, Mary can end the dispute by using (48c) to point out that she was only talking about herself in (48a).

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[35]Schaffer 2009: 213.

[36]Schaffer 2009: 213.

I agree with Schaffer that the parties in (47) can hardly be said to disagree if the dispute between them can be resolved in the manner illustrated by (48). However, there are some issues with the contention that the dialogue in (48) illustrates a potential resolution to the dispute in (47). First, if we assume that both contextualism and the the A-view of disagreement are correct, we get the result that the parties in (48) disagree by virtue of having conflicting non-doxastic attitudes towards the taste of licorice. This would make John's use of the disagreement marker 'I disagree' in (48c) legitimate because the parties would be engaged in a non-doxastic disagreement. Moreover, Mary's attempt to resolve the dispute in (48c) would fail because the dispute between the parties does not concern the propositions that the parties believe. Thus, the resolution in (48) appears to be illegitimate on the A-view of disagreement. Second, regardless of what conception of disagreement we operate with, there are some worries about the felicity of the resolution in (48). In order to illustrate why the resolution in (48) might not be felicitous it is useful to explore some dialogues that can easily be resolved through linguistic clarification. For example, everybody can agree that the parties in (49) are merely talking past each other:

(49)   a.   Mary: I am a doctor.

     b.   John: I disagree, I am not a doctor.[37]

Consequently, it is also fairly easy to recognize that the dispute in (49) can be resolved in the following manner:

(50)   a.   Mary: I am a doctor.

     b.   John: I disagree, I am not a doctor.

     c.   Mary: Listen, I only said that *I* am a doctor.

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[37]Huvenes 2012b: 170.

By using (50c) Mary points out that she was only talking about herself in (50a), and that John's response in (50b) is out of place relative to what Mary said in (50a). Now then, if the parties in (47) are talking past each other in the same manner as the parties in (49) are talking past each other, then it ought to be fairly easy to recognize that the dispute in (47) is resolvable too. But this appears not to be the case. On the contrary, whilst it is fairly easy to see that Mary's use of (50c) resolves the dispute in (50), it is not at all clear that the dispute in (47) can be resolved in the following manner:

(51) a. Mary: Licorice is tasty.

  b. John: I disagree, licorice is not tasty.

  c. Mary: Listen, I was just saying that *I* like it.

This is a problem for the contextualist, because if contextualism is true, there should be little doubt amongst competent speakers that the dialogue in (51) is felicitous. At the very least it seems that the contextualist owes us an explanation of why there is a significant discrepancy between the felicity of (50c) and (51c).

2.6.1 More Data

Consider another dialogue where the parties are clearly talking past each other:

(52) a. Mary: I solved the riddle.

  b. John: I disagree, it's too hard for me.

Because Mary is only talking about herself in (52a) it is fairly easy appreciate that Mary can resolve the dispute in (52) in the following manner:

(53) a. Mary: I solved the riddle.

b. John: I disagree, it's too hard for me.

c. Mary: Listen, I just said that I solved the riddle.

What I would like to draw attention to is that Mary's response in (53c) is really a speech report of what Mary said in (53a). Furthermore, accurate speech reports tend to block objections to their accuracy. Just notice how the following objection to the speech report in (53c) is out of place:

(54) John: No, you didn't say that.

Naturally the latter contention holds good in discourse about matters of taste too:

(55) a. Mary: I like chili.

b. John: I disagree, it's too hot for me.

c. Mary: Listen, I only said that I like chili.

What Mary says in (55c) is true. That is, in (55c) Mary accurately reports that she was only talking about herself in (55a). Thus, it is clear that John cannot reply to what Mary is saying in (55c) with the following objection:

(56) John: No, you didn't say that.

Finally, consider the following dialogue:

(57) a. Mary: Chili is tasty.

b. John: I disagree, it's too hot.

c. Mary: Listen, I only said that chili is tasty to me.

Here is the problem for the contextualist. If we assume that the contextualist semantics is true, then Mary's use of (57a) would roughly express the proposition that *chili is tasty for Mary*. On the contextualist view then, Mary's report in (57c) should be true because she was indeed talking about herself in (57a). Thus, we should expect the speech report in (57c) to bar objections to its accuracy just as easily as (53c) and (55c) bars objections to their accuracy. However, it is not entirely clear that (57c) bars the following objection:

(58)   John: No, you didn't say that.

In fact, I contend that the objection in (58) appears to be legitimate. At the very least It seems that the contextualist owes us an explanation of why the speech report in (57c) does not bar objections to its truth just as as easily as other true speech reports.

2.7   Reporting Disagreement

Herman Cappelen and John Hawthorne contend that there can hardly be such a thing as a disagreement about matters of taste:

> We want to emphasize one final point about generics: the literature tends to proceed as if we generally intuit a disagreement when one person utters a generic claim of the sort 'Fs are fun' (or 'Doing G is fun') and another person utters 'Fs are not fun' (or 'Doing G is not fun'). But this is just not right. It is not hard at all to come up with cases where two people utter a pair of judgements of this form, but there is no sense of disagreement between them.[38]

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[38]Cappelen and Hawthorne 2009: 113.

The main argument they advance in favor of their view starts out by making the assumption that we are fairly proficient at reporting when two parties disagree. For example, consider the following case of disagreement:

(59) a. Mary: Earth is flat.

      b. John: I disagree, Earth isn't flat.

According to Cappelen and Hawthorne it is easy to see that a third party could report on Mary and John's dispute in the following manner:

(60) Mary and John disagree whether Earth is flat.[39]

Because it is easy to see that the report in (60) is true, Cappelen and Hawthorne propose to use reports like (60) to test whether two parties disagree.[40] With these considerations in mind, consider the following dialogue:

(61) a. Mary: Sushi is tasty.

      b. John: I disagree, sushi is awful.

According to Cappelen and Hawthorne we should intuit that a third party could not report on Mary and John's dispute in the following manner:

(62) Mary and John disagree whether sushi is tasty.[41]

Certainly, if virtually everyone in the debate shared Cappelen and Hawthorne's intuition that the report in (62) is false, our intuitions about reports like (62) could be considered

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[39]Cappelen and Hawthorne 2009: 55-56.

[40]Cappelen and Hawthorne 2009: 54-57.

[41]Cappelen and Hawthorne 2009: 113.

as a powerful diagnostics for disagreement. However, far from everyone share Cappelen and Hawthorne's intuition that (62) is false. As far as I can tell (62) is just as felicitous as (60). At the very least contextualists should concede that there is a large discrepancy between the dialogue in (61) and the dialogue in (63):

(63)   a. Mary: I am a doctor.

     b. John: I disagree, I am not a doctor.[42]

In (63) we immediately recognize that the parties are not disagreeing. By extension, we have no trouble recognizing that a third party could not correctly report that:

Mary and John disagree whether Mary is a doctor.

Because our intuitions about (62) are greatly divergent, it is difficult to use our intuitions about examples like (62) as evidence without being overly chauvinistic. Thus, I am not going to argue that raw intuitions about the felicity of reports like (62) provide weighty evidence for or against any semantic theory. Instead, I contend that we can gain some traction if we focus on the consequences flowing from Cappelen and Hawthorne's contention that the parties in (61) are not disagreeing.

First, assume for the sake of argument, that flexible contextualism provides a correct semantic theory for the predicates of taste. Second, assume that there is no such thing as disagreement in discourse about matters of taste. Finally, assume that John in (61) is a competent speaker of English. With our assumptions in mind, it seems that John, by virtue of his linguistic competence, should easily acknowledge that Mary is only talking about herself in (61a) and that his use of the disagreement marker 'I disagree' in (61a) is inappropriate relative to what Mary said. The problem for contextualists is that

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[42]Huvenes 2012b: 170.

fully competent speakers of English frequently engage in dialogues like (61). Why would speakers frequently engage in dialogues like (61) if their semantic competence makes them able to acknowledge that they are merely talking past each other? To me it seems implausible that there should be such widespread systematic error on behalf of competent speakers.

2.8   Making Sense of F-type Disagreement

We have seen that contextualists can offer an explanation of how there can be non-doxastic disagreements in discourse about matters of taste by embracing the A-view of disagreement. But capturing non-doxastic disagreement might not be enough to vindicate contextualism form all charges concerning disagreement. We have explored data which suggests that speakers frequently use the disagreement markers 'That is not true' and 'I don't believe that' to express disagreement about some matter of taste. The use of such disagreement markers does not sit well with the contention that the disagreements present in discourse about taste are merely non-doxastic. Rather, the use of such disagreement markers suggest that at least some of the disagreements present in discourse about taste concern the beliefs of the disputing parties. Thus, a satisfactory account of disagreement should explain how two parties can disagree by virtue of having conflicting beliefs about some matter of taste.

I am going to embrace the view that there is F-type disagreement in discourse about matters of taste. However, I readily admit, that at first sight it is not clear whether F-type disagreement is a potential benefit or a potential worry. Can it be the case that one party believes p and another party believes $\neg p$ and yet no party is making any kind of mistake? Here is Michael Glanzberg's verdict on the possibility of F-type disagreement:

From a traditional, non-relativist, point of view, this idea is prima facie absurd: if two propositions express disagreement, one must fail to be correct. Of course, this absurdity flows from theoretical commitments of the traditional view, and any such theory must give way in the face of compelling evidence against it.[43]

As far as I can tell Glanzberg gets to the core of the issue concerning F-type disagreement. If we presuppose a traditional point of view, that is, a semantic theory whereupon propositions are true or false *simpliciter*, it is no wonder that the notion of F-type disagreement comes out as absurd. Hence, I completely agree with Glanzberg's verdict that the absurdity of F-type disagreement flows from the traditional point of view. However, the upshot is that the coherence of F-type disagreement turns on ones choice of semantic theory and NIC seems to be a promising semantic theory to adopt if one wishes to make sense of the phenomena of disagreement in discourse about matters of taste. How then, can we cash out a sensible account of F-type disagreement? Consider the following disagreement data:

(64)   a. Mary: Grapes are tasty.

        b. John: I disagree, grapes are not tasty.

We start by putting the thin semantic content offered by NIC to work. According to NIC the proposition expressed by (64a) is the proposition that *grapes are tasty*. Mary believes that proposition to be true whilst John believes the negation of that proposition. At this point it clear that the parties in (64) hold conflicting beliefs insofar as John cannot come to believe what Mary believes without giving up his own belief. It is precisely because the parties hold noncotenable beliefs that the parties can be said to disagree at all. Yet,

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[43]Glanzberg 2007: 16.

we want to make sense of the view that no party is at fault despite of their conflicting beliefs. We shall capture the faultless part by deploying the following definition of accuracy:

> Accuracy. A belief or assertion occurring at C is accurate, just in case its content is true as used at C.

On this view, Mary's belief at C that *grapes are tasty* can be accurate with respect to C whereas John's belief at C' that *grapes are not tasty* can be accurate with respect to C'. Our notion of accuracy makes it clear that the parties in (64) are faultless by virtue of having accurate beliefs. More so, we are now in a position to shed our previous definition of F-type disagreement in favor of the following one:

> Two parties have an F-type disagreement only if (A) there is a proposition p such that one party believes p and the other party believes $\neg p$ and (B) the beliefs can both be accurate.

Similarly, we can shed our previous definition of S-type disagreement in favor of the following one:

> Two parties have an S-type disagreement only if (A) there is a proposition p such that one party believes p and the other party believes $\neg p$ and (B) the beliefs cannot both be accurate.

The account of S and F-type disagreement given above provides NIC with considerable explanatory power. For example, NIC offers a fine grained explanation of the difference between the disagreements in the following dialogues:

(65) a. Mary: The *1812 Overture* is written by Tchaikovsky.

  b. John: No, it is written by Stravinsky.

    c.   i. Mary: The *1812 Overture* is beautiful.

        ii. John: I disagree, it is awful.

Our definition of S-type disagreement makes it clear that one party in (65a)-(65b) must be at fault because their beliefs cannot both be accurate. Conversely, our definition of F-type disagreement makes it clear that no party in (65c-i)-(65c-ii) is at fault because the beliefs of both parties can both be accurate. Furthermore, recall that contextualists and expressivists had problems with disagreement data featuring disagreement markers like 'That is not true' and 'I don't believe that'. It is worth pointing out that the account of disagreement presented above can circumvent these issues. Consider these dialogues:

(66)   a. John: My drawings are terrible.

        b. Mary: That is not true, your drawings are beautiful.

(67)   a. Mary: Your pastry is tasty.

        b. John: Unfortunately, that is not true.

(68)   a. Mary: Your drawings are beautiful.

        b. John: That is not true, they are not very good.

According to NIC (66a) expresses the proposition that *John's drawings are terrible*, (67a) expresses the proposition that *John's pastry is tasty* and (68a) expresses the proposition that *John's drawings are beautiful*. On this view, the use of the disagreement marker 'That is not true' in (66b), (67b) and (68b) makes sense because the pronoun 'the' is anaphoric referring to the propositions previously expressed in the dialogue.

It is also worth taking into consideration some dialogues featuring non-declarative sentences. For example, an optative:

(69)   a. Mary: Your drawings are beautiful.

       b. John: If only that were true.

According to NIC Mary's utterance in (69a) expresses the proposition that *John's drawings are beautiful*. In (69b) John is expressing his wish that the proposition Mary previously expressed in (69a) were true. By expressing this wish John is also disagreeing with what Mary asserted.

Finally, consider the following disagreement which is instigated by the interrogative sentence in (70a):

(70)   a. Mary: Is it true that Steve's pastry is tasty?

       b. John: Sure, Steve's pastry is tasty.

       c. Tom: That is not true, Steve's pastry is horrible.

In (70a) Mary is explicitly querying whether the proposition that *Steve's pastry is tasty* is true. In (70b) John asserts the proposition that *Steve's pastry is tasty*. Tom's use of 'That is not true' in (70c) targets the proposition previously expressed by John in (70b).

We have now seen how our notion of accuracy impacts our construal of S and F-type disagreement. We can now explore what consequences our notion of accuracy has for agreement. Consider the following case:

(71)   a. Mary: The *1812 Overture* is written by Tchaikovsky.

       b. John: I agree.

       c.   i. Mary: The *1812 Overture* is beautiful.

           ii. John: I agree.

To me it is clear that the agreement in (71a)-(71b) differs from the agreement in (71c-i)-(71c-ii). In (71a)-(71b) both Mary and John believe the proposition that *the 1812 Overture is written by Tchaikovsky* and the accuracy of their beliefs depend on the world of Mary and John (assuming that they occupy the same world). Following this line of thought we can define the type of agreement illustrated by (71a)-(71b) in the following manner:

> Two parties have a C-type agreement only if (A) there is a proposition that both parties believe and (B) the accuracy of both beliefs depend on the same circumstance of evaluation.

In (71c-i)-(71c-ii) Mary and John believe the proposition that *the 1812 Overture is beautiful*, but the accuracy of their beliefs depend on different circumstances of evaluation. The accuracy of Mary's belief depends on a circumstance containing Mary's standard of taste and the accuracy of John's belief depends on a circumstance containing John's standard of taste. Following this line of thought we can define the type of agreement illustrated by (71c-i)-(71c-ii) in the following manner:

> Two parties have a P-type agreement only if (A) there is a proposition that both parties believe and (B) the accuracy of the beliefs depend on different circumstances of evaluation.

I take the remarks above to suggest that the account of disagreement offered by NIC can accommodate a fairly complex variety of disagreement data. But before we move on I would like to shed some thoughts on the disputes or arguments that sometimes occur when two parties disagree.

First, consider the following S-type disagreement:

(72)　　a.　Mary: The *1812 Overture* was written by Stravinsky.

b. John: I disagree, it was written by Tchaikovsky.

Quite, often the dialogue in (72) will be the beginning of an argument about the authorship of the *1812 Overture*. Furthermore, it is likely that the outcome of the argument will be that Mary concedes that she was wrong because Tchaikovsky did in fact write the *1812 Overture*. Hence, the arguments that ensue from S-type disagreements are often error eliminating. In this way these arguments appear to be worthwhile insofar as we want to eliminate beliefs that represent the world in an inaccurate manner. But in the case of an F-type disagreement no party is at fault. Thus, there is some pressure to explain why speakers engage in arguments about taste when no party is at fault in having the beliefs they have.

Here is what John MacFarlane writes about the interests speakers have when discussing matters of taste:

> We have an interest in sharing standards of taste, senses of humor, and epistemic states with those around us. The reasons are different in each case. In the case of humor, we want people to appreciate our jokes, and we want them to tell jokes we appreciate. In the case of epistemic states, it is manifestly in our interest to share a picture of the world, and to learn from others when they know things that we do not.[44]

I suggest that we follow MacFarlane by assuming that speakers have an interest in having shared standards of taste and by extension that speakers want to have shared beliefs about matters of taste. On this view, two parties with noncotenable beliefs about some matter of taste will tend to argue back and forth in an attempt to sway each other into sharing the same beliefs. With this in mind consider the following dialogue:

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[44]MacFarlane 2007b: 21-22.

(73)   a. Mary: The *1812 Overture* is beautiful piece of music.

        b. John: I disagree, its not beautiful at all.

It is not hard to imagine that a dialogue like (73) constitutes the beginning of an argument about the beauty of the *1812 Overture*. For example, Mary could respond to John by saying 'But have you noticed the subtleties of the string arrangement or the intricacy of the rhythm?'. Perhaps this remark is sufficient to sway John into conceding that the The *1812 Overture* is beautiful. After all, it is not unusual that arguments about taste end up producing agreement.

2.9   The Objection from Incompleteness

In the previous section we saw that NIC purports to provide a satisfactory account of disagreement in discourse about taste. A vital component of that account is the idea that there are propositions that are not only, modally and temporally neutral, but also, taste-neutral. Positing such propositions makes it possible to say that someone who believes the proposition that *oatmeal is tasty* and someone who believes the proposition that *oatmeal is not tasty* have a doxastic disagreement by virtue of holding noncotenable beliefs. However, not all philosophers are willing to countenance widespread propositional neutrality. For example, this passage from Frege is often taken to be a rejection of temporally neutral propositions:

> If someone wished to cite, say, 'The total number of inhabitants of the German Empire is 52 000 000', as a counter-example to the timelessness of thoughts, I should reply: This sentence is not a complete expression of a thought at all, since it lacks a time determination. If we add such a determination, for exam-

ple, 'at noon on 1 January 1897 by central European time', then the thought is either true, in which case it is always, or better, timelessly, true, or it is false and in that case it is false without qualification.[45]

In the passage above Frege uses 'thought' to mean roughly what we call 'proposition'. Hence, the point is that sentences which express insufficiently specific contents are incomplete in the sense that they do not express full blooded propositions. More recently Kent Bach has argued that sentences containing predicates of taste express a semantic content that lacks some vital piece of information, necessary to produce a truth evaluable proposition.[46]. If Bach is right we have made a mistake in assuming that the contents expressed by sentences containing predicates of taste are truth evaluable. We have also made a mistake in taking such contents to be suitable objects of belief and disagreement. How can we respond to the objection from incompleteness?

There are at least two worries about the objection from incompleteness. First, John Mac-Farlane has pointed out that if we accept the view that unspecific contents are incomplete we will proliferate incompleteness excessively. In order to see why, we can consider the following example:

(74)   Mary: It is zero degrees Celsius.

Even if we take the content expressed by (74) to be *it is zero degrees Celsius at the base of the Eiffel Tower at noon local time on 22 February 2005* this content is still modally neutral and therefore in a sense incomplete. Yet, virtually all prominent semantic theories take the content expressed by (74) to be modally neutral. Thus, if the objection from incompleteness is to be viable there is pressure to explain why only time and taste-neutral

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[45]Frege 1979: 135.
[46]Bach 2006.

contents yield incompleteness whilst modally neutral contents remain complete.

Second, the view that sentences containing predicates of taste do not express propositions do not seem to sit well with the way we talk. Consider the following example:

(75) John: My drawings are terrible.

We have previously seen in §2.4 that speakers routinely respond to assertions of (75) by saying something like 'That is not true, your drawings are beautiful'. If (75) does not express a truth evaluable proposition it would seem that speakers who ascribe truth or falsity to (75) are somehow unable to recognize that the content expressed by (75) cannot be true or false. I take it to be unlikely that otherwise competent speakers should be guilty of such widespread systematic error when talking about matters of taste. With these considerations in mind I do not believe that the objection from incompleteness should deter us from positing taste-neutral propositions in order to make sense of the data from discourse about taste.

Chapter 3

Relativism versus NIC

3.1 Introduction

In the preface to his book *Assessment Sensitivity: Relative Truth and its Applications* John MacFarlane writes:

> Analytic philosophers are now considerably more open to relativism about truth than they were when I began this project. My initial aim was merely to place relativist views on the table as real options. Many of those who initially accused these views of incoherence have come around to regarding them as merely empirically false.[1]

MacFarlane is right that relativism about truth has been rejuvenated as a viable position amongst philosophers. In particular the application of relative truth to areas of natural language semantics is in vogue. The relativist systems of philosophers such as John Mac-

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[1]MacFarlane 2014: vii.

Farlane, Peter Lasersohn, Max Kölbel and Tamina Stephenson are all motivated by the claim that they can do a better job at accommodating the semantic data from discourse about matters of taste than competing semantic theories.[2] For example, relativists are quick to point out that unlike contextualism, relativism can offer an satisfactory account of disagreement in discourse about taste. More recently, MacFarlane has argued that his brand of relativism is necessary in order to offer a satisfactory account of retraction in discourse about taste. In this chapter my attention will not be directed towards questions concerning the coherence of relativism. Instead I will explore whether the semantic data supports the view that the relativist semantics has significant explanatory benefits when compared to NIC.

In §3.2 I explore Peter Lasersohn's relativist system. In particular I identify the key areas where Lasersohn's system deviates from standard Kaplan-style systems. In §3.3 I show that Lasersohn's system is motivated by the claim that it can provide an account of fault-less disagreement. I then argue that NIC can provide an account of faultless disagreement at a lower cost by maintaining the orthodox view that the circumstance of the context of use is the circumstance relevant in order to evaluated sentences for truth. In §3.4 I turn to Tamina Stephenson's relativist semantics. Stephenson has drawn attention to disagreement data which she argues that neither the relativist semantics of Lasersohn nor the semantics offered by NIC suffice to accommodate. I object that Stephenson's interpretation of the disagreement data is flawed. Furthermore, I argue that Stephenson's relativist semantics makes wrong predictions about the potential resolvability of disagreements in discourse about taste. In §3.5 I outline the accounts of assertion given by Lasersohn and Stephenson and argue that both accounts are associated with potential worries. Further-more I suggest that the semantics of NIC can be equipped with a pragmatic setup which

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[2]See, MacFarlane 2014, Lasersohn 2005, Kölbel 2002 and Stephenson 2007.

circumvents the worries associated with the accounts of assertion favored by Lasersohn and Stephenson.

In §3.6 I explore John MacFarlane's assessment sensitive relativism. MacFarlane takes the propositions expressed by sentences containing predicates of taste to be assessment sensitive. The truth of such propositions depend not only on features of the context of use but also on features of the context of assessment. In §3.7 I explore MacFarlane's account of disagreement. According to MacFarlane the account of disagreement offered by NIC is too weak insofar as it allows that the beliefs of two disputing parties to both be accurate. To avoid the latter we should stipulate that it is the taste of the assessor that is relevant to the accuracy of all beliefs concerning taste. By making this stipulation relativists can offer an account of disagreement where the beliefs of the disputing parties cannot both be accurate. However, we have to keep in mind that the beliefs of the disputing parties remain accurate from a metalinguistic perspective. Thus it is not obvious that capturing preclusion of joint accuracy in the relativists sense should be considered a desideratum. In §3.8 I explore MacFarlane's account of assertion and retraction. According to MacFarlane a retraction of a previous assertion is obligatory whenever the asserted sentence is not true at the context of use and the context of assessment. Rival semantic theories cannot accommodate this commitment to retract. I argue that the relativist account of retraction does not sit well with the observation that there are competent speakers who do not recognize that they have a requirement to retract in the cases where the relativists tell us that a retraction is mandatory.

3.2 Lasersohn's Relativism

As with NIC it is useful to consider Lasersohn's brand of relativism as an expansion of the system developed by David Kaplan in the paper "Demonstratives".[3] Because of this I start this section by outlining Kaplan's framework. Then I show in what ways Lasersohn's system expands from orthodoxy.

Recall that in Kaplan's framework expressions are associated with two kinds of meaning. The first kind of meaning is called content and it can be represented as a function from circumstances of evaluation to appropriate extensions. In the case of a sentence the content is a proposition and its extension at a circumstance of evaluation is a truth value. The second kind of meaning is called character. The character of an expression determines its content relative to a context and it can be represented as a function from contexts to contents. We can illustrate the view above by considering the following sentence:

(76)   Picasso is painting.

According to the view above a use of (76) at C would express the proposition that *Picasso is painting*. Notice that this proposition is not about any particular world or time. That is, the proposition expressed by (76) is modally and temporally neutral. Nonetheless, the proposition in question only has a truth value with respect to a world and time. To accommodate the modal and temporal neutrality of (76) Kaplan settled on circumstances of evaluation consisting of $\langle w, t \rangle$ pairs where w is a world and t is a time.[4]

So far we have seen that Kaplan offers a two-stage semantic system. In the first stage, sentences combine with contexts of use to express propositions. In the second stage

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[3]Kaplan 1977.

[4]Kaplan 1977: 502.

propositions are evaluated for truth with respect to circumstances of evaluation consisting of $\langle w, t \rangle$ pairs. But what circumstance of evaluation is relevant when evaluating the truth of (76) as used at C? Kaplan maintained that the circumstance of the context of use was the relevant circumstance when evaluating a use of (76) for truth:

> If C is a context, then an occurrence of ϕ in C is true iff the content expressed by ϕ in this context is true when evaluated with respect to the circumstance of the context.[5]

Notice the twofold role played by the context C in Kaplan's system. First the context determines the propositional content expressed by a sentence at a context. Subsequently the context initializes the parameters of the circumstance, setting them to be the circumstance of the context.

Now that we have sketched Kaplan's framework we can explore the adjustments we have to make in order to obtain the relativist system of Peter Lasersohn. Lasersohn's starting point is Kaplan's distinction between character and content. With this distinction in mind consider the following sentence:

(77)   Oranges are tasty.

Lasersohn takes the content expressed by a use of (77) at C to be the proposition that *Oranges are tasty*. This proposition is not only modally and temporally neutral, but also perspective-neutral. In order to provide a satisfactory semantics for (77) Lasersohn embraces Kaplan's advice that we can add parameters to our circumstances if needed. Lasersohn's choice is to expand Kaplan's $\langle w, t \rangle$ pair into the following triple $\langle w, t, j \rangle$ where w is a world, t, is a time and j is a judge.[6] Now the proposition expressed by (77) will have

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[5]Kaplan 1977: 522.

[6]Lasersohn 2005: 665.

truth values with respect to world-time-judge triples. The judge parameter differs some-
what from the taste parameter employed by NIC but for the present moment it is fruitful
to think of the judge parameter as doing the same work as the taste parameter we are
already accustomed to. It is clear then, that when we only look at the parameters em-
ployed by NIC and Lasersohn's relativism there are virtually no important differences
between the two positions. But when we look at how those parameters are used there
are some crucial differences. Proponents of NIC define truth at a context in the following
manner:

> An occurrence of ϕ at C is true iff the proposition expressed by ϕ at C is true
> at C, $\langle w_c, t_c, g_c \rangle$, where w_c is the world of C, t_c is the time of C and g_c is the
> taste of C.

Notice that the context of use has a circumstance determining role in the sense that it
tells us what world, time and taste to look at when evaluating the use of a sentence for
truth. Thus, NIC preserves the circumstance determining role of the context of use that
is prominent in Kaplan's original framework. Contrastingly, Lasersohn rejects the view
that the situation of utterance picks out a unique judge:

> In order to maintain an authentically subjective assignment of truth values to
> sentences containing predicates of personal taste, we must allow that the ob-
> jective facts of the situation of utterance do not uniquely determine a judge.[7]

The consequence is that there is no objectively correct judge relative to which we must
evaluate a use of (77) at C. Rather, the judge parameter is pragmatically determined by
the perspective adopted by the assessor. For example, if an assessor evaluates a use of (77)
with herself serving as judge, the assessor adopts an autocentric perspective. According

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[7]Lasersohn 2005: 669.

to Lasersohn, the autocentric perspective is the perspective most frequently adopted by assessors. For example, speakers ordinarily adopt the autocentric perspective when they make assertions. Thus, if a speaker, say Diane, is to make a justified assertion of (77) it is usually a criteria that the proposition expressed by (77) is true when Diane is the judge. However, there are situations where speakers might assess and even assert (77) from an alternative exocentric perspective.[8] If an assessor evaluates or asserts (77) with a salient agent other than herself as judge, the assessor adopts an exocentric perspective. Finally, Lasersohn maintains that speakers can adopt an acentric perspective where no particular individual serves as judge. When an assessor takes on the acentric perspective the proposition expressed by (77) cannot be evaluated for truth:

> This accords well with our intuitions, I think; 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. Note that despite the fact that an acentric perspective precludes the truth-assessment of such sentences, it does not render them uninterpretable which is as expected under our formalism, since the content of such sentences does not vary with the judge.[9]

Clearly, Lasersohn's use of the judge parameter breaks with the Kaplan-style semantics where the context of use always picks out a circumstance of evaluation with a privileged position when the use of a sentence is to be evaluated for truth. How then, does Lasersohn motivate his break with the Kaplan-style framework? This questions serves as the starting point for the discussion in the next section.

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[8]Lasersohn 2005: 673.
[9]Lasersohn 2005: 670.

3.3 Lasersohn's Relativism and Disagreement

In the previous section we saw that in Lasersohn's system the situation of utterance does not privilege any unique judge when the use of a sentence containing a predicate of taste is to be evaluated for truth. Instead Lasersohn contends that the judge parameter is pragmatically determined by the perspectives adopted by the assessors. But how does Lasersohn motivate his use of the judge parameter?

Consider the following disagreement data:

(78)   a. Mary: There are ten strawberries on the table.

      b. John: No, there are only nine.

(79)   a. Mary: Strawberries are tasty.

      b. John: I disagree, strawberries are overly sweet.

Lasersohn contends that the parties in (78) and (79) are disagreeing. Yet, the parties in (79) are having a different kind of disagreement than the parties in (78). In (78) at least one of the parties are making a mistake whereas no party in (79) seems to be at fault. Here is how Lasersohn describes the disagreement in (79):

> 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.[10]

Hence, Lasersohn agrees with us that the parties in (79) are having an F-type disagreement. Furthermore, Lasersohn agrees with us on the overall strategy to pursue in order to accommodate the F-type disagreement exhibited by (79):

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[10]Lasersohn 2005: 662.

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. This is not at all hard to work out formally, and in fact can be implemented in Kaplan's system with a relatively small adjustment.[11]

As far as I can tell the strategy described above is more or less the same strategy embraced by NIC to make sense of the disagreement exhibited by (79). The problem then, is that Lasersohn's approach gives us a more complex semantic machinery that we need in order to carry out the strategy described above. That is, we do not need the complexity of Lasersohn's system in order to accommodate the F-type disagreement in (79). Let's consider an example to illustrate the point:

(80) a. Mary: Sushi is tasty.

  b. John: I disagree, sushi is not tasty at all.

In Lasersohn's system the proposition expressed by Mary in (80a) is the proposition that *sushi is tasty*. Mary believes that this proposition is true whilst John believes the negation of that proposition. It is because the semantics offered by Lasersohn allows Mary and John to hold noncotenable beliefs concerning the taste of sushi that the parties can be said to have a doxastic disagreement. Furthermore, Lasersohn can capture the intuition that the disagreement between Mary and John is faultless because the content of Mary's belief is true when Mary serves as the relevant judge and the content of John's belief is true when John serves as the relevant judge. So far I have no central objections to

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[11]Lasersohn 2005: 662.

Lasersohn's approach. However, as we saw in §3.2 Lasersohn goes on to stipulate that there is no correct judge to look at when we are evaluating the truth of an actual use of the sentence in (80a). The problem is that this feature of Lasersohn's system, which is arguably the system's most radical deviation from traditional Kaplan-style semantics, is not necessary in order to give an account of the F-type disagreement between the parties in (80). NIC maintains the following contention: If a sentence ϕ is used at a context C then it is the circumstance of C that is the relevant circumstance in order to evaluate the truth of ϕ at C. This feature does not provide an obstacle on the road to handle F-type disagreement. In NIC it is fully possible to maintain that Mary's belief at C that *sushi is tasty* can be accurate with respect to C, whereas John's belief at C' that *sushi not tasty* can be accurate with respect to C'. In this way, NIC can give an account of the F-type disagreement in (80) whilst deviating less from Kaplan's semantic framework than Lasersohn's relativism does.

3.4 Stephenson's Relativism

In the previous section we saw that both the relativist semantics developed by Peter Lasersohn and the semantics of NIC provide the apparatus needed to accommodate F-type disagreement in discourse about taste. In order to adjudicate between the two semantics I suggested that we have a methodological incentive to favor NIC because of its greater parsimony. However, Tamina Stephenson has drawn attention to disagreement data which she argues that neither NIC nor Lasersohn's variety of relativism can accommodate. In order to do better, Stephenson presents an alternative relativist semantics which allegedly offers a correct account of the disagreement data. In this section I outline Stephenson's relativist semantics and the disagreement data she takes to favor

her semantics. I then offer objections to Stephenson's interpretation of the disagreement data and argue that Stephenson's relativist semantics does not offer any benefits when it comes to making sense of disagreement in discourse about taste.

Stephenson asks us to consider the following disagreement data:

(81)   a. Mary: Tuna is tasty.

        b. John: I disagree, Tuna is not tasty.[12]

A natural explanation of the disagreement illustrated by (81) starts out by stipulating that Mary in (81a) believes the proposition that *Tuna is tasty* and John in (81b) believes the negation of that proposition. Thus, the parties in (81) disagree by virtue of holding noncotenable beliefs about the taste of tuna. Both the relativist semantics offered by Lasersohn and the semantics offered by NIC possess the means to stipulate that the parties in (81) disagree by virtue of holding noncotenable beliefs about the taste of tuna. However, Stephenson maintains that these semantics wrongly predict that we should *always* interpret dialogues like (81) as illustrations of disagreement. In order to see why the dialogue in (81) does not always illustrate disagreement, Stephenson asks us to consider that the dialogue takes place in a context where Mary and John are feeding their cat Tom.[13] In this context Stephenson argues that there is a reading of (81) where Mary's utterance in (81a) expresses the proposition that *tuna is tasty to Tom* whereas John's utterance in (81b) expresses the proposition that *tuna is not tasty to the judge* where John serves as the judge of the index. When the dialogue in (81) is interpreted in this manner the parties in (81) do not hold noncotenable beliefs and by extension they do not doxastically disagree.[14] In order to accommodate this interpretation of the disagreement data

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[12]Stephenson 2007: 521-522.
[13]Stephenson 2007: 521-522.
[14]Stephenson 2007: 521-522.

Stephenson offers an alternative, more flexible, relativist semantics.

Stephenson starts out by adopting Lasersohn's idea that sentences containing predicates of taste express propositions that have truth values with respect to $\langle w, t, j \rangle$ triples where w is a world t is a time and j is a judge. Thus, Stephenson embraces the view that we need an additional parameter in order to make sense of discourse about taste. But from this point on Stephenson makes multiple innovations to the syntax and semantics of the predicates of taste. First, Stephenson stipulates that 'tasty' and 'beautiful' are two-place predicates. The extra argument place can be filled in three different ways. First, the extra argument place can be filled by using a regular pronoun as in the following sentence:

(82) Tuna is tasty to Mary.

Second, if a particular individual is salient the extra argument place can be filled by a null pronoun pro_x. If the argument place is filled with pro_x a use of 'Tuna is tasty' where Mary is the salient individual will express the same semantic content as a use of (82). Third, the extra argument place can be filled by a special silent nominal PRO_J. When 'tasty' takes PRO_J as object the resulting content is *tasty for the judge*.[15] This content encodes judge dependency because an occurrence of PRO_J at C will pick out the judge of the index of C.[16]

With her novel semantics Stephenson can reinterpret the following dialogue:

(83) a. Mary: Tuna is tasty.

   b. John: I disagree, Tuna is not tasty.[17]

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[15]Stephenson 2007: 518.

[16]Stephenson 2007: 518.

[17]Stephenson 2007: 521-522.

According to the semantics offered by Stephenson both (83a) and (83b) have two possible interpretations depending on whether the extra argument place is filled with a null pronoun pro$_x$ referring to a salient individual or the silent nominal PRO$_J$. This allows for interpretations of the dialogue in (83) where the parties are disagreeing and interpretations where the parties are not disagreeing. For example, if both John and Mary use pro$_x$ the proposition expressed by (83a) might be *tuna is tasty to Mary* and the proposition expressed by (83b) might be *tuna is tasty to John.* If this is the case the parties are not holding noncotenable beliefs and by extension the parties are not having a doxastic disagreement. On the other hand, if both Mary and John fill the argument place with PRO$_J$ the parties in (83) will have noncotenable beliefs and by extension the parties will have a doxastic disagreement of F-type.

Certainly Stephenson's framework bestows the predicates of taste an impressive semantic flexibility. Nonetheless, I have some objections to Stephenson. First, Stephenson assumes that it is a desideratum to explain why there are interpretations where the parties in (83) are not disagreeing. However, it is not at all clear that this should be considered a desideratum. On the contrary, the claim that there are readings of (83) where the parties are are not disagreeing seems very strained. Second, the flexibility of Stephenson's semantics has some unwanted consequences concerning the resolvability of disagreements involving pro$_x$. In order to appreciate the issues that flow from pro$_x$ we need to compare the felicity of the following dialogues:

(84)　a. Mary: Tuna is tasty to Tom.

　　　　b. John: Yuk, I disagree, tuna is not tasty at all.

　　　　c. Mary: Listen, I only said that tuna is tasty to Tom.

(85)　a. Mary: Tuna is tasty.

    b. John: Yuk, I disagree, tuna is not tasty at all.

    c. Mary: Listen, I only said that tuna is tasty to Tom.

In (84a) Mary is filling the extra argument place of 'tasty' with a regular pronoun resulting in the proposition that *Tuna is tasty to Tom*. On the other hand John in (85b) is filling the extra argument place with PRO_J. Clearly, then the parties in (84a) are merely talking past each other. Because the parties are merely talking past each other Mary in (84c) can resolve the dispute by clarifying that she was only talking about Tom's taste. Furthermore, it is fairly easy to see that this clarification is felicitous. On Stephenson's view there are situations where the sentences in the dialogue illustrated by (84) and the sentences in the dialogue illustrated by (85) express the same semantic content. All it takes in Stephenson's framework is that Mary in (85a) fills the argument place with pro_x referring to her salient cat Tom. John does not recognize that Mary uses pro_x and fills his use of 'tasty' with PRO_J. In (85c) Mary clarifies that John's use of the disagreement marker 'I disagree' is out of place because she was only saying that tuna is tasty to Tom. The problem is that there is a large discrepancy between the felicity of (85c) and (84c). Whereas Mary's clarification in (84c) is clearly felicitous, the clarification in (85c) is not. How can there be such a large discrepancy in felicity if the sentences of both dialogues express the same semantic content? It seems then, that Stephenson's null pronoun pro_x leads to issues that are similar to those we explored in §2.6.

3.5   Some Worries About Assertion

The speech act of assertion has played an important role in motivating the relativist semantics of both Peter Lasersohn and Tamina Stephenson. In this section I argue that

there are objections to both Lasersohn's and Stephenson's views about assertion. I then argue that the account of assertion offered by NIC can circumvent the issues associated with the relativist accounts of assertion.

We start out by considering the following examples:

(86)   John: Licorice is tasty.

(87)   a. Mary: How's that new brand of cat food you bought?

      b. John: It's tasty, because the cat has eaten a lot of it.

In (86) we naturally take John's assertion to be warranted if licorice is tasty to John. But Peter Lasersoh has pointed out that in cases like (87) we naturally take John's assertion in (87b) to be warranted if the food in question is tasty to someone other than the asserter.[18] In the case of (87) John's assertion would be warranted if the new brand of cat food is tasty to the contextually salient cat. In order to make sense of John's assertion in (87b) Lasersohn adopts the distinction between autocentric and exocentric perspectives that we explored in §3.2. In the autocentric perspective an assertion is warranted if the content of that assertion is true when the asserter serves as the judge. In the exocentric perspective an assertion is warranted if the content of the assertion is true when the judge is some salient individual other than the judge.[19] Thus, the exocentric perspective makes it possible for Lasersohn to stipulate that John's assertion in (86) is warranted because the content of the assertion is true when the contextually salient cat serves as judge.

Several commentators, like John MacFarlane and Tamina Stephenson have pointed out that it is only natural to assert that something is tasty if the asserter has first hand knowledge that the food is tasty to the asserter. On this view it is an oddity of Lasersohn's

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[18]Lasersohn 2005: 673.

[19]Lasersohn 2005: 673.

system that the exocentric perspective allows speakers to assert that *licorice is tasty* even in cases where licorice is only tasty to a salient individual other than the asserter.

Tamina Stephenson has argued that her relativist semantics can offer a better account of assertion. As we have seen Stephenson takes 'tasty' to be a two place predicate where the extra argument place can be filled by the special nominal PRO_j, the null pronoun pro_x or a regular pronoun as in 'tasty to Sal'. In order to avoid the issues associated with Lasersohn's exocentric perspective Stephenson stipulates that uses of 'licorice is tasty' which are filled with PRO_j can only be asserted if the assertoric content is true when the asserter serves as the judge of the index.[20] Subsequently, Stephenson argues that in cases like (87) John's use of 'tasty' is filled with the null pronoun pro_x. In the case of (87) this pronoun refers to the salient cat.

I concede that Stephenson's approach circumvents the issues associated with Lasersohn's exocentric perspective. I also concede that Stephenson's null pronoun pro_x makes it possible to explain cases like (87). But as we have seen in §3.4 Stephenson's pro_x is associated with its own issues. Hence, by adopting Stephenson's pro_x we would only trade one problem for another.

How then, can we make sense of cases like (87). First I want to emphasize that both Lasersohn and Stephenson assume that we should make sense of cases like (87) via the semantics given to 'tasty'. What I would like to suggest is that we follow John MacFarlane by looking to the field of pragmatics for a solution to cases like (87).

Here is a pragmatic view that nearly everyone should be able to accept: the meaning a speaker intends to communicate by uttering a sentence *S* often goes substantially beyond the semantic content of *S*. If we combine this pragmatic view with the semantics of NIC

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[20]Stephenson 2007: 509.

we can make sense of (87). First, according to the semantics of NIC the content asserted by John in (87b) is something along the lines of *the new cat food is tasty, because the cat has eaten a lot of it.* However, in light of the pragmatic context we understand that what John intends to assert goes beyond the semantic content of his utterance. Presumably, the intended content is something along the lines of *the new cat food is tasty to the cat, because he has eaten a lot of it.* Furthermore, Mary is likely to understand that this is what John intends to communicate because it is obvious from the context. Based on such considerations I believe MacFarlane is right when he claims that we should not be surprised by this kind of sloppy language use:

> This kind of laziness is to be expected. We tend not to make things explicit
> unless our audience is likely to misunderstand us.[21]

To sum up. Cases like (87) need not be explained by positing complex semantic mechanisms. Rather, cases like (87) can be taken to illustrate that there are circumstances where speakers express themselves with a low level of precision whilst managing to communicate the intended meaning.

3.6 Assessment Sensitive Relativism

As with NIC and Lasersohn's relativism it is useful to consider John MacFarlane's assessment sensitive relativism as an expansion of the system developed by David Kaplan in the paper "Demonstratives".[22] In this section I quickly sketch a Kaplan-style semantic framework and show how to expand it in order to obtain MacFarlane's assessment sensitive relativism. The sketch should help to clarify how Lasersohn's relativism, Mac-

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[21]MacFarlane 2014: 156.

[22]Kaplan 1977.

Farlane's relativism and NIC all represent different strategies on how to expand Kaplan's framework to handle discourse about matters of taste.

As we saw in §3.2 Kaplan takes the proposition expressed by the following sentence to be modally and temporally neutral:

(88)   Picasso is painting.

To accommodate the modal and temporal neutrality of (88) Kaplan employs circumstances of evaluation consisting of $\langle w, t \rangle$ pairs where w is a world and t is a time.[23] The proposition expressed by (88) is then taken to have different truth values relative to different circumstances of evaluation. Furthermore Kaplan maintains that the circumstance of the context of use is the relevant circumstance to look at when evaluating a use of (88) for truth.[24] In Kaplan's system then, the context of use plays a bifurcated role. First, the context of use determines the propositional content expressed by a sentence in that context. In Kaplan's paper this part is described as a function from contexts to contents.[25] Second, the context of use initializes the parameters of the circumstances of evaluation, setting them to be the world and time of the context of use.

Now consider the following sentence:

(1) Rhubarb is tasty

MacFarlane maintains that the proposition expressed by (1) is not only temporally and modally neutral but also taste-neutral.[26] In order to accommodate the taste-neutrality of (1) MacFarlane expands Kaplan's $\langle w, t \rangle$ pairs into $\langle w, t, g \rangle$ triples where w is a world, t is

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[23]Kaplan 1977: 502.
[24]Kaplan 1977: 522.
[25]Kaplan 1977: 505.
[26]MacFarlane 2014: 81.

a time and g is a taste. If we now compare the parameters employed by NIC and the relativist systems of Lasersohn and MacFarlane it becomes clear that there is considerable overlap. Both NIC and MacFarlane's relativist system use a $\langle w, t, g \rangle$ triple whilst Lasersohn deploys a $\langle w, t, j \rangle$ triple. Hence, the core differences between the three systems cannot be seen by merely looking at the composition of the circumstances they employ. Rather, one must look at how the parameters of the circumstances are put to use. As we have seen NIC privileges the circumstance of the context of use when evaluating the use of a sentences for truth. Lasersohn dismisses this privilege by stipulating that the judge parameter is not uniquely determined by objective features of the utterance situation.[27] MacFarlane on the other hand makes a point of deploying a context of assessment in addition to a context of use. When evaluating a use of (1) the context of use is taken to determine what world and time to look at and the context of assessment is taken to determine what taste to look at. By deploying two contexts MacFarlane can define truth at a context of use and assessment in the following manner:

> A sentence ϕ is true as used at a context C_1 and assessed from a context C_2
> iff the proposition expressed by ϕ at C_1 is true at C_1, $\langle w_{c_1}, t_{c_1}, g_{c_2} \rangle$, where w_{c_1}
> is the world of C_1, t_{c_1} is the time of C_1 and g_{c_2} is the taste of the agent of C_2.[28]

In the definition above truth is doubly relativized to a context of use and a context of assessment and this allows (1) to be true as used at a context C_1 and assessed from C_1, but false as used at C_1 and assessed from C_2. Certainly, the assessment sensitive truth predicate is a technical novelty; but why would we want to deploy such a complex truth predicate? In the next subsection I explore the motivation for adopting MacFarlane's brand of relativism.

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[27]Lasersohn 2005: 669.

[28]MacFarlane 2014: 67.

3.7 Assessment Sensitive Disagreement

MacFarlane's assessment sensitive relativism is partly motivated by considerations concerning disagreement.[29] In order to appreciate the virtues MacFarlane takes his account of disagreement to offer, it is useful to compare MacFarlane's account of disagreement with the account of disagreement offered by NIC.

We start the comparison by considering the following disagreement data:

(89)   a.   Mary: Licorice is tasty.

        b.   John: I disagree, licorice is not tasty.

We have seen that the parties in (89) disagree because Mary believes the proposition that *licorice is tasty* and John believes the negation of that proposition. That is, the parties disagree by virtue of having noncotenable beliefs. Thus, John cannot come to believe what Mary believes without giving up his own belief. But even though the parties have noncotenable beliefs, it seems that no party is at fault by having the beliefs they have. In order to explain how the parties can have noncotenable beliefs without being at fault I have suggested that we deploy the following definition of accuracy:

> Accuracy. A belief or assertion occurring at C is accurate, just in case its content is true as used at C.

On this view, Mary's belief at C that *licorice is tasty* can be accurate with respect to C whereas John's belief at C' that *licorice is not tasty* can be accurate with respect to C'. Hence, this notion of accuracy makes it clear that the parties in (89) are faultless by virtue of having accurate beliefs. With the considerations above in mind I have argued

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[29]MacFarlane 2014: 132.

that the parties in (89) can be said to have the following type of disagreement:

> Two parties have an F-type disagreement only if (A) there is a proposition
> *p* such that one party believes *p* and the other party believes ¬*p* and (B) the
> beliefs can both be accurate.

MacFarlane acknowledges that NIC offers a suitable explanation of the disagreement in (89) if we assume that the parties in (89) are having an F-type disagreement.[30] Nonetheless, MacFarlane also refers to the F-type disagreement captured by NIC as faux disagreement.[31] MacFarlane's concern is that the notion of F-type disagreement proposed by NIC offers too little conflict between the parties in (89:

> Although we can concede that doxastic noncotenability is a kind of disagreement, we can now see that it is not going to give us everything we might have
> wanted in a notion of disagreement. For, in at least one sense of disagreement
> that we care deeply about, when two people disagree in virtue of having certain beliefs, those beliefs cannot both be accurate. If two people disagree,
> they can't both be right.[32]

What MacFarlane wants is an interpretation of the disagreement in (89) that is more akin to the disagreement in (90):

(90)   a.   Mary: The Sun is at the center of the solar system.

   b.   John: I disagree, the Sun is not at the center of the solar system.

Let us assume that the proposition that (90) expresses the proposition that *the Sun is at the center of the solar system* and that this proposition is temporal so that it has truth

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[30]MacFarlane 2014: 134.

[31]MacFarlane 2007b: 15.

[32]MacFarlane 2014: 126.

values relative to worlds and times. Furthermore, Mary asserts this proposition whilst John asserts its negation. Because the proposition that *the Sun is at the center of the solar system* and its negation cannot both be true at the same world and same time, the beliefs of Mary and John cannot both be accurate and by extension Mary and John cannot both be right.

In order to arrive at a notion of disagreement where the beliefs of the parties in (89) cannot both be accurate, MacFarlane starts out by replacing our notion of accuracy with the following one:

> Accuracy. An attitude or speech act occurring at C_1 is accurate, as assessed from a context C_2, just in case its content is true as used at C_1 and assessed from C_2.[33]

According to the notion of accuracy given above, at any context, it is the taste of the assessor that is relevant to the accuracy of all beliefs about what is tasty and what is beautiful. If we analyze the disagreement in (89) in terms of MacFarlane's notion of accuracy, we get the result that Mary's belief is accurate whilst John's belief is inaccurate as assessed from Mary's context. Conversely, assessed from John's context, his belief is accurate and Mary's belief is inaccurate. Finally, because the beliefs of Mary and John cannot both be accurate MacFarlane can claim that the disagreement in (89) satisfies the following condition:

> Preclusion of joint accuracy. The accuracy of my attitudes (as assessed from any context) precludes the accuracy of your attitude or speech act (as assessed from that same context).[34]

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[33]MacFarlane 2014: 127.
[34]MacFarlane 2014: 129.

At this point we have to ask: should we consider it a desideratum to capture preclusion of joint accuracy in MacFarlane's sense? As far as I can tell there is at least two significant reasons not to accept preclusion of joint accuracy as a desideratum. First, I am not entirely convinced that capturing preclusion of joint accuracy gives the relativists a more robust notion of disagreement than the one offered by NIC. Keep in mind that when accuracy is made assessment sensitive joint accuracy is precluded, but joint reflexive accuracy is not precluded:

> Preclusion of joint reflexive accuracy. The accuracy of my attitudes (as assessed from my context) precludes the accuracy of your attitude or speech act (as assessed from your context).

Thus, relativists allow that Mary's belief in (89a) might be accurate as assessed from her context of assessment whilst John's belief in (89b) might be accurate assessed from John's context. But that means that on the relativist view there is still a sense in which the beliefs of both parties can both be accurate and both right.

Second, the disagreement data does not suggest that we need to capture preclusion of joint accuracy. The disagreement data that we have previously considered only suggests that the disputing parties have noncotenable beliefs and that no party is at fault in having the beliefs they have. But we can explain these features about the data without capturing preclusion of joint accuracy. Thus, when we emphasize that the primary concern of a semantic theory is to explain the data with as few resources as possible, there is a burgeoning worry about the motivation behind MacFarlane's account of disagreement. The worry is that assessment sensitive relativism proliferates the semantic machinery even more than NIC without offering any clear-cut explanatory benefits with regard to the disagreement data.

3.8 Assertion and Retraction

Michael Dummett claimed that we cannot fully understand the significance that the concept of truth has for a language *L* merely by defining what it takes for sentences of *L* to be true. In order to understand why this is so Dummett asks us to compare truth with the concept of winning in the game of chess.[35] Suppose that a person, say Annette, knows that White can win at chess by putting Black's king under threat of inescapable capture, by making Black run out of time or by making Black resign the game. Surely in such a case we would say that Annette understands what it takes for a player to win in the game of chess. But if Annette only had this knowledge she would miss out on the fact that players conventionally aim to win.[36] Similarly, imagine a scenario where Annette, understands what it takes for a sentence to count as a true sentence of a language *L*. In such a scenario we would say that Annette understands what it takes for sentences of *L* to be true. However, if Anette only had this information she would fail to recognize that speakers of *L* conventionally aim to assert only true sentences. Hence, Annette would fail to grasp the significance that the concept of truth has for speakers of *L*. Based on such considerations about the relation between truth and assertion Dummett makes the following suggestion:

> what has to be added to a truth-definition for the sentences of a language, if
> the notion of truth is to be explained, is a description of the linguistic activity
> of making assertions; and this is a task of enormous complexity.[37]

MacFarlane embraces Dummett's suggestion and reasons that what we need in order to grasp the significance of assessment-relative truth is to identify what effects assessment-

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[35]Dummett 1959: 142-143.

[36]Dummett 1959: 142-143. See also, MacFarlane 2014: 98-99.

[37]Dummett 1978: 20.

relative truth has on the linguistic practice of assertion.[38]

MacFarlane starts out by deploying a traditional distinction between the force and content of an assertion where the content of an assertion is the proposition that is being asserted and force of the assertion declares that the asserted proposition is true.[39] Once the distinction between force and content is up and running MacFarlane goes into more contested territory by taking on the view that the speech act of assertion is governed by constitutive rules.[40] Providing a constitutive rule for assertion is to provide a rule that governs every performance of assertion. No act which is not subject to the constitutive rule can count as an assertion.[41] After discarding some alternatives MacFarlane suggests that the following rule is constitutive of assertion:

> (A*). An agent is permitted to assert that p at context C_1 only if p is true as used at C_1 and assessed from C_1.[42]

What (A*) tells us is that an agent, say Susan, is permitted to assert p only if p is true at the context of use and context of assessment occupied by Susan. At face value this contention seems to sit well with the way speakers generally behave. Furthermore, (A*) shows us some of the pragmatic significance of assessment-relative truth. With (A*) in mind, recall that I have previously suggested that we equip a semantics of NIC with the following assertion rule:

> (A). An agent is permitted to assert that p at context C only if p is true at C.

What (A) tells us is that an agent, say John, is permitted to assert p only if p is true at

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[38]MacFarlane 2009: 97-101.

[39]MacFarlane 2009: 17.

[40]For a criticism of the view that speakers are governed by constitutive rules, see Cappelen 2010.

[41]MacFarlane 2014: 101. See also, Williamson 2000: 239.

[42]MacFarlane 2014: 103.

the context occupied by John. But this is exactly what (A*) tells us about when speakers are permitted to assert. The reason for the normative equivalence between (A) and (A*) is that the context of assessment and the context of use overlap in (A*). Hence, (A) tells us that it is always the context one occupies which is the context relative to which one can assert only truths, which is equivalent to what (A*) tells us about assertability.

MacFarlane is quick to point out that the normative equivalence between (A) and (A*) makes it so that we cannot look at (A*) in isolation if we are to grasp the normative significance of assessement-relative truth. MacFarlane reasons that the remedy is to posit a more sophisticated account of assertion, an account that does not only tell when speakers are permitted to make assertions, but an account that also takes into consideration the consequences of making assertions:

> I think Dummett is right that our grip on truth comes from an understanding of its relation to assertion. But where Dummett focused on the norms for making an assertion, I propose we focus on the normative consequences of making an assertion.[43]

What then are the consequences of making an assertion? According to MacFarlane speakers who perform assertions take on a number of commitments by asserting. Here is a list of commitments, not said to be exhaustive, that MacFarlane takes speakers to undertake by asserting:

> (C1) Commitment to retract the assertion if and when it is shown to have been untrue.
>
> (C2) Commitment to justify the assertion (provide grounds for its truth) if and when it is appropriately challenged.

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[43]MacFarlane 2005: 318.

(C3) Commitment to be held responsible if someone else acts on or reasons from what is asserted, and it proves to have been untrue.[44]

For MacFarlan's purpose (C1), the commitment to retract, is the most important commitment undertaken by performing an assertion. What then is a retraction? On MacFarlane's construal a retraction is a speech act that targets another speech act. The effect of the retraction is to disavow the speaker from the commitments flowing from the original speech act:

> The effect of retracting a speech act is to "undo" the normative changes effected by the original speech act. So, for example, in retracting a question, one releases the audience from an obligation to answer it, and in retracting an offer, one withdraws a permission that one has extended. Similarly, in retracting an assertion, one disavows the assertoric commitment undertaken in the original assertion. This means, among other things, that one is no longer obliged to respond to challenges to the assertion (since one has already conceded, in effect), and that others are no longer entitled to rely on one's authority for the accuracy of this assertion.[45]

Hence, by retracting an assertion the retractor disavows himself from (C1)-(C3) and any other commitments that might flow from the targeted assertion. Because of the strong link between assertion and retraction, MacFarlane suggests that we can discern a normative difference between NIC and assessment-relativism by taking into consideration not only the norms governing assertion, but also the norms governing retraction. Here is the norm MacFarlane takes to be constitutive of retraction:

(R). An agent in context C_2 is required to retract an (unretracted) assertion

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[44]MacFarlane 2005: 318. See also, MacFarlane 2014: 108.

[45]MacFarlane 2014: 108.

of p made at C_1 if p is not true as used at C_1 and assessed from C_2.[46]

Now, with (R) in mind, consider the following pair of sentences:

(91)   Rhubarb is tasty

(92)   Beatrice is beautiful

(R) predicts that if Annette would perform an assertion of (91) at C_1, Annette would be required to retract that assertion if she no longer likes rhubarb at C_2. Similarly, if John would perform an assertion of (92) at C_1, John would be required to retract if he no longer finds Beatrice beautiful at C_2. Clearly then, (R) reveals the normative significance of assessment-relative truth because the obligation to retract an assertion is triggered by facts about a context of assessment which does not always overlap with the context of use.

Given that we can only discern the pragmatic relevance of assessment-relative truth by looking at the relativist retraction norm, the speech act of retraction takes on a crucial epistemic role:

> A stronger, more interesting thesis is that some of the things we say and think are assessment-sensitive. We have not established that, but we have at least shown what such a claim would imply and what evidence might count for or against it. To defend an assessment-sensitive semantics for a particular class of sentences, one would have to adduce evidence about the norms for defending and withdrawing assertions made using those sentences.[47]

Thus, in order to find out whether we need assessment-relativism we must determine

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[46]MacFarlane 2014: 108.

[47]MacFarlane 2005: 322.

whether (R) is in force.

How can we determine whether (R) is in force? Presumably, competent speakers should have a firm pre-theoretic grasp of the norms that govern the different speech acts. For example, Timothy Williamson contends that competent speakers have a tacit grasp of the constitutive rule governing assertion:

> In mastering the speech act of assertion, one implicitly grasps the C-rule, in whatever sense on implicitly grasps the rules of a game in mastering it. As already noted, this requires some sensitivity to the difference in both oneself and others between conforming to the rule and breaking it. [48]

Thus, if (R) is constitutive of retraction the intuitions of competent speakers should converge towards the judgement that a retraction is obligated in the cases where (R) tells us that a retraction is obligatory. As far as I can tell the most significant worry about the relativist account of retraction is the observation that many competent speakers do not recognize that they have an obligation to retract in the cases where (R) predicts that a retraction is obligatory. For example, consider a context where John asserts the proposition that *fish sticks are tasty*. At a later context, John has a change of heart about the taste of fish sticks. He then has the following exchange with Mary:

(93)   a. Mary: Years ago you said that fish sticks were tasty, right?

        b. John reply 1: Yes, but I take that back now.

        c. John reply 2: Yes, I used to love fish sticks, but now I don't.

If (R) is in force competent speakers should intuit that John has an obligation to use (93b) instead of (93c) as a response to what Mary said in (93a).[49] However, philosophers like

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[48]Williamson 2000: 241.

[49]MacFarlane 2014: 14.

Diana Raffman do not share this intuition. In fact, Raffman claims that she would use the reply in (93c) as a response to what Mary said in (93a):

> But I think that is just what I would say—they *were* tasty then, but they aren't tasty anymore—and this would not have to imply that their taste had changed. I think I would have no inclination to retract . . . . My point here is not that MacFarlane's intuitions are faulty. Rather, it's that whatever we may variously think people would say in such cases, our intuitions are sufficiently divergent, and/or simply anemic, that MacFarlane's constructed examples cannot always bear the weight he places on them.[50]

Of course, Raffman is not the only one who contends that the response in (93c) appears to be entirely felicitous. In fact, I assume that most non-relativists will contend that (93c) is an appropriate response to (93a). Thus, if relativists are going to contend that (R) is in force, they owe us an explanation of why there are competent speakers who do not recognize that they have an obligation to retract in the cases where (R) predicts that a retraction is mandatory.

Before we move on, I would like to point out an important caveat about the observations above. I have assumed that non-relativists do not intuit that they have an obligation to retract in the cases where the relativists predict that a retraction is obligatory. Even though this assumption about the intuitions of non-relativists is likely to be true, one would have to conduct empirical surveys in order to have robust evidence in favor of that assumption. In the case of epistemic modals such surveys have already been carried out. All of surveys carried out so far has disconfirmed the relativist account of retraction as far epistemic modals are concerned.[51]

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[50]Raffman 2016: 172.

[51]See, Marquez 2015.

If we tentatively accept that (R) is disconfirmed because there are competent speakers who do not recognize that (R) is in play, we need to posit an alternative rule in order to make sense of retraction in discourse about taste. The first step towards that aim is to identify a set of situations where not only some, but virtually all competent speakers can agree that a retraction of a previous assertion is mandatory. At face value this is a daunting project given that the intuitions that relativists and non-relativists have about retraction are quite divergent. Nonetheless, it appears that both relativists and non-relativists have some precious common ground in the constitutive rule of assertion. Both the relativist (A*) and the non-relativist (A) tell us that it is always the context one occupies which is the context relative to which one can assert only truths. Thus, the intuitions of relativists and non-relativists converge when it comes down to identifying the situations where speakers are permitted to assert. With this in mind it seems reasonable to assume that both relativists and non-relativists can accept that an assertion which has violated the assertion rule has to be retracted because the assertion was not permitted in the first place. Perhaps then, we can get some traction with the following rule:

> (R*). An agent is required to retract an (unretracted) assertion of p made at C if and when the assertion is shown to have violated (A).

We can illustrate how (R*) will fare in practice by considering the following sentences:

(94)   Cameron is playing the piano.

(95)   Lemonade is tasty.

What (R*) tells us is that an agent, say Mary, in context C_2 is required to retract a previous assertion of (94) made at C_1 if she discovers that the assertion violated (A) when it was made at C_1. That is, if she discovers that Cameron did not play the piano at C_1. The same holds good with assertions of (95). However, in order to assert sentences like (95)

speakers need to have first hand knowledge about the taste of the relevant food. Hence, in virtually all cases speakers will know immediately whether an assertion of (95) violated (A) or not.

It is a somewhat open question how (R*) fits into a larger account of retraction which takes into consideration retractions of questions, orders, requests, etc. As far I know there is no prominent unified account of retraction in the literature and I will not attempt to sketch a unified account of retraction here. What is important for my purpose is that the predictions made by (A) and (R*) sit well with the intuitions of competent speakers. Both relativists and non-relativists can agree that assertions are permitted in the cases predicted by (A) and similarly, both camps can agree that retractions are obligatory in the cases predicted by (R*).

3.9   Conclusion

The semantic machinery offered by contextualism is highly parsimonious. Thus, there is a methodological incentive to embrace contextualism. On the other hand, I have argued that there are multiple types of semantic data that are problematic for contextualism. I started by exploring some of the familiar issues that standard contextualism face with respect to indirect speech reports. Subsequently, I turned to flexible contextualism and argued that flexible contextualists have problems with sentences containing multiple predicates of taste.

Whilst the previous issues are significant in their own right, it is the phenomenon of disagreement that stands at the core of the debate about contextualism. At face value, both standard and flexible contextualists struggle to provide an account of how it is possible for speakers to disagree about matters of taste. I have explored two prominent responses to the problem of disagreement on behalf of contextualism. The first and arguably most promising response on behalf of contextualism is provided by Torfinn Huvenes. Huvenes offers a view of disagreement where two parties can disagree not only by having conflicting doxastic attitudes, but also by having conflicting non-doxastic attitudes. I have tentatively embraced the pluralistic conception of disagreement offered by Huvenes and conceded that it offers contextualists the means to explain how there can be non-doxastic disagreement in discourse about taste. On the other hand I have drawn attention to a range of disagreement data which suggests that the disputing parties are disagreeing by virtue of having conflicting beliefs. If the data I have presented is legitimate, contextualists still owe us an explanation of how two parties can disagree by virtue of having conflicting beliefs about some matter of taste.

The second response, favored by Herman Cappelen and John Hawthorne, reject the con-

tention that speakers disagree about matters of taste. I have argued that that this view does not sit well with the persistence of the disputes displayed by the semantic data. Finally, I offered an account of disagreement for NIC that can explain how two parties can disagree by having conflicting beliefs about some matter of taste.

The next task was to explore whether the prominent relativistic systems of Peter Lasersohn, Tamina Stephenson and John MacFarlane offered any clear-cut explanatory benefits when compared to NIC. We saw that Lasersohn motivated his brand of relativism by arguing that it can provide an account of disagreement in discourse about taste. I conceded that Lasersohn's relativism can explain all the varieties of disagreement present in discourse about taste. However, I also argued that NIC can accommodate the relevant disagreement data whilst positing less unorthodox semantic mechanisms. Therefore, we have a methodological incentive to favor the more parsimonious semantics offered by NIC over the relativist semantics offered by Lasersohn.

Subsequently, we saw that Tamina Stephenson has drawn attention to disagreement data which she argues that neither the relativist semantics of Lasersohn nor the semantics of NIC suffice to accommodate. Rather, we ought to embrace her more flexible relativist semantics if we are to accommodate the disagreement data. I have objected that Stephenson's interpretation of the disagreement data is flawed. Furthermore I have pointed out that her variety of relativism is associated with its own issues concerning disagreement.

Finally, I explored MacFarlane's assessment sensitive relativism. MacFarlane has argued that the data concerning disagreement and retraction suggests that we need assessment-relativism in order to offer a satisfactory semantics for the predicates of taste. I have conceded that MacFarlane's relativism can accommodate the disagreement data. Nonetheless, the disagreement data does not unambiguously favor assessment-relativism. NIC

can accommodate the crucial features of the disagreement data with a more trimmed semantic apparatus. Additionally, I have argued that MacFarlane's account of retraction does not sit well with the observation that there are competent speakers who do not recognize that the relativist retraction rule is in force. Finally, I proposed an alternative account of retraction that better accommodates our intuitions about retraction. Thus, I contend that the semantic data does not suggest that the most prevalent relativist semantics offer any clear explanatory benefits when compared to NIC.

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3.11 Reading list

FILO350.

Student: Carl Anders Hægeland.

Supervisor: Ole Thomassen Hjortland.

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