

**Expressing Disagreement:**  
A Hybrid Account of Predicates of Personal Taste  
and Other Expressives

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# Abstract

Predicates of personal taste (*tasty, fun, etc.*) are words that describe our tastes. They are said to give rise to *faultless disagreements*. These are disagreements where neither agent has committed a fault in uttering their sentences, but disagreement appears to persist. For example:

CARLING

Matty: Carling is tasty.

Billie: No, Carling is not tasty.

In CARLING, neither Mary nor Billie are at fault for both have conveyed a true proposition and yet there is a disagreement. The first two Chapters of this thesis are devoted to looking at semantic accounts that can explain cases of apparent faultless disagreement. I reject a variety of Contextualist and Relativist accounts on the basis that they fail to account for faultless disagreements. Chapter 3 is devoted to Expressivist semantics as a way of explaining disagreement. Therein we shall see that non-hybrid Expressivist semantics cannot account for expressive terms in predicative positions. At the end of this Chapter we will consider a hybrid account - Expressive-Contextualist - as a promising solution. We will see that Expressive-Contextualism fails primarily because of its Contextualist commitments, but the overall strategy of combining two semantics is favourable. In Chapter 4, I will propose a novel hybrid account which I call *Expressive-Relativism*. My main goal will be to explain faultless disagreement, as well as describe how expressive terms can have descriptive content. The account that is presented in this Chapter will address the shortcomings with the theories presented thus far. I will end this thesis with Chapter 5, wherein I consider how far Expressive-Relativism can go.

# Declaration

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# Preface

The starting point for this thesis was to analyse predicates of personal taste (PPTs): words such as *tasty*, *fun*, etc. Broadly construed these words capture our tastes. The reason why they're of interest is because they appear to give rise to a phenomenon known as *faultless disagreements*. These are disagreements where both agents have uttered something true, thus neither agent is at fault, yet the presence of a disagreement persists. Take the following example:

CARLING

Matty: Carling is tasty.

Billie: No, Carling is not tasty.

In CARLING, we have Matty and Billie disagreeing over whether a lager - Carling - is tasty, but we do not feel that there has been a fault committed by either speaker. After all, both speakers are merely expressing propositions about subjective tastes and not something objective that they can be wrong about.

In my investigations of PPTs, I primarily focused on the debates between those who claim that the parametric-sensitivity of PPTs is located at the context of use, meaning that it is the context in which the sentence is used that determines for whom something is *tasty*, *fun*, etc., - these cluster of views fall under the title of *Contextualism* - and those who claim that the parametric-sensitivity is located at the context of assessment where it is in assessing a proposition that we take into consideration an agent's tastes - this side falls under the title of *Relativism*. Both claim that they're the ones who can give the most satisfactory semantics for PPTs and the most plausible account of apparent faultless disagreement. Whilst examining the

merits and downfalls of the Contextualist approaches, I concluded that either Contextualist approaches do not have a good account of apparent faultless disagreement or they face some internal worries within their semantics. This conclusion led me to endorse Relativist semantics for PPTs and whilst for a long time I sided with the Relativists (and I still largely do) an obstacle came to the forefront: Relativists, I became convinced, lacked the tools to account for the disagreement aspect of faultless disagreement. This is a serious flaw, for the motivating factor of Relativism is often couched in terms of a simple and straightforward account of faultless disagreement.

The lack of disagreement accountability led me down an interesting avenue. I started considering an account which did not deal with truth-conditional content but was nevertheless semantic. This is an Expressivist account first notably developed by Potts (2005, 2007b,a). The possibility of employing an Expressivist semantics to complement the Relativist semantics in order to account for disagreement seemed like a neat solution to the Relativist's problem. In trying to get to grips with the Expressivist semantics, I noticed a strange problem concerning expressive terms in predicative positions. Expressives in such positions seem to contribute to the truth-conditional content, going against the independence property often championed as the most notable property of expressives. By rejecting the independence property, I was able to consider hybrid accounts which cover both expressive and descriptive dimensions. I particularly focus on Gutzmann (2015, 2016), who combines Expressivism with Contextualism. I highlight some issues with this account, but I favour the overall approach.

I exercise the strategy of employing a hybrid semantics to cover both - expressive and descriptive - dimensions. I argue that Relativism ought to be considered for the descriptive part whilst, like Gutzmann, I take inspiration from Potts and use Expressivism to take care of the expressive part. This results in a theory I call *Expressive-Relativism*. I note that Expressive-Relativism can provide a nice answer for the disagreement issue that the Relativist faced. It can also provide a neat so-

lution to the issue of expressive terms in predicative positions. More interestingly, however, Expressive-Relativism helps to support the idea that PPTs are not wholly descriptive terms as they do carry an expressive element. This expressive element is what gives rise to the disagreement in cases like CARLING. This is something that is overlooked by a lot of the Relativist and Contextualist approaches and I believe this idea lends itself to further investigation.

One way to summarise the research that this thesis contains is to say that there is a mirrored shortcoming with the most promising views of PPTs and expressives. Whilst on the PPTs side, the shortcoming manifests itself in treating these terms as wholly descriptive; on the expressives side the shortcoming is in treating these terms as wholly expressive. The solution that I have found is to develop a novel hybrid account that can solve both of these problems by being able to provide content from both - descriptive and expressive - dimensions. I hope that Expressive-Relativism is as interesting and convincing to the reader as it has become to me.

Before we delve deep into the debates surrounding PPTs and expressives, I want make a note about the content of this work. This thesis was written somewhat the wrong way around, for first I wrote the papers, wherein the main arguments of this thesis lie, and then I wrote the thesis. What this means is that a lot of the material that I put forth here is already published or is in manuscript form ready for publication. I draw from this material to a large extent whilst elaborating on it and reconstructing it where appropriate. So, as not to plagiarise myself or to plagiarise from the work that has been co-authored, I will briefly note from which papers the arguments in different chapters came from:

A large part of the material in Chapter 1 came from Berškýtė (2021b), excluding §1.6 (the section on Non-Indexical Contextualism) this material came from a manuscript co-authored with Graham Stevens (Berškýtė and Stevens, ms). The material in Chapter 2 was largely drawn from Berškýtė and Stevens (ms). The material in

Chapter 3 was mostly adapted from Berškýtė (2021a), except §3.4 (the section on descriptive approach to expressives) the material for this section was modified from Berškýtė and Stevens (2019). Most of the material from Chapter 4 has been drawn from Berškýtė (2021a) with a small part drawn from Berškýtė and Stevens (ms). Lastly, the content in Chapter 5, particularly the section on slurs (§5.3) draws on arguments developed in a joint work with Graham Stevens on gendered slurs (Berškýtė and Stevens, Ms).



# Introduction

Predicates of personal taste (*tasty, fun, etc.*) are words that describe our tastes. They have received considerable attention in the literature because they appear to give rise to *faultless disagreements*<sup>1</sup>. These are disagreements where neither agent has committed a fault in uttering their sentences, but disagreement appears to persist. Take the following example, which will be central to this thesis:

CARLING

Matty: Carling is tasty.

Billie: No, Carling is not tasty.

One way to explain the situation that is happening in CARLING is by saying that both Matty and Billie have conveyed a true proposition and yet their utterances are in conflict either because they are contradictory or because there's a conflict on some non-literal level. The first two Chapters of this thesis are devoted to looking at semantic accounts that can explain cases of apparent faultless disagreement. We shall look at varieties of Contextualist accounts and Relativist accounts, concluding that none of these produce a satisfactory way of dealing with faultless disagreements. Chapter 3 is devoted to Expressivist semantics as a way of explaining disagreement. Therein we shall see that non-hybrid Expressivist semantics runs into difficulty when trying to account for words that appear to be expressive and yet carry descriptive content. At the end of Chapter 3, we will consider a hybrid Expressive approach put forth by Gutzmann (2015, 2016). Although I will conclude that Gutzmann's account will not be best suited for the job at hand, due its Contextualist commitments, this

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<sup>1</sup>Not everyone agrees that faultless disagreement is a real phenomenon. As we shall see in Chapter 1, some Contextualists argue that we are mistaken about the intuition.

will give us the inspiration to look for an account that can do it all - deal with the expressive and descriptive dimensions. Namely, this will inspire us to consider Relativism as a candidate for the descriptive part of the hybrid. In Chapter 4, I will propose a novel hybrid account which I call *Expressive-Relativism*. My main goal will be to explain faultless disagreement as well as describe how expressive terms can have descriptive content. The account that is presented in this Chapter will address the shortcomings with the theories presented thus far. I will end this thesis with Chapter 5, wherein I consider how far Expressive-Relativism can go, mainly what other linguistic phenomena I would or would not want Expressive-Relativism to deal with.

## A Note on Relativism

A big part of this thesis will involve taking Relativism seriously. *Prima facie*, this might not seem like a very easy task, for the Relativist account has been presented as almost a comical position. Baghramian and Coliva, for example, note “that the label “relativist” has frequently been used as a pejorative term” (Baghramian and Coliva, 2019, 25). The refusal to accept Relativism as a serious account is further evidenced by the fact that in undergraduate lectures (more often than not ethics lectures) the students are warned against employing Relativism, especially in the moral domain. We warn the students against making claims such as *It’s all relative anyway*. If the reader has some reservations about Relativism, I hope that I can ease them in the first part of this Introduction. I want to show that even if in certain areas Relativism does sound like an incredulous or an implausible account concerning matters of taste it is exactly the type of theory we want. I start by sketching out a little bit of background.

The first thing to establish is the difference between the *global* and *local* forms of Relativism. A global Relativist would not be shy in applying Relativism to anything, the view “amounts to the claim that truth and falsehood, in any domain and pertaining to any statement, are always relative” (Baghramian and Coliva, 2019, 20). One of the most popular criticisms levied against global Relativism is that it’s

*self-refuting*. The rough idea is this: If truth is relative, it can be relatively true that Relativism is true. However, it can also be relatively false that Relativism is true. If it's down to an individual or some non-standard parameter<sup>2</sup> to render a proposition as true, then the whole Relativist framework can be false as assessed from some of these parameters. As such, Relativism (at least relative to some parameters) can be refuted precisely because of the relativist commitments. In other words, Relativism is self-refuting<sup>3</sup>.

Local Relativism is much more conservative and as a result the self-refutation charge does not hold. Local Relativists claim that truths are relative *only* in specific domains. The form of Relativism I will champion will be local and I am only making claims about predicates of personal taste and other expressives. Self-refutation is not applicable as it is *not* a matter of taste whether Relativism is a correct theory. Thus, a proposition of the kind *The Relativist account is correct* would not be classed as assessment sensitive in a way such that the proposition can be evaluated from different non-standard parameters. As a Relativist (at least partly) I, of course, would be inclined to believe that Relativism about taste is a (mostly) correct theory, but I would not be inclined to say that this matter is relative.

There are many different types of Relativism and Relativism itself has enjoyed various revisions throughout its history. What I'm particularly interested in is Relativism about truth of propositions, or *alethic* Relativism<sup>4</sup>. A very crude description of Relativism is that concerning certain domains there are no *absolute* truth-values and a certain proposition can be assessed differently by two separate parties. Meaning truth-values can only be assigned if we take particular parameters, standards or frameworks into consideration. For example, we might want to say that certain

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<sup>2</sup>Here by 'non-standard parameter' I mean parameters other than world and time.

<sup>3</sup>This is a very brief description of the self-refutation charge and I have presented it as a serious issue for the global Relativist. This is not to say that a global Relativist does not have the tools to address this, since my concern is not with the global Relativist I leave these concerns to one side. However, see Baghramian and Coliva (2019, 65–66) for a defence on behalf of the Relativist, also see Kölbel (2002, 122–124), Kölbel (2011), MacFarlane (2014, 30–35).

<sup>4</sup>For a very thorough and detailed exploration of Relativism and its history please see Baghramian and Coliva (2019).

moral claims are only true or false relative to some cultural framework. Or, as we shall see in this thesis, certain taste sentences can only be evaluated relative to some parameter that takes an individual's tastes into account. One agent might utter that *Carling is tasty* whilst the other utter that *Carling is not tasty* and both of these agents can have uttered something true. In their discussion of different characteristics that Relativism possesses Baghramian and Coliva note *equal validity* with the idea being:

[W]hen relativism is applied to any area of discourse, such as taste or morality, the incompatible judgments, issued from different standpoints or frameworks, would be both metaphysically and epistemically on par and cannot be ranked against one another. Moreover, their being on par should be appreciated by neutral and committed parties to the debate alike.

(Baghramian and Coliva, 2019, 9)

I take *equal validity* to be central to Relativism for it allows the intuition of *faultlessness* that we see in cases like CARLING. The feeling that both parties, although they have expressed apparently incompatible utterances, are correct in holding them. One is not more 'right' or 'truthful' than the other. With respect to the last point, that these judgement being on par should be appreciated by a neutral observer as well as those involved in a conversation, we should be a little cautious. It seems that perhaps on *reflection* both the neutral agent and the committed agent should appreciate judgements differing in truth-values on relativistic matters as being equally valid, but when it comes to disagreements I think it is safe to say that this does not always occur. Particularly with agents involved in a dispute, I do not think that there is a need for them to appreciate incompatible judgments at the time as being on par, for if the agents recognised that their judgements are on par there would be very little reason to argue about them.

Now, I am not here to defend or argue against Moral Relativism, but I want to show that the reservation one might have towards Relativism in domains like morality becomes the motivating force for Relativism in the domain of tastes. The fear, as applied to morality, is that we do not want to allow every person to truthfully utter *any* moral claim. Perhaps, one of the reasons why Relativism gets a bad press is precisely because of the equal validity characteristic. Concerning certain matters we do not want judgments to be on par with one another, for example if one agent thinks that *Murdering the innocent for fun is good* and the other holds that *Murdering the innocent for fun is not good*, then we would be hard pressed to find anyone who would think both of these judgments are on par. The issue here is that Relativism is applied to the wrong subject matter, (arguably) morals are not the sorts of things for which we want to be so flexible with when it comes to their truth. With tastes, however, it seems that the story is different. We can recognise that the following propositions: *Carling is tasty* and *Carling is not tasty* can be judged to be on par with one another. It seems like this is precisely the sort of subject matter that we want the flexible truths, that is, we want to be able to assess these utterances as true or false depending on the perspective. Furthermore, we want to recognise that people with two opposing views on the tastiness of Carling can both be said to be equally correct.

As mentioned, I am not proposing any sort of *global* Relativism. I also want to be clear that I am not even proposing that we should be Relativists about all context-sensitive or subjective language. Relativism in moderation, however, seems very attractive. Max Kölbel conveys this point nicely:

There is a widespread view among philosophers that relativism, quite generally, is hopeless. Such a view is about as undiscerning and unjustified as the view that eating fat, quite generally, is unhealthy. There are many different kinds of fat and whether eating a particular kind of fat is unhealthy depends on the quantity one eats, on the other things one eats with it, and on one's style of life generally. The same goes for relativism.

There are many different forms of relativism, and whether a particular form of relativism is a healthy view to take might depend on one's other views.

(Kölbel, 2002, 116)

If we take tastes to be completely subjective, almost flimsy and inconsequential then it seems that being a Relativist about tastes would be the correct avenue to explore. The issue with other matters, such as moral claims, is that they are not as subjective, flimsy or inconsequential. Because of this it would seem Relativism stands as inappropriate, for application to the moral domain.

## On the Semantics

Hopefully the reader now feels like Relativism is not the implausible maverick that we often tell our students about and we can start the discussion by taking it as a semantic account (at the very least) worth exploring. Before we can really delve into details about any of the semantic accounts that will be presented, we need to start with setting out the semantic framework which will allow me to discuss the intricacies of these theories with ease. I start with Kaplan's (1989b) indexical semantics as in one way or another all the accounts I will consider, including Expressive-Relativism, were borne out of Kaplan's work<sup>5</sup>.

Indexicals are words which change their content depending on the context in which they are uttered. Typical examples are *I*, *here*, *now*, *today*, *yesterday*. Consider the following:

---

<sup>5</sup>The two main issues concerning Kaplan's indexical semantics center around the logical validity of sentences like *I am here now* and *monsters*. Starting with the former, there is an infamous problem known as *The Answering Machine Problem*, where sentences like *I am not here now* can seemingly be true, for a discussion of these issues see notably: Corazza et al. (2002), Predelli (1998), Predelli (2005), Romdenh-Romluc (2002), Stevens (2009), Vicente and Zeman (2020). The latter problem concerns the prohibition of operators in English language that can shift the context and control the character of the indexical, Kaplan calls would be operators monsters (Kaplan, 1989b, 510). For a thorough discussion of monsters see: Maier (2016), Israel and Perry (1996), Predelli (1996, 2014), Schlenker (2003). Since these issues are not pertinent to PPTs or expressives, I will not explore them in this thesis.

- (1) a. Matty: I am hungry.
- b. Billie: I am hungry.
- c. Matty is hungry.

In (1a) and (1b) the speakers have uttered the same sentence, however contents of these sentences will differ because the indexical *I* will pick out different referents in each case. Thus Matty’s utterance will result in a proposition *Matty is hungry*, whilst Billie’s utterance will result in a proposition *Billie is hungry*. Compare this with (1c), where no matter who utters the sentence the content of the utterance will always stay the same.

For Kaplan a context is a technical notion, we can think of it as “package” that “provides whatever parameters are needed” in order to determine contents of indexical sentences (Kaplan, 1989a, 591, original emphasis). Take  $C$  to be a set of non-empty contexts, each context  $c$  containing a world parameter  $c_w$  (picks out the relevant world of the context), time parameter  $c_t$  (picks out the relevant time of the context), location parameter  $c_l$  (picks out the relevant location of context) and agent parameter  $c_a$  (picks out the relevant agent of context). In our examples (1a) and (1b), the relevant parameter for determining the content will be  $c_a$ .

Kaplan made a distinction between two kinds of meanings: *character* and *content*. Character is the linguistic meaning of an expression, set by the conventions of the language, which determines the content for each term. Kaplan (1989b, 505) considers the character of *I* as the following:

‘I’ refers to the speaker or the writer.

Thus to get the content of (an utterance of) *I* we need to look to the context in which the indexical is uttered to see who the speaker/writer is. In other words, the character will look for the  $c_a$ . Because the character takes an agent out of the context and returns the content, we can say that character of an indexical is a *non-constant function* from contexts to contents. The reason why it’s non-constant is because it

returns a different value if the  $c_a$  changes. Note that for terms that are not context-sensitive (arguably *square*, *two*, *chair*, etc.) the character will be a constant function from context to content. Consequently these terms will have the same content in whatever context they are used.

The second kind of meaning is precisely what the character returns - content. Content is truth-apt and it returns the appropriate truth-value or extension of the proposition. Thus we can represent contents as functions from circumstance of evaluation to truth-values/extension (Kaplan, 1989b, 505).

On circumstances of evaluation Kaplan writes the following:

Let us settle on *circumstances* for possible circumstances of evaluation. By this 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 a world, a time and perhaps some other features as well.

(Kaplan, 1989b, 502, original emphasis)

Thus the truth-values of sentences in (1) will be determined by looking at the relevant world and time. The propositions will only be true if the agent of the proposition is in fact hungry in the world and that particular time. This allows for one proposition to have different truth-values depending on which world or time is fixed by the circumstance of evaluation. For example, Matty's utterance might be true at  $c_{w_1}, c_{t_1}$ , but false at  $c_{w_1}, c_{t_2}$ . We can see below a representation of how we get from the character to content, to then truth-values of a sentence.

**Character** + Context  $\implies$  **Content**

**Content** + Circumstance of Evaluation  $\implies$  Truth-values

In what follows I will make a deviation from Kaplan's terminology. Instead of adopting the term circumstance of evaluation I will use context of assessment, a term which



I borrow from MacFarlane (2014). Instead of merely referring to context, I will qualify it as the context of use. Thus, with the new terminology in mind we can amend the representation above as:

**Character** + Context of use  $\implies$  **Content**

**Content** + Context of assessment  $\implies$  Truth-values

To account for PPTs, all the theories that I will discuss will include a *judge* parameter either in the context of use or context of assessment. This means that the judge parameter will either contribute to the content of the proposition or the truth-value of the proposition. The judge parameter is not present in Kaplan, as such we may want to think of a the judge parameter as a non-standard or non-classical contextual parameter. The judge parameter is utilised differently for different accounts. Most commonly the discussion of the judge parameter appears in respect of the Relativists who use it to give the correct truth-conditions for the PPT-sentences. We shall see however, that the judge parameter can be used to account for the contents of propositions (as with Indexical Contextualism or Indexical Relativism) and for non-propositional content (as with the Expressivists). Note that some (e.g. MacFarlane (2014)) refer to the judge parameter as the *standard of taste* parameter, for the purposes of this thesis I will keep with the judge parameter.

For the sake of simplicity I will only include the parameters which are directly relevant to the meanings of PPTs. Since the time parameter and the location parameter are not directly relevant to the assessment of PPTs with any of the accounts I discuss I shall leave them out of my discussion. As a result my context will include  $c_a, c_j, c_w$ , an agent, a judge, and a world parameter respectively.

Before I go on to discuss how different views function by utilising the Kaplanian semantics, I want to make a note on the context. Although I'm using two different terms which both involve the term context - context of use and context of assessment - I do not wish for these terms to be thought as two different kinds of contexts. Both CUs (contexts of use) and CAs (contexts of assessment) are drawn from the

same set of non-empty contexts  $C$ . What they really do is represent the different role that the context plays. They reflect the different parametric-sensitivity that different expressions exhibit. As we saw, the indexical  $I$  is sensitive to the agent parameter in the context of use. For some theories the parametric-sensitivity of terms like *fun* or *tasty* is located at the context of assessment and will depend on the judge parameter. Typically we will see that CU plays a *content* determining role, whilst CA plays a *truth-value* determining role (as we shall see there are exceptions with Non-Indexical Contextualism and Indexical Relativism). As I go on, I will frame each approach in terms of the parametric-sensitivity, however at this stage I will not assess the merits or the faults of the different accounts, instead I will only focus on how they fit in to the picture we have sketched out so far.

### **Assessment-Sensitive Relativism**

Roughly, Assessment-Sensitive Relativism (Relativism for short) is the view that the truth-values of PPT-sentences are sensitive to the judge parameter. Thus, one proposition can be true relative to one judge's perspective, whilst false as evaluated from another judge's perspective.

This fits with the picture we have sketched out above in the following way. The character of a PPT is a constant function from context of use to content. Meaning that *tasty*, *fun*, etc., will have the same content in each context of use. Thus, even if parameters of the context of use change, this leaves the *content* unaffected. What is novel about Relativism is that it utilises the judge parameter in the context of assessment. Thus contexts of assessment will be judge-world pairs, something will be true only relative to a world and a judge. Considering a PPT-sentence:

(2) Sentence: Carling is tasty.

Content: Carling is tasty.

Truth-Conditions: True at a CA iff Carling is tasty for the  $ca_j$ .

Here the context sensitivity is located at the level of context of assessment, particularly at the level of the judge. Thus, (2) will only be true at those CAs in which the judge finds Carling to be tasty, false otherwise.

Having a judge parameter which is separate from the agent parameter is a theoretically useful tool, for it allows one to evaluate a proposition from the perspective of someone other than the speaker's. Such occurrences can be quite common. For example a parent considers what's tasty from their child's perspective when considering what their child should have for dinner. They can sincerely utter *Fish sticks are tasty* and that can be true as long as they're taking their child as the judge of the CA even if the parent themselves does not find fish sticks tasty. Or take Billie who does not like Carling, but if she is considering what beer to get for her friend Matty, Billie can utter *Carling is tasty* and the utterance can convey a true proposition as long as the judge is taken to be Matty and not Billie. In these cases the speaker and the judge come apart and having a judge parameter gives the means of providing an explanation for such divergences. Following Lasersohn (2005, 670), I will adopt the terminology of *autocentric perspectives* for when the judge and the speaker coincide and *exocentric perspectives* for when the judge and the speaker come apart.

## Indexical Relativism

I will also, briefly, consider an account dubbed *Indexical Relativism*, which is defended by Cappelen (2008), Parsons (2011) Weatherson (2009)<sup>6</sup>. It's worth noting that none of the authors apply this view to PPTs. Similarly to Assessment-Sensitive Relativism, Indexical Relativism locates the parametric-sensitivity at the level of context of assessment, however unlike Assessment-Sensitive Relativism the judge does not influence the truth-value assignment, but the *content* of a sentence. Thus a proposition is not complete until the judge in the context of assessment is plugged in. Character still is a function from context to content, but this content is somewhat

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<sup>6</sup>Note that Cappelen calls his view Content Relativism. Egan (2009) is also sometimes attributed with Indexical Relativism, however as is noted by López de Sa (2011, 113–114), Egan's account is concerned with audience interpretation rather than the assessor in the context of assessment.

incomplete. On Weatherson’s version, instead of gaining a full proposition we gain a *propositional frame* (Weatherson, 2009, 342), where a full proposition is only given once we get the value of the judge in the context of assessment. Thus the content that we get from the character and context is a function from context of assessment to propositions. This means that when Matty utters *Carling is tasty* the propositional frame can be completed by any judge. If Matty is taken to be the judge then the proposition frame is supplemented with her as the judge and the full proposition we get is *Carling is tasty for Matty* and that will be true. If Billie is the judge then the complete proposition we get is *Carling is tasty for Billie*, which will be false as Billie does not like Carling. Below I represent the content and the truth-conditions for *Carling is tasty*:

(3) Sentence: Carling is tasty.

Content: Carling is tasty for  $ca_j$

Truth-Conditions: True iff Carling is tasty at  $ca_w$ .

Here the truth-conditions differ from the Assessment-Sensitive Relativist, since propositions are only true relative to words (Weatherson, 2009, 342). Where the judge plays a crucial role is in filling in the propositional frame, thus the judge completes the proposition. What is important to notice is that the judge is taken from the *context of assessment*. This will be the main difference between Indexical Relativism and Indexical Contextualism discussed in the next section, for Indexical Contextualism the judge is drawn from the *context of use*.

As with Assessment-Sensitive Relativism, we can allow exocentric judges. The propositional frame of *Carling is tasty* can be filled by any judge in the context of assessment. Thus, since Billie hates Carling but is thinking of what beer to buy Matty, she can take Matty to be the assessor of (3), thus completing the proposition from Matty’s perspective.

## Indexical Contextualism

Indexical Contextualism, is the view that PPTs contain a covert indexical, which refers to some individual or a group. In my terminology, the context of use contains a judge parameter  $cu_j$  which provides the individual or the group. As such we can say that the character of the PPT is a non-constant function from context of use to content. This means that if the judge parameter fixes someone different in CU then the content of the proposition will also change. Compare this to indexical semantics, where should the speaker change then the content of the indexical  $I$  also changes. We can represent the content and truth-conditions in the following manner:

(4)

Sentence: Carling is tasty.

Content: Carling is tasty for  $cu_j$ .

Truth-Conditions: True iff Carling is tasty  $ca_w$ .

Should Billie utter (4) then the content of the proposition will be *Carling is tasty for Billie*, if Matty utters it then the content will be *Carling is tasty for Matty*. The major difference between Relativism and Indexical Contextualism is that the parametric-sensitivity is located at the level of content in the context of use. Thus the context of use will contain a judge parameter, as well as a world and an agent parameter. Thus, for Indexical Contextualism the CU comprises of a world-agent-judge triple.

As with Relativism, including the judge parameter, along with the agent parameter, allows for the possibility of exocentric uses of PPTs. For example, take Billie and Matty to be discussing what beverages they should get for the CAMRA society (Campaign for Real Ale) party. CAMRA members are well know for disliking lager, as such they would most likely not find Carling to be tasty. Matty who is a big fan of Carling can utter *Carling is not tasty* and she can utter it truthfully, if the judge parameter fixes CAMRA as the judge (as opposed to Matty), resulting in a proposition *Carling is not tasty for the CAMRA society*.

## Non-Indexical Contextualism

Non-Indexical Contextualism can be seen as somewhat of a middle ground between Indexical Contextualism and Relativism. The similarity with Indexical Contextualism arises because the parametric-sensitivity is located at the level of CU, however unlike Indexical Contextualism and like Relativism, the judge parameter only plays a role in determining the truth-values of the proposition. As such, for Non-Indexical Contextualism the character of a PPT is a constant function from CU to content, thus the contents of sentences like those in CARLING stay constant across all CUs. Unlike Relativist semantics, however Non-Indexical Contextualism relativises the truth values to the context of use rather than context of assessment.

(5) Sentence: Carling is tasty.

Content: Carling is tasty.

Truth-Conditions: True iff Carling is tasty for  $cu_j$  at  $cu_w$ .

If Billie utters (5), then the correct context to assess the proposition is the one in which it is uttered, i.e. one in which Billie is the judge of the  $cu$ . Although there is no indexicality at the level of content, there is indexicality at the level of the context of use as it is that context that determines the truth-values of a proposition. This is different from Relativism because a single proposition may correctly be evaluated from *any* context of assessment, whereas for Non-Indexical Contextualism the judge neutral proposition may only be correctly evaluated from the context in which it is uttered, i.e. context of use.

## Expressive Semantics

Expressive semantics is somewhat of a deviation from the four theories we have discussed so far, in that the concern will not be over how we deal with PPTs but rather how we can account for expressive terms such as *damn*, *fucking*, *fuckhead*, etc. Expressive terms are used to convey (typically) the speakers attitudes/emotions. For the time being we will only discuss expressives which appear in attributive positions (*That fuckhead Jeremy forgot the turkey*) rather than predicative positions (*Jeremy*

*is a fuckhead*), because, as we shall see in Chapter 3, there are big concerns over how non-hybrid versions of Expressivist semantics deals with expressive terms occurring in predicative positions.

Expressivist semantics is very interesting for not only does it deal with, what appears to be, non-truth-conditional content, we also need to introduce an extra parameter into the context of use to capture the expressive content. In what follows I will be following Potts' (2007b; 2007a) exposition of Expressivist semantics, for not only does it seem to be (arguably) the most influential non-hybrid semantic account out there, it has also become a springboard for a plethora of Expressivist views.

Potts makes a distinction between the expressive and the descriptive dimensions - where the expressive and the descriptive contents reside. Here I take descriptive content to be one which is *directly* truth-conditional, i.e. one which contributes to the truth value at the first instance. So although there is much content which is truth-conditional (e.g. semantic presuppositions), such content would not be directly truth-conditional and under this definition would not be classed as descriptive content. For Potts the expressive dimension is separate from the descriptive dimension, which also means that the expressive content and the descriptive content are distinct.

To account for the expressive content we need to include the judge parameter into the context of use. This is similar to both versions of Contextualism we have considered, however the major difference is that the judge helps to contribute to the expressive dimension rather than the descriptive dimension. The judge parameter by itself, however, is not enough to capture the expressive content for it only tells you *who* the individual is who is having an attitude and not *what* the attitude is nor does it tell you anything about *who* the attitude is being directed towards. To help to account for these latter points we need to introduce the *expressive setting* parameter  $cu_{\mathcal{E}}$ .

Loosely, we can think of the expressive setting as capturing all the expressive information that is available at a given CU. For Potts,  $cu_{\mathcal{E}}$  is a set of expressive indices, where an expressive index is a triple of  $\langle a \mathbf{I} b \rangle$ . Here  $a$  and  $b$  are entities, such that  $a$  is the relevant judge and  $b$  is the subject of the judge’s attitude.  $\mathbf{I}$  is an interval  $\mathbf{I} \sqsubseteq [-1,1]$  that measures two things: the intensity of the attitude (the narrower the interval the more intense is the attitude) and the positive or the negative feeling that  $a$  has towards  $b$  (Potts, 2007b, 177).

(6) That fuckhead Bevan spilled my Carling.

Descriptive Content: Bevan spilled  $cu_j$ ’s Carling.

Truth-Conditions: True iff Bevan spilled  $cu_j$ ’s Carling at  $ca_w$

Expressive Content:  $\langle \llbracket cu_j \rrbracket - \mathbf{0.8}, \mathbf{0} \llbracket Bevan \rrbracket \rangle$

Use-Conditions: Felicitously used iff  $cu_j$  has a negative attitude towards Bevan.

Here the expressive *fuckhead* communicates the expressive information to the context. We represent it by the expressive index, which not only shows who the attitude is aimed towards, but also how intense and what kind of attitude it is. Along with the expressive content, we have the use-conditions. I will elaborate on this in Chapter 3, but roughly just like we have truth-conditions that tell us whether something is true, we have use-conditions to tell us whether an expressive has been felicitously used. If the  $cu_j$  had no ill feelings towards Bevan then the use of *fuckhead* in this particular context would be infelicitous.

Below, in Table 1, I summarise how where the relevant different parametric-sensitivity is located for each of the theories that will be the focus of this thesis.



Parametric-sensitivity in:	Assessment-Sensitive Relativism	Indexical Relativism	Indexical Contextualism	Non-Indexical Contextualism	Expressivist Semantics
Context of Utterance			✓ descriptive content	✓ truth-value assignment	✓ expressive content
Context of Assessment	✓ truth-value assignment	✓ descriptive content			

Table 1: Parametric-sensitivity for Non-Hybrid Accounts

Now that the relevant ground has been covered for different semantic options and the relevant admin is out of the way, we can start with the exploration of predicates of personal taste and different forms of Contextualism.

# Chapter 1

## Predicates of Personal Taste and Contextualisms

The first chapter of this thesis will introduce and explore predicates of personal taste (PPTs), disagreement and a cluster of Contextualist views. We'll see that often Contextualist approaches are put forth as a response to Relativism, as Contextualism is often seen a less extreme semantic path than Relativism. I will show that these views fail broadly because they cannot give a satisfactory account of the phenomenon know as *faultless disagreement* or they posit some element in the semantics which they do not provide sufficient evidence for. Refuting Contextualist approaches will give us motivation to look for an alternative semantics for PPTs. In the next chapter, we will see that Relativism *pima facie* seems like a better candidate.

### 1.1 Predicates of Personal Taste, Faultless Disagreement and Relativism

Broadly construed, predicates of personal taste (PPTs) are words that express our tastes, paradigm examples being *fun*, *tasty*. Since these predicates are undoubtedly highly subjective a sufficient semantic framework should capture this subjectivity. The subjectivity in question is agent dependent, as there seem to be no matters of fact whether sentences like *this lager is tasty* or *this rollercoaster is fun* are true. Rather, it is down to each speaker's own preferences whether such things are the

case. The subjective aspect of PPTs appears to produce puzzling disagreements, called *faultless disagreements*. These are disagreements where speakers have uttered apparently contradictory sentences, but neither speaker appears to be at fault. Take for example two friends arguing over whether a certain lager - Carling - is tasty.

CARLING

Matty: Carling is tasty.

Billie: No, Carling is not tasty

In CARLING, two contradictory sentences seem to be uttered, Matty is asserting that *Carling is tasty* whilst Billie is denying this. This secures the intuition of a *disagreement*. There is also an intuition that neither Matty nor Billie have said anything false and in this sense the *faultlessness* intuition is secured. Compare CARLING with (7).

- (7) a. Matty: Carling is a lager.
- b. Billie: No, Carling is not a lager.

In (7a) and (7b), again, there is a feeling of a contradiction, but the disagreement no longer feels faultless. This is because either Matty or Billie (in this case Billie) have uttered something false.

Because PPTs seem to give rise to faultless disagreements an adequate semantic framework must give an explanation for them. This need not mean that a semantic framework needs to accept them as a real phenomenon, but it does need to provide a story for why the intuition of faultless disagreement arises.

PPTs are often cited as a motivating phenomenon for endorsing Assessment-Sensitive Relativism, a view which claims that truth concerning certain expressions is sensitive to a parameter in the context of assessment. As mentioned in the Introduction, for the Relativist the PPT's character is a constant function from context to content and the parametric-sensitivity is located in the judge parameter of the CA. So although

the content is constant in all CAs, different judges can evaluate the proposition and the same proposition can receive different truth-values depending on the tastes of the  $ca_j$ . Relativist can explain faultless disagreements in what appears to be a straightforward manner. In CARLING, the contents of both Matty's and Billie's utterances can be true if the judge parameter picks them out as judges of the CA. This gives us faultlessness. The disagreement intuition is accounted for by there being two contradictory propositions which arise when Billie denies Matty's utterance.

Along with PPTs there are other linguistic phenomena that can be seen as candidates for a relativistic treatment. For example, one might take aesthetic terms such as *beautiful*, *ugly*, *funny*, *contrived* to be amenable to the same relativistic semantics as PPTs. As some have pointed out when it comes to aesthetic predicates there seems to be less subjectivity or at least it's a subjectivity of a different kind. The fact that we value the opinions of art/literary/gourmet food critics makes it seem as though there is more going on than a judge simply deciding that *This painting is beautiful* or *The plot of this novel is contrived*. As such revisions to the highly subjective Assessment-Sensitive Relativism presented here can be made. For example Brogaard (2017) puts forth a version of Relativism where the truth is not relative to just any judge parameter but some expert evaluator<sup>1</sup>. Another linguistic phenomenon that is used to motivate Relativism is epistemic modals. These are words such as *might* and *must* where it seems that the truth of a sentence like *Matty might be at a pub* depends on what information the judge has. We'll briefly consider epistemic modals in §1.6<sup>2</sup>. One might also take moral terms, *good*, *bad*, to be susceptible to a Relativistic treatment however this seems to be a lot harder to justify. The intuition of faultless disagreements is not as strong with a pair of sentences like *Murder is good* and *No, murder is not good*. The point in mentioning this other linguistic phenomena is to note that there is other motivating force for Relativism. I take PPTs to be the

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter 5, §5.1 for a discussion of aesthetic predicates.

<sup>2</sup>For a discussion of terms that seem to be akin to PPTs, but perhaps are more grounded in facts like aesthetic predicates, epistemic modals, future contingents see (Lasersohn, 2017, ch. 10), see also (MacFarlane, 2014, chs. 9 and 10). I will consider some of these linguistic phenomena as candidates for the account I propose in this thesis in Chapter 5.

clearest example of subjective language that particularly pairs well with assessment sensitivity, this reason is why the thesis kicks off with PPTs.

## 1.2 Indexical Contextualism

Contextualism can be seen as a moderate response to Relativism, for the reputation that Relativism receives is often that it's too radical, if we can get away with sticking with monadic truth, we should do just that. The purpose of the remainder of this chapter is to explore various Contextualist approaches to determine whether what is taken to be the more moderate semantics can adequately capture the meanings of PPTs.

Most Indexical Contextualist accounts combine a simple indexical semantics with some extra element in order to fully account for faultless disagreement. We'll explore such views below. Before doing so we'll consider a non-hybrid version of Indexical Contextualism. Such an account employs an indexical semantics and nothing else to give the meanings of PPTs. A version of non-hybrid Indexical Contextualism (henceforth Indexical Contextualism) has been put forth by Cappelen and Hawthorne (2009). They propose that the interpretation of a PPT is dependent on a tacit reference to an individual/group. They start with the predicate of *filling* (later using more traditional PPTs) and claim that “on an occasion of use, a predication of ‘filling’ to some item will tacitly relate that item to a particular individual or group”, where “‘That is filling’, as made by X, where ‘that’ refers to Y, will express the proposition that Y is filling for X” (Cappelen and Hawthorne, 2009, 103).

Using the terminology from the Introduction, we can say that for Cappelen and Hawthorne the character of a PPT is a non-constant function from context of use to content. Should the  $cu_j$  change, then the content of the PPT will also change<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup>I ought to stress that Cappelen and Hawthorne, do not speak of the judge parameter in the context of use as securing the content. I am adopting their view to fit my own terminology and I do not think that it is a misrepresentation of their view. A different proponent of Indexical

As mentioned, Indexical Contextualism allows for exocentric perspectives, these are perspectives that are someone other’s than the speaker’s, that’s why we need the judge parameter along with the agent parameter in the CU. Including the judge parameter explains different types of exocentric disagreements. Consider two cases that Cappelen and Hawthorne mention. Firstly, we might have “correction” cases (Cappelen and Hawthorne, 2009, 110). For example, Billie might be reminding Matty that she actually did not find Carling to be tasty. The propositional content of such disagreements is represented below:

- (8) a. Matty: Carling is tasty [for Matty].  
 b. Billie: No, Carling is not tasty [for Matty].

Billie might go on to remind Matty that she complained about the watery taste of Carling last time she drank it in order to justify her utterance in (8b). Billie’s utterance will pick out Matty as the appropriate judge producing the desired content, namely *Carling is not tasty for Matty*. Here we have a clear case of a contradiction so the disagreement aspect is taken care of. We do not, however, have faultlessness, it will be a matter of fact whether Carling is tasty for Matty.

A different type of exocentric disagreement is that of a group disagreement (Cappelen and Hawthorne, 2009, 110–111). Matty and Billie discuss whether Carling is tasty for their friends who are members of CAMRA (Campaign for Real Ale):

- (9) a. Matty: Carling is tasty [for CAMRA friends].  
 b. Billie: No, Carling is not tasty [for CAMRA friends].

Just like with (8), there seems to be a disagreement for two propositions expressed are contradictory. This again is secured by the inclusion of  $cu_j$ , which allows the indexical element in the PPT to fix CAMRA friends rather than Matty or Billie as the appropriate judge, thus securing a contradiction. However, just as with (8) there

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Contextualism, Glanzberg (2007, 11–12) writes of an *experience parameter E* that is present in PPTs and seems to be very much like the judge parameter. None of the arguments I present against Indexical Contextualism rest on me adopting the terminology set out in the Introduction, as such, I feel like adopting a uniform way of discussing these accounts is not out of place.

is a lack of faultlessness - CAMRA friends would not find a lager like Carling tasty, thus Matty's utterance is false.

Both correction and group disagreements differ from our paradigm disagreements like CARLING, for autocentric perspectives are not being taken by both speakers. Under Indexical Contextualism, the contents of CARLING would be the following.

- (10) a. Matty: Carling is tasty [for Matty].  
b. Billie: #No, Carling is not tasty [for Billie].

A well versed objection against Indexical Contextualism is that although in auto-centric uses of PPTs it secures faultlessness, Indexical Contextualism fails to secure disagreement<sup>4</sup>. The reason is that there's no contradiction between (10a) and (10b), both propositions are compatible. This is often seen as the main reason for dismissing Indexical Contextualism, however to do so just based on the argument from contradiction would be premature. There are two routes that the Indexical Contextualist may want to take: the first is to deny that faultless disagreement is a real phenomena, the second is to bite the bullet to some extent, accept that there's no contradiction but explain the disagreement aspect in some other manner. I focus on the former option first, before considering approaches that combine indexical semantics with some extra element to explain the disagreement aspect of faultless disagreement.

### 1.2.1 Denying Faultless Disagreement

Some Indexical Contextualist claim that the intuition of faultless disagreement is overstated. They claim that faultless disagreement is not a real semantic phenomena, as such there is no problem in failing to account for it. For example Glanzberg writes:

From a traditional, non-relativist, point of view, this idea [of faultless disagreement] is *prima facie* absurd: if two propositions express disagreement, one must fail to be correct [...] I have not argued for this conclusion directly, but I have argued that sober reflection on the semantics of

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<sup>4</sup>See for example, Lasersohn (2005, 2017), MacFarlane (2014).

predicates of personal taste gives us no reason to accept any notion like faultless disagreement.

(Glanzberg, 2007, 16)

From the quote above, it's clear that Glanzberg rejects the idea that faultless disagreement a necessary element for the semantics of PPTs. If we can have a rich semantic profile of PPTs without the notion of faultless disagreement, there is no reason for us to accept such an 'absurd' phenomenon. The issue with this approach lies in its failure to explain why we have an intuition of faultless disagreement in the first place. Why is it that we feel there is a difference between disagreements concerning PPTs like that in CARLING and those concerning facts such as (7). Those who want to avoid giving an account of faultless disagreement must carry the burden of giving us some story concerning our intuitions.

Cappelen and Hawthorne also reject faultless disagreement; however, they provide an explanation of why we might intuitively accept such a phenomenon. Cappelen and Hawthorne claim that the faultless disagreement data is overstated and we do not have genuine disagreements when both speakers take autocentric perspectives. They write:

[W]e do not ourselves find anything very compelling about the purported intuition of faultless disagreement. Cases where the sense of no fault runs deep are ones where the sense of disagreement runs shallow.

(Cappelen and Hawthorne, 2009, 132)

I take the claim that with faultlessness 'disagreement runs shallow' to mean that there is no actual disagreement in cases of faultless disagreement. Cappelen and Hawthorne put our mistaken belief in faultless disagreement down to *semantic blindness* (2009, 118). Semantic blindness is the idea that ordinary language users are often "blind to the semantic workings of their language" (Hawthorne, 2004, 107).



Particularly the speakers are blind to the fact that there is context sensitivity exhibited by certain predicates. In the case of PPTs the speakers are blind to the fact that their standards are different and thus fail to see that the propositions expressed are actually consistent, rather than contradictory. Ordinary speakers project their own standards of taste onto those we disagree with. Such an approach is used in support of Contextualism in epistemology<sup>5</sup>. Semantic blindness can be used to explain disagreements over knowledge claims.

(11)       Matty: I know I have hands.

          Billie: No, you don't know that!

Let there be a standard of knowledge parameter present in the context of use  $cu_s$ . Take Matty to be in  $cu_{s_1}$  where the standard of knowledge is low like that which is appropriate for an conversation at a pub, whereas Billie is in  $cu_{s_2}$  where the standard is high, such as is appropriate at an epistemology seminar. In this case, there would be no disagreement as both speakers are merely taking different standards into consideration, thus they are not talking about the same thing. This is illustrated below:

(12)       Matty: I know I have hands [according to a low standard of knowledge].

          Billie: No, you don't know that [according to a high standard of knowledge]!

In cases like these, there is no genuine disagreement. The speakers merely get the feeling of disagreement as both Matty and Billie are blind to the fact that two different standards of knowledge are at play. Once we draw their attention to the low/high epistemic standard divide, they will agree that their respective uses of *know* have different meanings due to differing standards of knowledge. After this, they would, or should, retreat from the claim that there is a disagreement between them (or at least engage in a discussion under the same epistemic standard). Cappelen and Hawthorne (2009, 117-118) make use out of the predicate *hot* to convey this point, consider an Arizonian overhearing a Bostonian that it's hot:

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<sup>5</sup>For discussion of Contextualism in epistemology see Hawthorne (2004); DeRose (2006).

(13) Bostonian: It's hot [according to the standards of Boston]!

Arizonian: No, it's not hot [according to the standards of Arizona]!

The Arizonian's standard for hotness is very different to that of the Bostonian's, however, "this is not recognized by the Arizonian's language faculty and, owing to misjudgements about semantic uniformity, some disagreement judgements are accepted when they ought not to be" (Cappelen and Hawthorne, 2009, 118). Thus, because the standards for hotness are vastly different, yet this is not recognised by the Arizonian, she accepts this as a case of a genuine disagreement when in fact she is mistaken in doing so. Should the Arizonian realise there are two wildly different standards at play, she would not think that she is disagreeing in (13).

Similarly in our paradigm example CARLING, when Billie and Matty appear to be disagreeing from autocentric perspectives they are mistakenly attributing their own standards of taste to the other speaker. If this were to be reflected on, the semantic blindness would disappear. Both Matty and Billie would agree that there is no genuine disagreement between them. As such, the argument goes, faultless disagreement is not a genuine phenomenon, rather we are simply mistaken about our intuitions.

### 1.2.2 Empirical Data

The approach taken by non-hybrid Indexical Contextualist accounts that faultless disagreement is not a genuine semantic phenomenon, can only stand if we accept that we are mistaken about our intuitions. To challenge this I will discuss two experiments that present linguistic data in support of faultless disagreement. I will end the section by commenting on why semantic blindness does not pose as big a threat for PPTs as it perhaps does for *knows* and *hot*.

#### Solt

I will first consider an experiment carried out by Solt (2018), which suggests that ordinary speakers recognise the difference between faultless disagreements and disagreements where one speaker is 'at fault'. Solt tested an idea presented in Kennedy

(2013), where he discusses two types of subjectivity. Orthodox gradable adjectives like *tall*, *rich*, *hot* etc., can be subjective as the standard changes from context to context. However, there is a crucial difference in subjectivity between these gradable adjectives and PPTs, which is illustrated in comparative form constructions:

- (14)      Matty: Beer is tastier than wine.  
            Billie: No, beer is not tastier than wine.

- (15)      Matty: Frank is taller than Freddie.  
            Billie: No, Frank is not taller than Freddie.

When we put PPTs in the comparative form, faultless disagreement is still present; it seems that both Matty and Billie can have uttered something true in (14). After all, there are no objective facts to tell us whether beer is tastier than wine. It seems that the type of subjectivity exhibited by PPTs stays even if we switch paradigm disagreements from positive form (like CARLING) to comparative form. In (15), we see a disagreement, but this is not faultless. Either Matty or Billie will be ‘at fault’, for there is a fact whether Frank is taller than Freddie. Thus, the kind of subjectivity exhibited by gradable adjectives like *tall* is different from the kind of subjectivity present in PPTs like *tasty*.

Solt (2018) looked at 35 different types of gradable adjectives (including paradigm PPT *fun* and *tasty*) in which the following dialogues were given to the participants<sup>6</sup>:

- (16)      A: John and Fred look similar but John is taller than Fred.  
            B: No, Fred is the taller one of the two.
- (17)      A: The vase on the table is more beautiful than the one on the bookshelf.  
            B: No, the vase on the bookshelf is more beautiful<sup>7</sup>.

(Solt, 2018, 63)

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<sup>6</sup>91 participants were recruited for this experiment (Solt, 2018, 62).

<sup>7</sup>One might take issue with this example as some might think *beautiful* is not strictly a PPT but rather an aesthetic predicate, I use this example as it was presented in Solt. However, nothing hangs on this for this as disagreements using the same template were given for adjectives *fun* and *tasty*. If the reader is not convinced because of the adjective *beautiful*, I invite them to replace (17) with (14).

For each of the 35 gradable adjectives, a similar dialogue representing disagreement was given and the participants were asked to make a choice whether one of the speakers was right, or whether this is a matter of opinion. In other words, Solt wanted to know whether participants thought that the disagreement was about ‘fact’ or ‘opinion’.

The data demonstrates that for orthodox gradable adjectives like *tall*, 98% of the participants said that the disagreement fell in the ‘fact’ category, whilst only 4% percent claimed that disagreements over PPTs were over fact and not opinion (Solt, 2018, 65). From this, we see that there is a clear disparity between judgements from the participants between faultless disagreement and disagreement where one speaker is ‘at fault’. This supports the idea that ordinary speakers take faultless disagreements to be a real phenomenon.

### **Foushee and Srinivasan**

Similar results are found in Foushee and Srinivasan (2017). However, instead of having the disagreements in comparative constructions, they were presented in their positive form. Foushee and Srinivasan tested both adult’s and children’s intuitions over whether disagreements concerning different gradable adjectives can be faultless. One of the goals for this experiment was to see whether children and adults had different sensitivity to subjective adjectives. Although this is an interesting issue it is not relevant for our purposes and so I will only focus on Experiments 1 and 2 where only adults were tested. In Experiment 1, 18 subjects were tested, whereas 33 subject were tested for Experiment 2.

The subjects of the experiment were presented with different objects which were given novel names. For example, *pimwits* were thin purple cylinders varying in height and the amounts of yellow spots they had on them. *Daxes* were blue and yellow spheres, varying in size and density of stripes. Foushee and Srinivasan wanted to test different types of gradable adjectives. Absolute gradable adjectives (*spotted*, *striped*) whose

meaning is largely context-independent, relative adjectives (*tall*) that has context-dependent meaning, and subjective adjectives (*pretty*) (Foushee and Srinivasan, 2017, 380). To do this they gave the test subjects the following scenario, demonstrated in Figure 1:

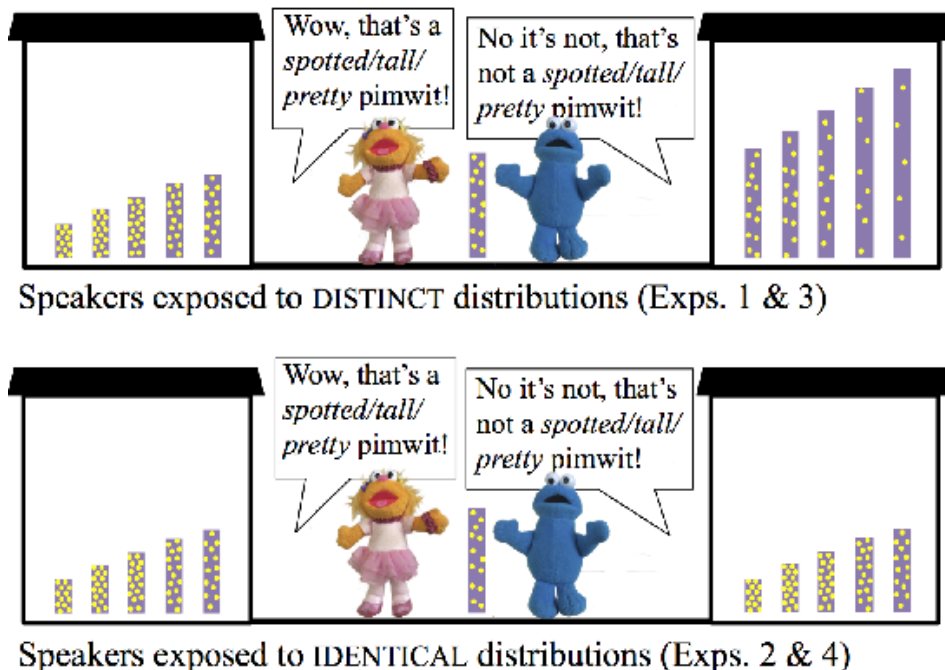


Figure 1: Experiment set up (Foushee and Srinivasan, 2017, 380)

Two Sesame Street puppets - Zoe and Cookie Monster - were presented. The puppets live in their own individual houses<sup>8</sup>. In each of their houses the puppets were acquainted with *daxes* and *pimwits*. For example in Experiment 1, Zoe lived in a house with 5 pimwits (think purple cylinders). Zoe's pimwits were quite short and densely spotted. Whereas Cookie Monster lived in a house with 5 tall, sparsely spotted pimwits. Zoe was not aware what kinds of pimwits Cookie Monster's house contained and *vice versa*. In Experiment 2, the distributions of pimwits were the same, so both Zoe and Cookie Monster were acquainted with the same pimwits (again they did not know what each other had in their houses). Zoe and Cookie Monster would leave their houses and would be presented with an exemplar pimwit, where in the Experiment 1 the size and the distribution of the spots was in the middle of the smallest (Zoe's) pimwits and the largest (Cookie Monster's) pimwits. The

<sup>8</sup>In our example, we will focus on Zoe and the Cookie Monster, however different characters from Sesame Street were used in different experiment, precisely which puppets are used is not of a concern here.

same pimwit was used as the exemplar object in Experiment 2. After leaving their houses the puppets would look at the exemplar pimwit and disagree over whether the pimwit was *spotted*, *tall* or *pretty*<sup>9</sup>:

(18) Zoe: That’s a spotted/tall/pretty pimwit.

Cookie Monster: No, that’s not a spotted/tall/pretty pimwit.

(Foushee and Srinivasan, 2017, 380)

The test subjects were asked whether the disagreement was faultless and why/why not. Test subjects judged disagreements to be faultless in cases of subjective adjectives with the explanation given being that of the puppet’s opinion. Interestingly, the intuition that faultless disagreement is present was found in cases of relative adjectives, however, the explanation for why participants found such disagreements to be faultless differed. Instead of citing that the disagreement came down to puppet’s opinion, the explanation was that it was down to puppet’s experience (Foushee and Srinivasan, 2017, 382). It was also clear that the test subjects did not find disagreements to be faultless in cases of absolute adjectives. The overwhelming explanation for why this is the case involved participants citing that it was to do with the object property itself, rather than anything to do with the puppet’s experience or opinion<sup>10</sup>.

What both of these experiments show is that faultless disagreements seem to be accepted by ordinary speakers. Since no direct argument against faultless disagreement is given, we can dismiss accounts like Glanzberg’s that refuse to acknowledge faultless disagreement as, at least, incomplete. As we saw, Cappelen and Hawthorne do provide us with an explanation of why we have this intuition about disagreements. If they are genuine autocentric discourses, then they are not really disagreements, but we mistake them as such due to semantic blindness. However, the semantic blindness

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<sup>9</sup>Similar set-up was given for when blue and yellow spheres were under discussion - daxes - were considered. For simplicity’s sake I shall only focus on pimwits.

<sup>10</sup>This is a quick summary of the experiments, for figures containing results please see Foushee and Srinivasan (2017, 381–382)

thesis does not put Cappelen and Hawthorne in any better position than Glanzberg, for two reasons.

Firstly, we might accept semantic blindness in the case of epistemic standards (and maybe in the case of *hot*), but it is nowhere near as convincing in the case of PPTs. When it comes to tastes it is appropriate to have authority over your own tastes and project your own standard, for that is the point of predicates of *personal* taste. When two people disagree over tastes, they are not oblivious to the fact that the other speaker has her own tastes. We saw in the case of epistemic standards, once we make it clear to the speakers that two different standards are at play, they might just back down and accept this as true. However, this need not (and often is not) the case with PPTs. People already know they have different standards of taste. If we point out that the agents engaged in a disagreement have different standards of taste, and more precisely that they have different standards in assessing a particular object (such as Carling) they can ‘stick to their guns’ and carry on with the disagreement. This point can be illustrated with an amended example taken from Zeman (2016a, 102):<sup>11</sup>

(19)     Matty: Carling is tasty.

          Billie: So, you’re projecting your standard of taste on both of us?

          Matty: No I’m not, I know how much you dislike Carling.

Insisting that there is some standard which would result in one speaker being wrong, appears to beg the question against proponents of faultless disagreement. If we insist that one would back down from a disagreement over whether Carling is tasty or not, we’re insisting that there is one standard in that context that is ‘correct’. That is,

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<sup>11</sup>The original example (see below) presented by Zeman makes a point against presuppositional blindness. However, I think the amended version does nicely to make the point against semantic blindness as well.

- a. Alice: This is fun.
- b. Bob: So, you presuppose we share a standard of taste.
- c. Alice (intrigued): No, I don’t. I actually know you cannot stand the Formula Rossa. Why would you ask that?!

(Zeman, 2016a, 102)

it will either be true or false within a particular context whether Carling is tasty. But this is precisely what is at issue; we are trying to provide an explanation for judgments over taste which are subjective. That is, we are trying to provide a theory that explains how we can have a disagreement when two different standards are at play.

The second reason to doubt that the semantic blindness thesis is a good explanation for apparent faultless disagreement (in the light of linguistic data) arises when we think of *who* is making the judgements about the disagreements in the experiments. We are asking participants external to the disagreements to observe the conversations and then comment on what sort of disagreement they think it is. To use semantic blindness as an excuse for the intuition of faultless disagreement fails to consider this point. We should expect the participants observing the disagreements to be semantically blind as well if semantic blindness is the cause of our mistaken belief in faultless disagreement. That is, they would have said that there is a matter of fact whether the vase is more beautiful, or whether beer is tastier than wine, given such a high percentage of participants accepting faultless disagreement. Thus, even if the semantic blindness thesis is correct for some cases, it still fails to explain participants' intuitions about faultless disagreement here.

Further, it is not only the case that the participants are not subject to semantic blindness, but they also see that no speaker could be objectively correct. Participants see that when speakers are engaged in disagreements over PPTs, each speaker is 'locked' in their own tastes/subjectivity and this is precisely the result we want. The reason why PPTs are interesting is because of the speaker dependent subjectivity that is exhibited by them. To try and discard this would be denying the essential feature of PPTs.

I take my arguments against the semantic blindness thesis to also apply to others who reject faultless disagreement. For example, Stojanovic (2007) argues that fault-



less disagreement is due to a misunderstanding. The nature of faultless disagreement is also questioned by Moltmann (2010) who has put forth cases in which we appear to have paradigm examples of faultless disagreement, but the disagreement aspect is missing. Showing that it is someone external to the conversation who is judging such disagreements to be faultless, makes the opponent's job much harder. Now we're not simply considering the speakers involved in the conversation (who may be mistaken about their intuitions), but also the participants of the experiment. The burden of proof, then, shifts back to the opponents to show why the intuitions of the participants are incorrect. Note that I am not claiming that there are no cases where the supposed disagreement over taste is either not faultless or is not really a disagreement. However, I agree with Zeman (2016b), who points out that the Contextualist still has to explain those cases, like CARLING, where the disagreement is intuitively present.

In light of the linguistic data, it seems that the Indexical Contextualist cannot simply reject faultless disagreements. If they do, they fail to explain important data arising from PPTs. The Contextualists have also not provided a satisfactory argument against the intuition of faultless disagreement. We saw in the previous section that non-hybrid Indexical Contextualist accounts do not have the tools to account for faultless disagreement within their frameworks.

Of course, what Cappelen and Hawthorne, and Glanzberg reject is the intuition that apparent faultless disagreement really does boil down to disagreements arising from contradictory propositions. It is open to them to modify their Indexical Contextualism by supplementing it with an alternative account to explain the disagreement aspect of faultless disagreement. This is a popular approach taken in the literature, one explains disagreement in a way that does not boil down to literal contradictory propositions being conveyed. That is, one supplement Indexical Contextualism with some other account to give us disagreement. The main strategy of these hybrid accounts is to reject the rigid notion of disagreement. Instead, hybrids of Indexical

Contextualism put forth some extra ingredient where the disagreement is explained in a non-truth-conditional way arising from conflicting attitudes or desires or can be explained by some pragmatic process, yielding non-literal propositional content<sup>12</sup>. Hybrid approaches respect the linguistic data presented in §1.2.2, for the data only specifies that ordinary speakers accept faultless disagreement but do not specify whether the disagreement is propositional or non-propositional. We will see that although such hybrid theories appear to appease the empirical data, they still do not provide a satisfactory semantic profile for PPTs. I will consider two hybrid accounts then conclude this section by introducing a wider problem for indexical accounts (whether hybrid or not).

### 1.3 Presupposition of Commonality

In his discussion of values, Lewis notes how we presuppose that we all share similar values, where the *we* can be explicated in terms of “the speaker and those somehow like him” (Lewis, 1989, 127). This is the idea that López de Sa (2008, 2015) expands on with his hybrid account of Indexical Contextualism. According to López de Sa, the use of a PPT triggers a *presupposition of commonality* - a presupposition that we are alike in our tastes. In using a PPT one introduces this presupposition in to the common ground. If it goes unchallenged then the presupposition holds. If the presupposition is challenged, then the feeling of a contradiction arises and this feeling of a contradiction is precisely what explains disagreement. Let us repeat our paradigm example:

CARLING

Matty: Carling is tasty.

Billie: No, Carling is not tasty.

In CARLING, the presupposition of commonality is triggered by the use of *tasty*. Both Matty and Billie presuppose that their tastes are alike - they both share the

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<sup>12</sup>For a discussion of non-literal truth-conditional disagreement see López de Sa (2008), Sundell (2011), and Silk (2016). For discussion of non-truth-conditional disagreement see, Buekens (2011), Clapp (2015), Gutzmann (2016). For survey articles see Khoo (2019) and Zeman (2017).

same standard of *tastiness* (López de Sa, 2008, 305). However, it cannot both be true that *Carling is tasty* for the likes of Matty and *Carling is not tasty* for the likes of Billie, as the presupposition holds that the tastes of Matty and Billie are the same (López de Sa, 2015, 162). Because of this we get the *presumption of contradiction* and this is what gives the intuition of a contradiction that we get in CARLING. Note, this does not mean that a contradiction is actually expressed, merely that there is an appearance of a contradiction. Presupposition of commonality predicts that when we're involved in a conversation, we presuppose that we are all alike, not that it actually is the case that we are all alike.

The faultlessness aspect of faultless disagreement is accounted for via the indexical semantics. Matty's utterance in CARLING produces a proposition *Carling is tasty for Matty*, whilst Billie's utterance in CARLING results in *Carling is not tasty for Billie*. As long as both speakers are sincere, no fault occurs. To account for the disagreement aspect López de Sa adopts a flexible notion of disagreement concerning conflicting attitudes, "the attitudes in question are non-doxastic, *conative* in nature—like desires, likings, or preferences" (López de Sa, 2015, 158, original emphasis). The reason for these conflicting attitudes is because the presupposition of commonality has failed and has not been accepted into the common ground. So although there is no actual contradiction in CARLING, we get the intuition of a contradiction when the presupposition of commonality fails to be accepted into the common ground. This intuition is then explained away in terms of conflicting attitudes which is the basis for disagreements concerning tastes.

### 1.3.1 The Lack of Presupposition of Commonality

I will present two arguments against López de Sa, both arguments cast doubt on whether presupposition of commonality is actually present in the use of PPTs. The first is a well recited argument from Baker (2012), which shows that it is very difficult to detect the presupposition in the first place. Baker demonstrate this by considering

three presupposition detection tests which I will briefly discuss<sup>13</sup>.

The first is the ‘Hey, wait a minute test!’ (Baker, 2012, 117-118). It’s supposed to detect that something new is being added to the common ground. So, when an utterance entails a presupposition  $x$  containing new information it is appropriate to interject and say *Hey, wait a minute! I had no idea that  $x$* . Now, consider the following dialogues:

- (20) a. Matty: Frank’s dog is barking again!  
Billie: Hey, wait a minute! I had no idea that Frank had a dog.
- b. Matty: Carling is tasty.  
Billie: #Hey, wait a minute! I had no idea that we are alike in respect to our taste judgments.

In (20a) the presupposition  $x$  is that Frank owns a dog, thus Billie’s response is completely felicitous, she’s pointing out that this information entailed by Matty’s utterance is new to her (and the common ground). In (20b), however Billie’s response seems very odd. It’s not ungrammatical but seems to almost not be part of the current conversation. This suggest that the presupposition of commonality is not presupposed by Matty’s utterance in (20b).

The next test is the “...and what’s more..” test (Baker, 2012, 118–119). When a proposition  $y$  entails a presupposition  $x$ , it is inappropriate to utter  $y$  *and what’s more  $x$* , because the conjunct  $x$  adds no new information to the utterance. Consider the following:

- (21) a. Matty: #Frank’s dog is barking again and what’s more Frank owns a dog
- b. Matty: Carling is tasty and what’s more we are alike in respect to our taste judgments.

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<sup>13</sup>Baker attributes these tests to Yablo (2006) and von Stechow (2004).

Matty’s utterance in (21a) is inappropriate as the presupposition that Frank owns a dog is already entailed by the first conjunct she’s uttered. Thus, the infelicity arises from the redundancy of the second conjunct. In (21b) however, the second conjunct seems to add new information to the conversation and so the infelicity does not arise.

The last test that Baker considered is the ‘awkward cancellation’ test (Baker, 2012, 119-120). When a proposition entails a presupposition  $x$  then it seems awkward to cancel it in a direct manner, consider:

- (22) a. Matty: #Frank’s dog is barking again, although Frank does not own a dog.  
b. Matty: Carling is tasty, although we are not alike in respect to our taste judgments.

Matty’s utterance in (22a) is infelicitous and seems almost contradictory. The reason being is that the presupposition has to be true in order for the utterance to come out as true. Matty’s utterance in (22b) however does not feel infelicitous in any manner, there’s no awkwardness about it. It seem that the proposed presupposition can be false, without creating a feeling of contradiction overall.

What these three tests suggest is that there does not seem to be the presupposition of commonality entailed by the PPT-sentences expressed. If this is the case then we cannot explain faultless disagreement in terms of the presupposition of commonality failing and the feeling of a contradiction arising.

Now one might object at this point and argue that it is unfair to put the presupposition of commonality through these tests, as these tests were initially designed to detect *semantic* presuppositions. It is not clear that the presupposition of commonality is (at least purely) semantic in nature. I would not be convinced by this argument<sup>14</sup>, mainly because it seems that what is triggering the presupposition is

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<sup>14</sup>See also Baker for a similar concern where he notes that “since the intuition of conflict and disagreement is supposed to be driven by the presence of the presupposition, it is reasonable to think that the test applies in the cases I am discussing” (Baker, 2012, 118, ft.nt. 25).

the conventional meaning of the PPT. Furthermore, even if presupposition of commonality is non-semantic, it does not mean that these tests should not apply. After all it still adds something to the common ground that is related closely to the initial utterance. I will not argue for the status of the presupposition of commonality here, nor will I argue that these test should be applied to non-semantic presuppositions, I will only note that I do not think it's unfair to put presupposition of commonality through these tests. However, should one be unconvinced I'll present an argument that does not rely on these tests, but rather questions the notion of presuppositions of commonality when indexicality is involved.

An account like López de Sa's has an issue in explaining why the presupposition is not triggered when there is an explicit indexical reference made in the utterance. For example

- (23) a. Matty: Carling is tasty.  
b. Matty: Carling is tasty for me.

In (23a), the presupposition of commonality is triggered by *tasty*, in (23b) it is not, even though both cases are PPT-sentences. We need to explain what the difference is between the two instances. The answer is that presupposition of commonality is not triggered in (23b) as Matty makes it explicit that she is only talking about her standard of taste. Thus, it appears that the indexical element in (23b) is preventing the presupposition of commonality from being triggered. This, however, is not a satisfactory answer. We must not forget that the indexical element is very much present in (23a) according to Indexical Contextualism. The propositions expressed by (23a) and (23b) are identical, but still, it is only in (23a) that the presupposition of commonality is triggered. We need to explain why the explicit indexical element prevents the presupposition from being triggered. The explicit indexical nature of (23b) cannot be the answer, for then it seems that the role of indexicality becomes redundant in (23a).

One suggestion might be that the indexical element is not individualistic. That is,

when John utters (23a), the proposition expressed is *Carling is tasty for us/our group*. Thus, it would make sense for the presupposition of commonality to be triggered (that everyone in the group is alike in their judgment of taste). This would also solve the problem of the difference between (24a) and (24b), for the presupposition of commonality would trigger in both cases. Consider:

- (24) a. Matty: Carling is tasty.  
b. Matty: Carling is tasty for us/our group.

In both cases, the presupposition of commonality is triggered and there is no longer a disparity between covert/explicit indexical elements. Furthermore, it would explain why the presupposition of commonality is not triggered in explicit individualistic indexical utterances, like (23b). Matty is simply talking about her own tastes and not the group tastes.

This, of course, would bring back issues we had with non-hybrid Indexical Contextualism, where we no longer can explain faultless disagreement. For if Matty and Billie are disagreeing over the group standard then one of them will have uttered something true and the other something false — there will be a matter of fact in that context whether Carling is tasty for the group or not. Thus, perhaps it would be able to capture disagreement (in attitudinal, as well as, propositional, terms), but it would not give us faultlessness.

## 1.4 Metasemantic Approaches

In this section I consider Metasemantic approaches that explicate disagreement in terms of the use of the linguistic term itself (*metalinguistic*) or in terms of the context that we're in (*metacontextual*). I will start by briefly considering the Metacontextualist approach, before looking at a more sophisticated version of the Metalinguistic account, one which involves a metalinguistic negotiation. Simply put, on this view, the agents are negotiating over how a word *should* be used in a context.

### 1.4.1 Non-Canonical Disagreements and Metacontextualism

In the literature, Metalinguistic and Metacontextual approaches are treated in a fairly straight forward manner, one is about words and the other is about the context. For example, Lasersohn describes disagreement under the Metalinguistic approach as not being about the object at hand (e.g. Carling), but about the interpretation of the PPT like *tasty* and *fun*. Thus, disagreement is down to the speakers “taking the opposite sides in this conflict over the meaning of the word, rather than appealing to a contradiction between the ordinary semantic contents of their utterances” (Lasersohn, 2017, 39), whilst disagreement under Metacontextual approaches are being taken “to be disputes about what context the discourse participants are in” (Lasersohn, 2017, 39). Similarly, Zeman notes that the disagreement arising out of PPTs can “be cashed out in terms of disagreement about the meaning of words (“metalinguistic disagreement”) or about the context interlocutors are in (“metacontextual disagreement”)” (Zeman, 2017, 70).

Before sketching out these approaches more fully, I will first go into some detail about how Metasemantic approaches reject the claim that disagreement should be given in terms of inconsistent propositions. I will primarily focus on the work of Sundell (2011), and Plunkett and Sundell (2013). Plunkett and Sundell make a distinction between *cononical* and *non-cononical* disputes. The former kind is where two speakers disagree over the contents of the propositions -  $p$  and  $\sim p$ . These are the kinds of disagreements that the Relativists attribute to cases of CARLING. Plunkett and Sundell, quite rightly, point out that there are plenty of disagreements where contradictory propositions are not involved - these are the non-canonical disputes. Consider the following disputes:

- (25) a. Burgers come with chips.  
b. No they don't. Burgers come with french fries.

(Sundell, 2011, 276)

- (26) a. There is one proton in the nucleus of a helium atom.



b. No, there are two protons in the nucleus of a helium atom.

(Plunkett and Sundell, 2013, 12)

We can call disputes in (25) *character disagreements*, where the disagreement is not about the contents of propositions - both ‘chips’ and ‘french fries’ refer to the the same thing - but about the correct word that should be used to refer to the potato entity that comes with the burger. As such, there is no content denial present here, but rather what is the right way to refer to the potato entity. Disagreement in (26) cannot be down to inconsistent propositions either for:

If the familiar Grician story about words is correct, then the speaker of [(26a)] literally says that there is at least one proton in the nucleus of a helium atom, while the speaker of [(26b)] literally says that there are at least two protons in the nucleus of a helium atom. In this, they are both correct, since there are exactly two protons in the nucleus of a helium atom.

(Plunkett and Sundell, 2013, 12)

What speakers in (26) disagree over is the implicature that there is *exactly* one proton in the nucleus of a helium atom<sup>15</sup>. But this is not the literal content that is expressed. With examples such as these it is clear that not every disagreement that exists is down to the literal content that the proposition expresses, as such we should not demand that it is due to the literal contradictory content that faultless disagreements arise. Now that we have motivation for non-canonical disagreements we can explore Metasemantic approaches in more detail.

Metacontextual approaches take disagreement to come down to the agents disagreeing over what context they are in. The descriptive part still appeals to the indexical semantics, where the propositions expressed will involve either the speakers themselves or some group. For example, when Matty utters that Carling is tasty, she may

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<sup>15</sup>For more examples of implicature disagreements and other non-canonical disagreements please see (Sundell, 2011, 275–276).

have in mind that Carling is tasty for the relevant individuals (call these relevant individuals Group A). Thus, as well as communicating the proposition Carling is tasty for group A, she manages to pragmatically communicate that the context that she is in is one where Carling meets the standard of tastiness. Now Billie, since she knows that Carling is not tasty for her, disagrees with Matty and notes that Carling is not tasty for the relevant individuals (call these relevant individuals Group B). As such, as well as the proposition expressed, she managed to pragmatically communicate that the context that she and Matty are in is one where the standard of tastiness is not met. If we spell out the propositional content, then we see that the two propositions expressed are consistent:

(27)      Matty: Carling is tasty<sub>Group-A</sub>.

            Billie: No, Carling is not tasty<sub>Group-B</sub>.

This result will of course capture faultlessness, but not the disagreement aspect. As argued, we do not need (27) to be a canonical disagreement. It is enough that we have the pragmatic information that manages to account for the conflict. The extra linguistic information that both speakers communicate can be paraphrased as follows:

(28)      Matty: We are in a context where Carling meets the standard of tastiness.

            Billie: We are not in a context where Carling meets the standard of tastiness.

I'm going to leave my critique of Metacontextualism until §1.4.3, for the criticism brought against Metacontextualism will equally apply to Metalinguistic accounts. Thus, I will now explain how Metalinguistic approaches handle disagreement. The particular version I will focus on is Plunkett and Sundell's (2013) account of metalinguistic negotiation. This account is more sophisticated than merely saying that the speakers disagree about the usage of a certain term (as I have briefly explained above). Metalinguistic negotiation involves a normative element, thus the agents are disagreeing about how a term *should* be used.

## 1.4.2 Metalinguistic Negotiation

Just as with the Metacontextual account, the Metalinguistic approach takes indexical semantics to give an account of the descriptive content, thus a PPT's character is a non-constant function from context of use to content. Should the  $cu_j$  change the proposition will also change. This, as with other accounts, gives us the faultlessness part of the faultless disagreement. The innovation of the Metalinguistic approach is to explain disagreement as arising from the conflict that is based on how the word is used or should be used in a given context. As such the disagreement is not about the contents of the propositions expressed, but rather trying to *negotiate* the appropriate use of a given word in that context. Briefly, Matty and Billie do not express contradictory proposition, but they disagree over whether *tasty should* be used in that context.

To help us to recognise that we can have non-canonical disputes in virtue of words having different meanings, Sundell and Plunkett put forth (citing Kennedy's (2007) work on gradable adjectives) that certain words that are context-sensitive can have different meanings. For example take *tall* which means something having a degree of height in a given context which surpasses the contextually set standard. Thus in a context  $cu_1$  where we're jockeys and the standard height for jockeys is 5'2" (1.57m), *tall* will mean something like *exceeds the height of 5'2" (1.57m)* or  $tall_x$  for ease of exposition. Now consider  $cu_2$ . Under consideration are basketball players and the average height is 6'6" (1.98m). In  $cu_2$  *tall* would give the meaning *exceeds the height of 6'6" (1.98m)* or  $tall_y$ . So although *tall* has the same character (i.e. exceeds the degree of height of the contextually set standard), the character is a non-constant function from context to content, thus if two people have different standards in mind, the content of the adjective will be different. Thus if two people disagree over someone being tall but they mean  $tall_x$  and  $tall_y$  then the contents would be compatible.

Sundell and Plunkett argue that using an adjective can provide useful information

about the context rather than provide factual information. They motivate this by using an example from Barker (2002):

Normally, [FEYNMAN] will be used in order to add to the common ground new information concerning Feynman's height:

[FEYNMAN:] Feynman is tall.

But [FEYNMAN] has another mode of use. Imagine that we are at a party. Perhaps Feynman stands before us a short distance away, drinking punch and thinking about dancing; in any case, the exact degree to which Feynman is tall is common knowledge. You ask me what counts as tall in my country. "Well," I say, "around here, ..." and I continue by uttering [FEYNMAN]. This is not a descriptive use in the usual sense. I have not provided any new information about the world, or at least no new information about Feynman's height. In fact, assuming that tall means roughly 'having a maximal degree of height greater than a certain contextually-supplied standard', I haven't even provided you with any new information about the truth conditions of the word tall. All I have done is given you guidance concerning what the prevailing relevant standard for tallness happens to be in our community; in particular, that standard must be no greater than Feynman's maximal degree of height. The context update effect of accepting [FEYNMAN] would be to eliminate from further consideration some candidates for the standard of tallness. My purpose in uttering [FEYNMAN] under such circumstances would be nothing more than to communicate something about how to use a certain word appropriately - it would be a metalinguistic use.

(Barker, 2002, 1-2)

Here, as noted by Barker, no new factual information is being given in FEYNMAN, since we can both see Feynman's height. The only information being given is about

the use of the word *tall* in this context. To extend this example to where disagreement takes the focal point consider the following amendment. Say Feynman is 5'10" (1.77m) tall, thus for Matty the standard of tallness would meet Feynman's height (take her to mean  $tall_x$ ) and when asked what counts as tall around here she utters FEYNMAN. But now suppose Billie overhears and for her the standard of tallness is much higher, like that of a basketball player, say 6'6" (1.98m), thus she may disagree with Matty where she means  $tall_y$ , as the following shows:

(29) Matty: Feynman is  $tall_x$ .

Billie: No, Feynman is not  $tall_y$ .

Here we have the classic problem for Contextualism where the contents are compatible, thus, how is it that they can both disagree? Sundell and Plunkett argue that disagreement in (29) is non-canonical (i.e. no incompatible contents are conveyed), but Matty and Billie are negotiating how the word *tall* ought to be used, or they are negotiating over the standard of tallness that should be applied in the current context. Because this negotiation is over the usage of the word we call it metalinguistic negotiation.

Plunkett and Sundell use Barker's insights about gradable adjectives to argue that what happens in disputes like CARLING<sup>16</sup> the two speakers are negotiating the appropriate use of the word *tasty*. In essence Matty is saying that the standard of tastiness should be set in such a way that Carling meets it whilst Billie disagrees. So although the propositions expressed are compatible, the disagreement is about the use of the word itself.

### 1.4.3 A Critique Against Metasemantic Approaches

There are several criticisms I would like to levy against the Metasemantic approaches.

The first is neatly summarised by Lasersohn:

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<sup>16</sup>Although they do not consider *tasty*, there is a discussion of *spicy* which is arguably a PPT. In his 2011, Sundell considers *delicious*.

[M]etalinguistic disagreement presumes a shared language, and metacontextual disagreement presumes a shared context. But neither of these is required for faultless disagreement over taste<sup>17</sup>

(Lasersohn, 2017, 41)

For example, say Matty is in Manchester and Billie is in Boston, Billie can still disagree with Matty even if, due to their geographical locations, they have never met. Some (see for example Cappelen and Hawthorne (2009, 60–61) and MacFarlane (2014, 119–120)), make a distinction between the *state* disagreement, such as the situation just described where the speakers are not physically speaking to one another, and *active* disagreement such as is seen in CARLING, where both speakers are disagreeing by engaging in the activity of conversation. It seems unreasonable to say that two speakers who are not even aware of each others existence would be in some kind of disagreement about what context they are in or how they should use the word *tasty*. Now, Sundell and Plunkett do think that their metalinguistic negotiation account can cover state disagreements, they write:

[B]y using the term ‘dispute’ to refer to any linguistic exchange that appears to express a genuine disagreement, we have implicitly acknowledged that some disagreements aren’t expressed at all.

(Plunkett and Sundell, 2013, 10)

I still think more work needs to be done here, however. It seems unreasonable that one would consider themselves to be in conflict with someone because they are negotiating a certain standard for tastiness or fun, when they are not even aware

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<sup>17</sup>Note here that by metalinguistic disagreement Lasersohn does not quite mean the same thing as metalinguistic negotiation. As noted, Plunkett and Sundell present a more complex version of a Metalinguistic account. On a simple Metalinguistic account the speaker’s would not be disagreeing over which standard ought to apply in this context, but rather the meaning of the word (e.g. what *tasty* means). Lasersohn’s (2017, 42) argument against the more simple view is that speakers can disagree even if they do not share a language. For example, if Matty utters *Carling is tasty* (in English) and Billie utters *Carling nėra skanus* (*Carling is not tasty* in Lithuanian), according to Lasersohn, they are still disagreeing even if they are not in conflict over the meanings of English or Lithuanian words. Since Plunkett and Sundell, in my view, have a stronger account I will put the simple Metalinguistic approach aside for this discussion.

of this person. Furthermore, if we consider two contexts where the standards of *fun*, *tasty*, etc., are wildly different and the speakers have not interacted then this becomes even less plausible. Again, take Matty to be in Manchester hosting a lager event, the salient standard of tastiness here will be whether Carling would meet the threshold of tastiness for the attendees of this event - *tasty<sub>x</sub>*. Take Billie who is in Boston teaching a class of small children, where one of them mentions that they saw their parent drink Carling. The salient standard here will be whether Carling would meet the threshold of tastiness for a small child - *tasty<sub>y</sub>*<sup>18</sup>. Take the following utterances:

(30) Matty (in Manchester): Carling is *tasty<sub>x</sub>*.

Billie (in Boston): Carling is not *tasty<sub>y</sub>*.

It appears that when we flesh out an example like this it seems even more unreasonable that Matty and Billie should be disagreeing by metalinguistic negotiation. This is partly because if we accept that the propositions are compatible, then there is no disagreement on the level of content, but since the contexts are so wildly different there should not be any conflict in the use of the word either. It just does not seem the case that either Matty or Billie would class themselves as negotiating the appropriate use of the word. The same point stands for Metacontextual accounts. If the speakers are not involved in a conversation it seems unreasonable to think that they are somehow disagreeing over what context they are in.

Although this objection puts some pressure on the Metasemantic accounts, it's not world shattering. There's a few ways one could respond. First the Metalinguistic approaches could bite the bullet and simply admit that their view only accounts for active disagreement and not state disagreement, the same avenue is available for the Metacontextual account. Thus, Metasemantic accounts could still provide a plausible explanation of faultless disagreement in paradigm cases like CARLING. Another way to argue against this objection is to say that disagreements like those in (30)

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<sup>18</sup>Here we can of course imagine Billie uttering *Carling is tasty* for other reasons than taste, for example she is indirectly trying to persuade children not to drink alcohol. I want to put such reasons aside and imagine that she is *only* concerned about the tastes of the children.

are not really *genuine* disagreements. Once we consider two contexts which are so different, we lose the intuition of a conflict. As such it would not be fair for the Metasemantic accounts to be expected to account for cases such as these. Lastly, the Metasemantic approach could say that *were* these agents in the same context then they would be disagreeing. I will not assess these responses for I believe there is a much more serious obstacle for the Metasemantic approach to tackle.

As noted by several authors (Cappelen (2018), Karczewska (2016a,b), Zeman (2017)) whilst it is completely plausible to think that metalinguistics negotiations or meta-contextual disagreements do occur in some contexts it is an implausible leap to make that they happen in every context of faultless disagreements. That is, whilst we can envisage a context where the dispute really comes down to how we should use a certain word, it is not true that such contexts are like that presented in CARLING. If we take Barker’s example, which Sundell and Plunkett use as motivation for their Metalinguistic Negotiation account, then we see how different FEYNMAN is to the utterances in CARLING. Cappelen (2018, 177–178) notes that the set up in the Barker example “is unusual in that it is explicitly (close to) metalinguistic”. We are literally asked what counts as *tall* in our country. Because of this, we interpret the question and the answer in the metalinguistic way. This is not the case with the paradigm PPT example, we have not set it up in such a manner that the interpretation of *tasty* is metalinguistic. Of course, we can construct an example very much like Barker’s where the question *What counts as tasty in this pub?* would lead to a metalinguistic interpretation, but most of the examples we are simply not like this. As Karczewska (2016a, 110) writes, in paradigm cases of faultless disagreement nothing guarantees that the speakers “have the appropriate communicative intention which is required for a metalinguistic use of a predicate”.

Exactly the same argument can be made against the Metacontextual accounts. I do not want to deny that there are cases where metacontextual disagreements occur, for example, say if we are unsure which relevant individual we should consider



when talking about *tasty* or *fun*. However, this seems implausible when we consider paradigm examples like CARLING.

So even though I do not wish to deny that metalinguistic negotiations do take place more needs to be done in order to demonstrate that typical cases of faultless disagreements that get presented by the Relativist and are discussed by the Contextualist are such cases. Because of this I do not think the Metasemantic accounts give a satisfactory account of disagreement in cases like CARLING.

## 1.5 A General Argument Against Indexical Contextualism

Thus far, I have only considered a few variants of Indexical Contextualism. The literature is far-reaching and one could write a whole thesis on the merits and flaws of different views. As such, I would like to finish my discussion of Indexical Contextualism and its hybrids with a general argument which specifically targets the idea of endorsing an indexical semantics for PPTs. The benefit of this argument is that not only does it not rest on a critique of faultless disagreement, it also applies to all versions of Indexical Contextualism including its hybrids. This argument is a variation of the one I presented against López de Sa's proposal and it targets the covert nature of indexicality that is supposed to be present in PPTs.

As pointed out by Kölbel (2004b), if Indexical Contextualism is correct then sentences containing an overt indexical reference and those with a covert one would be equivalent. Thus, the following sentences would (in context) have the same content:

- (31) a. Matty: Carling is tasty.  
b. Matty: Carling is tasty for me.

If this is the case, then we should not be able to utter (31a) in conjunction with a negated (31a) (or vice versa) without a feeling of a contradiction (Kölbel, 2004b, 303-304). As such, under Indexical Contextualism, the following should be infelicitous:

- (32) a. Matty: Carling is tasty, but it's not tasty for me.

- b. Matty: Carling is not tasty, but it's tasty to me.

Matty's utterances in (32), however, are not only grammatical but also seem completely felicitous. We can further expand on Kölbel's point by noting that when two speakers are engaged in a paradigm case of a disagreement, overt mention of an indexical adds new semantic content to the discourse. Take the following exchange:

- (33) a. Matty: Carling is tasty.  
b. Billie: No, Carling is not tasty.  
c. Matty: Well, Carling is tasty for me.

If, as Indexical Contextualist claims, Matty's utterance in (33a) expresses a proposition that *Carling is tasty for Matty*, then (33c) ought to be repetitive and redundant. However, just the opposite seems to be the case, Matty's utterance in (33c) appears to add new information to the conversation. This is puzzling if (33a) and (33c) are supposed to express the same propositions.

A proponent of Indexical Contextualism can respond to the arguments above by noting that (33a) is to be understood as *Carling is tasty for  $cu_j$* , where the judge of the context of use can be any of the following: me, everyone, the average person, the group, etc. Matty's utterance in (33c) is explained by Matty restricting her utterance to herself. In other words, Matty is making it clear that she is the  $cu_j$  in this exchange. The benefit of this response is that, *prima facie*, it works against both examples, Kölbel's and mine. Matty's utterance in (32) could be understood as '*Carling is tasty for the group/everyone/the average person, but it is not tasty for me*' or *Carling is not tasty for me, but it is tasty for the group/everyone/the average person*. This response would seem to explain why the utterance is not contradictory, as different indexicals are fixed.

In response to this reply, I would like to first note that in paradigm cases of disagreements over tastes we take, as a default, autocentric perspectives. This is not to deny that there can be exocentric perspectives (indeed that's why we need a judge

parameter in the first place), but these need to be clear from the context. It thus seems strange that Matty would need to clarify that she means herself in (33c). For a vigorous response can be given as we can construct a dialogue where it is clear that Matty is talking about herself (and not the group/everyone/the average person, etc.), for example:

- (34) a. Matty: Carling is tasty, but I know most people don't like it.  
b. Billie: No, Carling is not tasty.  
c. Matty: Well, Carling is tasty for me.

We have constructed this example so it's clear that, in (34a), the indexical element is fixed to an autocentric perspective - Matty's perspective. If there was a covert indexical element contributing to the content of the proposition in the first conjunct of (34a), then Matty's utterance in (34c) would again seem puzzling and ought to be redundant. However, (34c) seems completely felicitous.

This argument shows that we have a reason to doubt whether there is an indexical element present in the content of the PPT. If the examples above are convincing, then it seems that there is no indexicality in the PPT. As noted this general argument will affect all forms of Indexical Contextualism, whether hybrid or not<sup>19</sup>.

## 1.6 Non-Indexical Contextualism

Non-Indexical Contextualism locates the parametric-sensitivity at the level of context of use. This view is discussed in detail by MacFarlane (2009, 2014)<sup>20</sup>. This is different from Indexical Contextual for the content of the PPT does not change from CU to CU, but rather the CU determines whether the proposition is true or false. Thus,

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<sup>19</sup>Syntactic arguments for including a judge in the content of a PPT can be found in Shaffer (2011). For a thorough response to Shaffer see Collins (2013).

<sup>20</sup>In his (2009) MacFarlane does not apply Non-Indexical Contextualism to PPTs but concentrates on epistemic claims, moreover he is explicit in the closing paragraph that he does not reject the possibility of endorsing a full blown Assessment-Sensitive Relativist account for epistemic standards (MacFarlane, 2009, 248-249). Furthermore, in MacFarlane (2014) we see that he rejects Non-Indexical Contextualism as the correct theory for PPTs. I discuss this view here mostly for completeness sense.

Non-Indexical Contextualism makes use out of the judge parameter in the context of use as a truth-value determiner. Recall our paradigm example:

CARLING

Matty: Carling is tasty.

Billie: No, Carling is not tasty.

Matty's utterance will be true if she is taken to be the  $cu_j$  and Billie's utterance will be true if she is taken to be the  $cu_j$ . The faultless disagreement is accounted for by the fact that both speakers have uttered something true (as assessed from the relevant CU), whereas the disagreement part can be accounted for by the fact that there appears to be two contradictory propositions being expressed. Since there is no covert judge in the content of CARLING, Billie's utterance seems to be a direct denial of Matty's utterance.

There are two arguments I will put forth against Non-Indexical Contextualism, the first is the argument concerning retraction, the second concerns the rigidity of Non-Indexical Contextualism.

MacFarlane (2014, 108-110) argues that Non-Indexical Contextualism's inability to fully account for the semantics of PPTs can be seen by considering the retraction conditions of utterances of PPTs. MacFarlane present the *Retraction Rule* as the following:

**Retraction Rule.** *An agent in context  $c_2$  is required to retract an (un-retracted) assertion of  $p$  made at  $c_1$  if  $p$  is not true as used at  $c_1$  and assessed from  $c_2$ .*

(MacFarlane, 2014, 108, original formatting)

For example, say when Billie was 5 years old she did not like olives so she may utter *Olives are not tasty* at  $cu_1$ . This proposition is evaluated as true, for Billie being the judge does not like olives at  $cu_1$ . Fast forward 15 years, we're at  $cu_2$  and now Billie

does in fact like olives. So following the retraction rule, she ought to retract her previous assertion (made at  $cu_1$ ), for it is no longer true as assessed from that new context. Billie is obligated, according to MacFarlane, to say something like *What I said before is not true, olives are tasty, I take it back*. This is where trouble arises. Her utterance must be evaluated with respect to the context in which it was used and the judge of that CU is her earlier, olive-hating, self. The best she can do is to utter a new assertion, judged by her present self - *I now like olives*. She cannot say that what she has uttered at  $cu_1$  is false, for the the correct CU that the proposition needs to be evaluated at is that CU in which it is made.

It is not clear to me how far the data on retraction should go. The debate is vast and for MacFarlane retraction is the central motivator for Relativism. The reason why I will not delve into the literature with a magnifying glass is because: first, I do not believe that being able to retract your assertion is the motivating factor for Relativism, to me, it seems that being able to account for faultless disagreement is much more motivating from a Relativist standpoint; second, as we shall see below, for me the much more worrying issue is that Non-Indexical Relativism seems to be too rigid as a theory for PPTs. Before I focus on this latter point, there is something to be said about MacFarlane's strong claim that one *is required to retract an (unretracted) assertion* from a context in which this assertion is no longer true.

One reason to doubt MacFarlane's claim can be seen by examples wherein it is not clear that one is required to retract their earlier assertion which (although true at the time of utterance) is no longer true. Cases of epistemic modals to prove this point are discussed by von Stechow and Gillies (2008), take their example of an epistemic modal *might*, imagine that Billy is looking for his keys<sup>21</sup>:

(35) a. Alex: The keys might be in the drawer.

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<sup>21</sup>MacFarlane questions this example saying that what's at issue here is not whether the speaker must retract their assertion, but rather whether the assertion was made responsibly (MacFarlane, 2014, 258). I think one could replace Billy's utterance with *What you have said is false* and Alex could still provide the same response. Since my argument against Non-Indexical Contextualism does not depend on retraction, I will not argue for this point further.

- b. Billy: (*Looks in the drawer, agitated.*) They're not. Why did you say that?
- c. Alex: Look, I didn't say they *were* in the drawer. I said they *might be* there - and they might have been. Sheesh.

(von Fintel and Gilles, 2008, 81, original emphases)

To account for epistemic modals we can introduce a speaker's information parameter  $cu_i$ , thus whenever *might* is uttered as long as the speaker does not have a concrete knowledge about the situation, the proposition expressed is true. When Alex utters (35a), at that  $cu$ , it is true based on his knowledge that keys could be in the drawer. When Billy checks the drawer and it turns out the keys are not there, the context changes to one where the speaker is aware that (35a) is no longer true. This is akin to Billie changing her mind about olives. What is interesting however, *pace* MacFarlane, not only does Alex not feel the obligation to take back his assertion, he refuses to do so. In a way he notes that what he said at (35a) is still true, for at the time of his utterance it is true that the keys *might* have been in the drawer. This puts pressure on the claim that one is required to take back what they have said if *now* that assertion is no longer true.

What von Fintel and Gilles example shows is that it is not always *required* to retract an assertion which is no longer true, but in some cases it seems that it is appropriate. For example, Billie may want to retract her olive hating assertion if she wants to make it clear to people that now she likes olives and they can put them in her food. Perhaps needing to retract *sometimes* is enough pressure for dismissing the Non-Indexical Contextualist<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup>For MacFarlane the notion of truth, the reason why we retract is because the proposition is now false. This idea has been questioned in the literature with experimental data, see Knobe and Yalcin (2014) for data which suggests that ordinary speakers do not retract purely because the assertion is now false.

There is a less contentious reason for dismissing Non-Indexical Contextualism. This idea is borne out of MacFarlane's (2014, 110-111) discussion of rejection conditions. Take Matty to assert *Carling is tasty*, Billie believes that what Matty has asserted is false. Bear in mind that this is not the same as Billie asserting the denial of Matty's claim. She just evaluates Matty's utterance as false. But, on Non-Indexical Contextualism, Billie must be wrong. The reason for this is that if the truth of an utterance depends on context in which it is uttered then we can only take into consideration the judge of that CU (call it  $cu_1$ ). In our example the judge of  $cu_1$  is Matty; as such, it is true relative to Matty that Carling is tasty. When Billie evaluates the proposition expressed by Matty as false (despite Billie's dislike for Carling), she must be in the wrong for we know that at  $cu_1$  the proposition *Carling is tasty* will always be evaluated as true. The only way in which Billie's evaluation of that proposition can come out as true is if at  $cu_1$  the proposition was false. In the example we are describing this is simply not the case

Although contents of propositions are not sensitive to the context of use (as they are for Indexical Contextualism), the truth-values are inherently tied to contexts of use and so, someone other than the judge of the CU cannot *correctly* evaluate the proposition in accordance to their opposing tastes. This is a troubling consequence for Non-Indexical Contextualism as it puts Billie at fault when evaluating a taste-proposition whose content is supposed to be judge neutral. This undermines the main desideratum that a correct semantic theory for PPTs must explain, namely faultless disagreement. As such, Non-Indexical Contextualism is not an adequate semantic theory for PPTs.

So far I have considered various Contextualist approaches in accounting for faultless disagreement, I believe that none of them are satisfactory either because they fail to give an adequate account of disagreement or more worryingly it does not seem like there is an indexical element present in the PPT. There is another hybrid Indexical Contextual account that I will consider in Chapter 3 of this thesis. This account, put

forth by Gutzmann (2015, 2016), combines an indexical semantics with Expressivism - I label his view Expressive-Contextualism. It will become clear that although I do not think that an indexical semantics is the correct way to approach PPTs (and later expressives), I do think that the overall strategy is correct and including Expressive semantics is extremely promising. I'm saving the discussion of Gutzmann's view until after I discuss Potts (2005, 2007b)'s non-hybrid Expressive semantics in order to do the view full justice.

## 1.7 Summary

In this Chapter, I have introduced PPTs and the idea of faultless disagreement. We have considered a non-hybrid version of Indexical Contextualism and shown that this version is unable to account for faultless disagreements. We have further seen that the Indexical Contextualist cannot simply dismiss the intuition of faultless disagreement for the empirical data supports its existence. As such they must either explain away the intuition (something they are yet to successfully do) or they need to give a suitable account of faultless disagreement. We have considered a couple of hybrid version of Indexical Contextualist and shown they are also unsatisfactory. Finally we have ended the Indexical Contextualist section by highlighting an argument which will affect any account that employs indexical semantics. We ended this Chapter with Non-Indexical Contextualism which also did not provide a good enough explanation of faultless disagreement.



# Chapter 2

## Relativism

Thus far, we have considered a variety of Contextualist semantics to see if such a moderate approach captures the meanings of PPTs and is able to give an account of faultless disagreement. We ended the last chapter on a negative note: it does not seem like what is often seen to be a moderate semantics is up to the task of giving us a satisfactory account of PPT-sentences. In this chapter we will explore what looks to be a much more promising avenue - Assessment-Sensitive Relativism (Relativism for short). We shall see that the Relativist avoids the issues posed against Indexical Contextualism for they do not posit the judge as part of the content of the proposition. Furthermore, *prima facie*, the Relativist's explanation of faultless disagreement is straightforward: the faultlessness is accounted for by the fact that both speakers have uttered something true, whilst the disagreement aspect is accounted for via a contradiction.

In this chapter I will argue that, although I have no issue with the faultlessness aspect of the Relativist's explanation, on closer inspection it is not clear whether the disagreement aspect has been answered. Focusing on Lasersohn's Assessment-Sensitive Relativism (2005; 2017), we'll see that a common approach in explaining disagreement is to explicate it in terms of a contradiction. However, we'll see that there is a good reason to doubt that the contradiction is present in the first place regarding cases like CARLING. If we find the arguments against the presence of a

contradiction persuasive, then the Relativists who cash out disagreement in terms of a contradiction will be lacking an explanation for disagreement. I will also consider Relativists like MacFarlane (2014) who do not *appear* to rely on the notion of a contradiction in order to account for the disagreement aspect, but once we get to grips with his account it seems to fall into similar troubles as Lasersohn (and the like). I will conclude this chapter by noting that if my arguments are cogent then the Relativist is in no better position to explain PPTs and faultless disagreement than the Contextualist. Both can give us faultlessness but neither camp can give us disagreement. This will be enough motivating force to look elsewhere for a way to give us disagreement. I will end this chapter by briefly considering an alternative Relativist approach, one for whom the *content* (rather than just truth-value) of a proposition would vary from CA to CA.

## 2.1 Lasersohn's Relativism

As we have already noted Assessment-Sensitive Relativism locates the parametric-sensitivity of PPT-sentences at the level of the context of assessment. That is, the judge parameter plays a significant role in deciding truth-values of a given proposition. The content of paradigm PPT-sentences does not vary from context to context, thus the character of a PPT *à la* Relativism is a constant function from context of use to content. As such, a sentence *Carling is tasty* will have the same meaning no matter who utters it. However, the sentence can have different truth-values depending on who the judge parameter picks out - if one does not like Carling then the proposition expressed will be false, if one does then the proposition will be true. Below I repeat the explication of this from the Introduction:

(36) Sentence: Carling is tasty.

Content: Carling is tasty.

Truth-Conditions: True at a CA iff Carling is tasty for the  $ca_j$ .

We now see how Relativists can deal with faultless disagreements with ease, lets consider our example again:

CARLING

Matty: Carling is tasty.

Billie: No, Carling is not tasty.

The explanation of faultlessness is straightforward and simple. The proposition expressed by Matty is true from the CA in which Matty is picked out by the judge parameter. Similarly for Billie, her sentence will be true if evaluated from the CA in which Billie is the judge. Since both speakers have uttered something true, neither is at fault.

The disagreement aspect is given by the fact that there is a presence of a *contradiction* in cases like CARLING. Lasersohn defines a contradiction in the following manner:

$\Phi$  contradicts  $\Psi$  iff there is no  $w, t$  such that  $\Phi$  is true relative to  $w, t$  and  $\Psi$  is true relative to  $w, t$ .

(Lasersohn, 2017, 71)

Here the definition of a contradiction is given in respect of a time parameter, where the context of assessment is world-time pair. It is clear that just this definition of contradiction is intended to hold for any parameters, including individual judges:

Contradiction: Where  $p, q$  are sentence contents (i.e. functions from  $U \times T \times W$  into  $\{\text{Truth, Falsehood}\}$ ),  $p$  and  $q$  contradict each other iff there are no  $u \in U, t \in T, w \in W$  such that  $p(u, t, w) = \text{Truth}$  and  $q(u, t, w) = \text{Truth}$ .

(Lasersohn, 2005, 667)

Where  $u$  are the individuals (judges),  $t$  times and  $w$  worlds. As noted, I will omit the use of the time parameter as it is not central to my discussion. Although this definition follows Lasersohn's formulation, it should be noted that it does not quite suffice as a definition of contradiction. What it gives us rather is a condition under

which  $\Phi$  and  $\Psi$  will be *contraries*. To define *contradiction* we need an additional clause referencing the falsehood of each as well as their truth. Presumably, Lasersohn has omitted this clause for the sake of simplicity, but I'll restore it here for completeness's sake:

CON:

$\Phi$  contradicts  $\Psi$  iff:

- a. there is no  $w, p$  such that  $\Phi$  is true relative to  $w, p$  and  $\Psi$  is true relative to  $w, p$ ; and
- b. there is no  $w, p$  such that  $\Phi$  is false relative to  $w, p$  and  $\Psi$  is false relative to  $w, p$ .

In CON  $p$  represents a general parameter, this could be judges, epistemic standard, times, etc., depending on what kind of linguistic phenomenon you're dealing with. Under CON, two propositions will contradict each other just in case there is no world-parameter pair (whatever this parameter might be), where both propositions can be true or both can be false relative to that world-parameter pair. Intuitively, this produces the correct results for PPT-disagreements. Examples like CARLING satisfy the definition of CON for there cannot be a world-judge pair where *Carling is tasty* and *Carling is not tasty* come out as true or false at the same time. In CARLING the speakers "contradict each other, even if these sentences are evaluated relative to different contexts with different judges or agents" (Lasersohn, 2005, 667).

Now it's easy to see precisely how the disagreement arises, according to Relativists like Lasersohn. When Billie expresses the negation of Matty's utterance, two propositions are expressed where there is no  $w, j$  such that both propositions can be true (or false). Thus, there can be no *one* world-judge pair where *Carling is tasty* and *Carling is not tasty* will come out as true (or false). Because of this CON is satisfied. It is the contradiction that gives rise to the disagreement. By all appearances, it seems that Lasersohn's Relativism can give us a neat solution to the problems that

the Contextualists faced, not only does it give us faultlessness by relativising truth, but it can also give us disagreement by showing that paradigm cases of faultless disagreements satisfy CON. In the next section, however, I will question the adequacy of CON as applied to the Relativist semantics. Having put pressure on the Relativists who use CON, I will propose a Relativist friendly definition of a contradiction - RELCON - we shall see that this new definition does not give us a contradiction in cases like CARLING, as such, the Relativists should not rely on a contradiction to explain disagreement. The shortfalls of Relativism is what will motivate the need for an alternative account.

### 2.1.1 A Relativistic Contradiction?

To challenge Lasersohn's use of CON, I will consider several authors that put pressure on the idea that there is contradiction present in disputes over taste. The reason why there is no contradiction (which then gets assimilated to the idea that there's no disagreement, but more on that later) is precisely because what counts from one perspective should not contradict anything from a different perspective. If it is true that *x is tasty* taking you as the judge and *x is not tasty* taking me as the judge, then there ought to be no conflict for two different contexts of assessment are being considered. Because of these considerations it will become clear that CON is not, in a sense, relativistic enough. Contradiction over PPT-sentences should only hold, if the contradictory propositions are actually assessed by *the same judge* and not, as CON would have it, if it were the case that these propositions were evaluated at the same world-time pair. Adopting a relativistic notion of contradiction, we shall see, will not give us a contradiction in cases like CARLING. This is what will give us motivation to look for an alternative account of disagreement.

We'll start with a very famous passage, penned by Frege, that will help to locate reasons for why the Relativist should not adopt CON:

If something were true only for him who held it to be true, there would be no contradiction between the opinions of different people. So to be

consistent, a person holding this view would have no right whatever to contradict the opposite view, he would have to espouse the principle: *non disputatum est*. He would not be able to assert anything at all in the normal sense, and even if his utterances had the form of assertions, they would only have the status of interjections – of expressions of mental states or processes, between which and such states or processes in another person there could be no contradiction.

(Frege, 1979, 233)

The quote above is arguing *against* the idea that truth could be relative to an individual (/judge). In short it is an argument against the Relativist's project. There are two conclusions drawn by Frege – one explicit and one implicit. The explicit conclusion does not follow; the implicit conclusion, however, holds weight. The explicit conclusion is that the situation Frege describes makes assertion impossible. While it's correct to say that utterances of propositions which are only true or false relative to an individual express the mental states (or, better, attitudes) of speakers rather than any objective truths, this does not mean that they thereby fail to count as assertions – speakers can assert subjective truths, and this is precisely what semantic Relativism is designed to accommodate. Furthermore as we saw, in Chapter 1 §1.2.2, ordinary speakers accept assertions about subjective matters as true or false (or wrong/right) and they seem to accept faultless disagreements. More work would need to be done to show that meaningful assertion of subjective matters is impossible. Since in this thesis I accept that assertion can be made within a Relativistic framework, I will move on from this issue.

The implicit conclusion is that the plausibility of Relativism is undermined by the claim that no contradiction can hold between opinions that are true only relative to those who hold them. Now, unlike Frege, I do not want to argue that the plausibility of Relativism is completely undermined, but rather that Relativism cannot explain disagreements in terms of a contradiction. As a result, the big motivating aspect of Relativism, i.e. simple explanation of faultless disagreements, is under threat. I

don't think this idea forces one to abandon Relativism, but it is a serious issue, as we will see this will motivate us to look elsewhere to explain disagreements.

Other authors have followed a similar line of argument against the Relativists. Moltmann, for example, expresses similar concerns and wonders whether Relativism is in the same boat as Indexical Contextualism:

If a speaker utters *chocolate tastes good* then, knowing the truth-relative semantics of the sentence, the speaker should know that the content of his truth-directed attitude or act would be true just relative to his own context. From his point of view, no considerations need to be made that the content of his utterance also target the context of the addressee. Of course, the speaker may know that the addressee will evaluate the utterance at his context. But why should he be bothered about that and why should it lead to possible disagreement? The addressee, in turn, given his knowledge of the relativist semantics of the sentence uttered should know that too. It thus remains a mystery why the situation should give rise to disagreement. The situation appears entirely undistinguishable from the one where the speaker expresses or upholds his own subjective opinion without targeting the addressee's parameters of evaluation in any way, that is, the situation made explicit by attitude reports like *I consider chocolate tasty*.

(Moltmann, 2010, 213, original emphases)

A similar argument (although not explicitly in relation to contradiction) is presented in Stojanovic (2007), where she argues that even if we accept that faultless disagreements are possible (she's doubtful about the idea), the Relativist is in no position to give an account of disagreement. Similarly to Moltmann, Stojanovic argues if we take speakers to have semantic competence with respect of PPTs then they should be aware the contents they express may take on different values if different judges are assigned, furthermore, Stojanovic writes:

They [the speakers] also know that one’s assertion and the other’s denial of the same content are inconsistent only when evaluated with respect of the same judge. Hence if each party intends the asserted content to be evaluated at himself or herself, and if this is mutually clear between them, then they will realize that there is no clash in truth value between their claims (when evaluated as they intend them to be), and that their “disagreement” is thus nothing more than a divergence in preferences.

(Stojanovic, 2007, 697)

She gives an interesting analogy concerning possible worlds. Take the following exchange:

(37) Tarek: Holmes lived on Baker Street.

Inma: No, he didn’t.

If Tarek is taking the appropriate possible world to be that of Conan Doyle’s fictional world and Inma is talking about the actual world (and they are both aware of this), then there isn’t really a disagreement here. By analogy it isn’t clear why there should be a disagreement between Matty and Billie if they are talking about their own tastes, from their own perspectives (Stojanovic, 2007, 697, ft.nt. 5).

Again, as just with the authors discussed above, what Stojanovic seems to be pointing to is Relativism’s inability to account for disagreement because there is a lack of contradiction between Matty’s and Billie’s (or Tarek’s and Inma’s) assertions. Although Stojanovic does not explicitly mention contradiction, I take her noting that contents ought to only be *inconsistent* when evaluated from the same judge, to hint at the lack of contradiction. Just like with Frege and Moltmann, I believe what Stojanovic has shown is that the Relativist cannot account for disagreement in terms of this inconsistency or contradiction.

What all of these authors highlight is if we adopt Relativism then it does not make sense to cash out a contradiction in terms of CON, for it should not matter that  $p$  and



$\sim p$  cannot be true (or false) *if* they were evaluated from the same CA, what matters is that in paradigm cases of faultless disagreements is that they are not evaluated from the same perspective. Thus, we can question Lasersohn’s claim that speakers “contradict each other, even if these sentences are evaluated relative to different contexts with different judges or agents” (Lasersohn, 2005, 667). When Matty asserts that *Carling is tasty*, she asserts a proposition that is true relative to her as a judge. When Billie asserts that *Carling is not tasty*, she asserts a proposition that is true relative to her as a judge. But there is nothing contradictory about this situation – the proposition just changes its truth-value depending on the tastes of its judge.

Clearly CON is an attempt to define contradiction in a way that respects the assessment sensitivity of truth. But Frege’s objection persuasively shows that it is not sufficiently sensitive to the relativisation of truth-values to contexts of assessment for this attempt to successfully ground faultless disagreements in contradictions. The attempt to ensure such sensitivity rests on the quantification over parameters in CON. But an important gap between the concept of contradiction offered here and the concept of assessment-sensitive truth, remains. According to CON, contradiction is a relation that can hold between two propositions, even if they are not actually evaluated at the same CA. CON places a condition on propositions, such that *if* their assessment at the same CA would be contradictory, then they are in contradiction with one another. But, if truth is really relative to a CA, this falls foul of the Fregean objection – relativism is grounded in the philosophical claim that what holds for one CA need not hold for any other, hence this condition does not hold. In other words, the fact that it would be contradictory for  $ca_{j_1}$  to endorse *Carling is tasty* and *Carling is not tasty* is not sufficient to generate any clash between  $ca_{j_1}$ ’s endorsement of *Carling is tasty* and  $ca_{j_2}$ ’s endorsement of *Carling is not tasty*. Hence, the condition built in to CON is inadequate for a Relativistic definition of contradiction, because holding true at  $ca_1$ , is not at odds with failing to hold true at  $ca_2$ . An alternative definition of contradiction, which reflect the Relativist’s commitments, however, is available:

## RELCON

$\Phi$  relative to  $(j_n, w_n)$  contradicts  $\Psi$  relative to  $(j_n, w_n)$  iff:

- a. The truth of  $\Phi$  relative to  $(j_n, w_n)$  excludes the truth of  $\Psi$  relative to  $(u_n, w_n)$ ; and
- b. The falsity of  $\Phi$  relative to  $(j_n, w_n)$  excludes the falsity of  $\Psi$  relative to  $(j_n, w_n)$ .

According to RELCON contradictions only hold at given contexts of assessment. So whereas CON identifies contradiction as a relation between  $\Phi$  and  $\Psi$  which guarantees that there will be no context of assessment in which both are true (or false), RELCON defines it as a relation which itself contains an argument place that relativises it to contexts of assessment. In other words, according to RELCON a contradiction only holds when  $\Phi$  and  $\Psi$  are true (or false) *at the same context of assessment* and not, like CON would have, if  $\Phi$  and  $\Psi$  were evaluated from the same context of assessment. This is the notion, that the relativist should aim for, and which CON does not secure.

The problem identified with CON is simple: if truth is a non-monic property that relates propositions to certain parameters, then contradiction inherits this same feature. The Relativist is not entitled to hold that  $\Phi$  contradicts  $\Psi$  just in case they could not both be true in a given CA. They are only entitled to hold that they contradict each other *in* that CA. The latter description of the entitlement takes contradiction to be a fully relativised notion, in a sense that the former does not: that  $\Phi$  contradicts  $\Psi$  at  $ca_1$ , does not entail that  $\Phi$  at  $ca_1$  contradicts  $\Psi$  at  $ca_2$ .

What this means for the Relativists that want to account for the disagreement aspect of faultless disagreement in terms of a contradiction, is that they no longer can. It's interesting that both Moltmann and Stojanovic hint at the idea that the Relativist is in no better position than the Indexical Contextualist. Although partly I disagree with this claim, for the Relativist is not positing any covert indexical elements that are part of the proposition, I agree with them when it comes to the disagreement aspect. The issue with the Indexical Contextualist was that the disagreement was

lost for there is no contradiction between *Carling is tasty for Matty* and *Carling is not tasty for Billie*. One way we can think about this is that there is no contradiction because the judge has changed from one context of use to the next. What has happened in one CU is not relevant for another, similarly if the agent parameter changed in *I am hungry* and *I am not hungry*, there is no contradiction for two different agents fill in the content. This is a similar situation that we have with Relativism, one context of assessment should not affect another if the parameters have changed. Thus, the context of assessment where Matty is the judge should not be relevant to the context of assessment in which Billie is the judge. The truth of Matty's utterance has no bearing on the truth of Billie's assertion precisely because the judge parameter has changed. If the Relativist wishes to commit fully to the idea that truth is relativised this should have a bearing on the notion of contradiction they employ. Adopting RELCON, as we see, puts the Relativist in the same boat as non-assessment-sensitive views, where disagreement seems to be lost.

The above discussion leaves us in a precarious position if we aim to adopt a Relativistic framework. Here there are a couple of options we could take; the first would be to deny that in CARLING there is a disagreement in the first place; the second is to find a way to account for the disagreement that does not involve a contradiction. The first option is undesirable. We saw in Chapter 1 that the Contextualist cannot simply deny that there is a disagreement, the intuition has to be accounted for. More importantly, however, one of the biggest motivations for Relativism is the fact that it's supposed give an account for faultless disagreement. As such, we do want to capture the feeling that Matty and Billie really do disagree about whether Carling is tasty, it's just that there is no contradiction there. One of my central aims for the rest of the thesis will be to find an account which can complement Relativism nicely and give us disagreement. Before doing so, however, I would like to consider a Relativist account which does not explicitly rely on contradiction to deal with disagreement. This is the focus of our §2.2.

## 2.2 MacFarlane’s Relativism

Just like Lasersohn, MacFarlane holds the character of a PPT to be a constant function from context of use to content. The judge parameter (or standard of taste in MacFarlane’s terminology), is where the parametric-sensitivity is located. On the semantic side both MacFarlane and Lasersohn are very similar, I omit the differences in the technical aspects as the more interesting way in which the two Relativist differ is in how they tackle faultless disagreement. Surprisingly, for a Relativist, MacFarlane does not endorse faultless disagreement in a way I have spelled it out so far. He does not think, that we should account for faultlessness by claiming that both judges have uttered something *true*, for he thinks this conception of faultlessness is incoherent. I think that this is a mistake and we shall see that, *pace* MacFarlane’s claims, faultlessness in respect of the truth is a coherent concept. On the disagreement front, MacFarlane differs in that he does not endorse a contradiction as an explanation for the disagreement, instead he claims that we ought to explain disagreement in terms of *preclusion of joint accuracy*. I will first critically analyse MacFarlane’s notion of a disagreement, before turning to defend faultlessness that rests on truth.

### 2.2.1 Preclusion of Joint Accuracy

For MacFarlane disagreement does not come down to a contradiction but rather *preclusion of joint accuracy*. Very roughly, this is the idea that we’re in a disagreement just in case two attitudes expressed could not be held *at the same* CA. I will talk about how this relates to the critique that we raised against Lasersohn, but first let’s consider how disagreement boils down to preclusion of joint accuracy in more detail. First we need to know what MacFarlane means by accuracy:

**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  $c_2$ .*

(MacFarlane, 2014, 127, original formatting)

Following the definition above, Matty's sentence *Carling is tasty* as uttered in a CU will be accurate if the content of the sentence comes out as true at the relevant CA - in this case the CA is one in which Matty is the judge, thus her utterance is accurate for the proposition will be true. The same will go for Billie, her utterance *No, Carling is not tasty* will only be accurate as assessed with her as the  $ca_j$ . Matty's utterance will be inaccurate for Billie because if it's assessed from the CA where Billie is the judge the content of Matty's utterance will be false.<sup>1</sup> In short, an utterance will be accurate if it is true when evaluated from a CA, false otherwise.

Preclusion of joint accuracy then, tells us that what is involved in a disagreement is one attitude/speech act preventing another attitude from being accurate:

**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).*

(MacFarlane, 2014, 129, original formatting)

According to the definition above what happens in CARLING, is that the accuracy of Matty's attitude (expressed by *Carling is tasty*) as assessed from the CA where Matty is the judge precludes the accuracy of Billie's attitude (expressed by *Carling is not tasty*) as assessed from the very same CA where Matty is the judge - the same will apply to Billie.

I want to highlight this last point. It's important that two incompatible propositions (i.e. *Carling is tasty* and *Carling is not tasty*) are being assessed from a *single* perspective. If Billie was to assess Matty utterance from a perspective other her own, then there would not be preclusion of joint accuracy as incompatible propositions can exist accurately from different perspectives. As such, disagreement only takes

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<sup>1</sup>It might seem that there's some similarity with Non-Indexical Contextualism as we're talking about a speech act's content being *true as used at  $c_1$  and assessed from  $c_2$* . This similarity is only superficial, as for Non-Indexical Contextualism, the context in which the sentence can be assessed has to be the same one as in which it is used, thus a content of an assertion will be accurate just in case it is true as used from  $c_1$  and assessed from  $c_1$ . For MacFarlane's Relativism, just like Lasersohn's, allows for an utterance occurring at a context of use to be evaluated from any CA.

place in cases like CARLING because, the two attitudes conveyed by Matty's and Billie's utterances cannot accurately exist at the same CA.

*Prima facie*, we can think of preclusion of joint accuracy as sidestepping the Frege-style objection, precisely because disagreement is explained in terms of speakers' attitudes and not truth-conditions. Disagreement on this view does not rest on the presence of a contradiction it merely demands a conflict of attitudes between participants. However, on a closer look it seems that framing disagreement in terms of attitudes does not bypass the Fregean objection, but now instead of claiming that there is a lack of a contradiction as we did with Lasersohn, I'll make the claim that opposing attitudes do not *preclude* each other in MacFarlane's sense. Truth concerning matters of taste is relative to a perspective and so long as disputes about taste are made from different perspectives there is no contradiction in both being true. Accordingly, there is no reason to think that an equivalently relativised notion of accuracy should be any different. Matty's accurate assessment of *Carling is tasty* can coincide with Billie's accurate assessment *Carling is not tasty*. Of course, Matty cannot accurately assess it as not tasty from her own, (i.e. Matty's) perspective, but that is not what we disagree over in cases of faultless disagreement. Matty's attitude may preclude her from having the same attitude that Billie has, but it does not preclude Billie from anything. Hence, it does not explain why Matty and Billie should be disagreeing.

Compare this to the objection levelled against Lasersohn. We said that there is a lack of contradiction because in the cases of faultless disagreement the truth is being relativised to different CAs - one in which Matty is the judge and one in which Billie is the judge. Should the propositions *Carling is tasty* and *Carling is not tasty* be assessed *from a single perspective*, then we could say that there was a contradiction. This however is not the case, as in paradigm cases of faultless disagreements (e.g. CARLING) there are two different perspectives involved. Similarly, should a single judge hold attitudes expressed by *Carling is tasty* and *Carling is not tasty* then we

could grant preclusion of joint accuracy. Again, however, two different judges (and thus two different CAs) are involved in cases of disagreement we're trying to explain. This is a simple instance of Fregean objection.

At this point I would like to stress that I think the strategy of grounding disagreement in terms of conflicting attitudes is correct, this is precisely the sort of position I will go on to defend. The issue I take with MacFarlane's analysis is that his definition of a disagreement is too close to that of a contradiction, which, if one is convinced by the arguments in the previous section, should not be the holy grail of the Relativists. In essence, I don't think that MacFarlane is putting the idea of judges' attitude to work hard enough. Before I move on to explore Expressivist approaches, which will make more exclusive use of judges attitudes, I would like consider MacFarlane's view on faultlessness.

### 2.2.2 Faultlessness and Truth

MacFarlane, somewhat strangely for a Relativist, takes the idea of faultless disagreement when based on truth to be an incomprehensible idea. I say that it's strange for a Relativist to do so because it is precisely this kind of concept of faultless disagreement that has been a major motivating factor for Relativism. In this section, I will go on to assess MacFarlane's argument for dismissing faultless disagreement couched in truth, concluding that it does not stand up to scrutiny. I will show that the concept of faultless disagreement that has so often been a helping hand to Relativism can and in fact should be adopted.

To start with, MacFarlane distinguishes four different senses of faultlessness (MacFarlane, 2014, 133–134):

- (i) *faultless<sub>w</sub>*: faultless in the sense that it's epistemically warranted.
- (ii) *faultless<sub>a</sub>*: faultless in the sense that it is accurate.
- (iii) *faultless<sub>n</sub>* faultless in the sense that it's not in violation of constitutive norms

governing belief/assertion.

(iv) *faultless<sub>t</sub>*: faultless in the sense the speaker has uttered something true.

Since there are many senses of faultless disagreement, MacFarlane is cautious about using the terms as it seems to be ambiguous. He accepts the first three senses of faultless disagreement, but he goes on to argue that the last which he dubs “*faultless<sub>t</sub> true*” (MacFarlane, 2014, 133) is incoherent. The argument that MacFarlane presents against *faultless<sub>t</sub>* is somewhat swift, but he claims that if this sense of faultlessness was coherent, then (38) could be coherently uttered by either Matty or Billie:

(38) I disagree with you about that, but what you believe is true.

(MacFarlane, 2014, 134)

If neither Matty nor Billie can coherently utter (38), then what faultlessness comes down to cannot be truth about the assertion or belief. MacFarlane goes on to claim that: “many opponents of truth relativism take its goal to be vindicating faultless disagreement in this sense. Clearly *that* is not a viable goal” (MacFarlane, 2014, 134, original emphasis).

I disagree with MacFarlane that *faultless<sub>t</sub>* disagreement is not a viable goal. Examples like (38) are in fact not counter examples to *faultless<sub>t</sub>*. I will present two responses: the first questions why we’re forcing the monadic notion of truth onto the Relativists endorsing *faultless<sub>t</sub>*, the second considers the fact that speakers engaged in disagreement would be unlikely to believe that what the other person believes is true.

MacFarlane’s argument seems to rely on his unwarranted assumption that defining faultlessness in terms of truth entails treating truth as a monadic property:

Faultless<sub>t</sub> disagreement is not possible on either construal of “disagreement”<sup>2</sup>. If you can coherently characterize another’s belief as “true”

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<sup>2</sup>The two construals of disagreement MacFarlane is referring to are: (i) *disagreement<sub>n</sub>* (doxastic noncotenability), and (ii) *disagreement<sub>p</sub>* (preclusion of joint accuracy). The latter notion, as we discussed above, is the one that is pertinent to discussions of Assessment-Sensitive Relativism.



(using the monadic propositional truth predicate), then you could come to have a belief with the same content without giving up any of your current beliefs, so the other's attitude is doxastically cotenable with your own.

(MacFarlane, 2014, 134)

My complaint with MacFarlane is that there is no recognition that one could recognise another person's opposing belief if that belief is evaluated from a different context of assessment. Billie could recognise Matty's belief *Carling is tasty* as *correct* as long as she is evaluating it from the context of assessment where Matty is the judge. MacFarlane is probably right that *faultless<sub>t</sub>* disagreement is impossible if we are operating with a monadic truth predicate. But we are not operating with a monadic truth predicate if we are specifying truth-conditions in a relativistic semantics. And that is why we can faultlessly disagree, according to Relativism. Because of this, it seems that (38) does not sufficiently capture the Relativist position who supports *faultless<sub>t</sub>*, as there is no recognition of relativisation of truth to different CAs. Recognising different perspectives would render (38) much more plausible, for example:

(39) I disagree with you about that, but what you believe is true from your perspective.

If we allow that our speakers are so reflective that they would take into consideration others perspectives (which does occasionally happen), then (39) seems acceptable, albeit somewhat strange for ordinary people do not tend to speak in such formal terms. It should be noted however, that typically ordinary agents are not so reflective and this leads us onto the second response. Agents involved in a subjective disagreement do not normally take the other agent to have uttered something true, thus we do not need the speakers to believe that (38) is coherent. When agents are locked in a disagreement, they will most likely not take themselves to believe the latter part of (38) – *but what you believe is true*. Even in matters as subjective as tastes, one speaker might take the other to be speaking falsely. This is not an

argument against *faultless<sub>t</sub>* disagreement, however. Rather, what this shows is that we shouldn't concentrate on what the people involved in the dispute believe about the other party. More concrete data would come from a third-party observer. A non-biased spectator, could coherently say:

(40) Matty and Billie disagree, but what they both believe is true.

Someone judging whether a disagreement is faultless or not can coherently believe, and felicitously utter, (40). This supports my claim that there is a very intuitive sense of faultless disagreement which a semantic theory ought to account for. That is, two people faultlessly disagree if there is some claim that they disagree over, yet both have expressed a true proposition. Hence while MacFarlane seems correct in deeming (38) incoherent, this is no obstacle in recognising *faultless<sub>t</sub>*.

One could point out that even though (40) does sound better than (38), it still sounds a little strange. To my ear (40) sounds fine, but I will speculate a couple of reasons why one might find it odd: firstly, we don't often have unbiased third-party observers to weigh in on PPT-disagreements, so the whole context might seem a little weird; secondly, the strangeness might be due to the word *believe* in the sentence, which I chose to use to mimic MacFarlane's example. I'm not claiming that people do not use the word *believe* it's just that if one is observing a conversation it's more natural to use a verb that reflects a speech act, replacing it with *said*, as in (41a) makes the example much more natural sounding:

- (41) a. Matty and Billie disagree, but what they both said is true.  
b. Matty and Billie disagree, but neither are wrong.  
c. Matty and Billie disagree, but they both hold valid points of view.

Furthermore, we can see that examples like 41b and (41c) which seem to communicate the same sentiment as (38), that are much less contentious. Of course more work would need to be done with these examples to show that they are *definitely* pointing at truth and not some other phenomenon, but for now I think that enough

has been done to undermine (38) as a strong challenge against *faultless<sub>t</sub>*.

If semantic relativism is correct, it owes us an account of faultless disagreement. More precisely, we need an account of *faultless<sub>t</sub>* disagreement. By failing to recognise such disagreement MacFarlane's Relativism is denying the linguistic data often used not only by Relativists but also their opponents. Assessment-Sensitive Relativism is motivated by the view that disagreements can be *faultless<sub>t</sub>*. As such, a retreat from the defence of this position is a weakening of the Relativist's case. Accordingly, I think I am justified in adopting *faultless<sub>t</sub>* disagreement as *the* phenomenon to be explained.

## 2.3 Other Relativists

Thus far, I have only considered two Assessment-Sensitive Relativists, which to put it mildly, does not cover the whole field of Relativism. In this section I will consider a couple of other accounts which I will not discuss in great detail, but will point to some interesting characteristics. I start with Max Kölbel, who presents a very similar account to Lasersohn<sup>3</sup>. I then move on Egan who presents a dispositional Relativist account.

### 2.3.1 Kölbel

It would not be fair of me to overlook Max Kölbel's work on Relativism. He proposes a very similar account to that of Lasersohn and MacFarlane. As such, this section will be brief for I believe that the same criticisms apply to Kölbel as they do to our other two Relativists. The similarity between Kölbel and the other Assessment-Sensitive Relativists is highlighted by Lasersohn (2005) who in the introductory note writes:

Most of the work for this paper was completed before I became aware of Kölbel (2002), which argues for a very similar position (though with-

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<sup>3</sup>More accurately Lasersohn presents a very similar account to Kölbel, as Kölbel's Relativism came first, see Lasersohn's quote below.

out the Kaplan-style formalization I develop here). Readers are referred to Kölbel's book for a fuller philosophical defense of this position, and for programmatic suggestions of a slightly different approach to formal implementation.

(Lasersohn, 2005, 643, ★)

Now, I will not go into the details of differing formal explications, particularly as I have tried to keep formalism in this thesis to a minimum, but I will consider some interesting claims that Kölbel makes. For this discussion we can simply assume Kölbel's formal explication to be the same as Lasersohn's. In fact, in his (2009) Kölbel does represent Relativism using Kaplan's system. Thus the character of a PPT is a constant function from context of use to content. Content is a function from context of assessment to truth-values, where the context of assessment contains a world parameter and a judge parameter (although for Kölbel it's a standard of taste parameter). One thing that I will briefly consider is how Kölbel would handle cases of disagreement, the conclusion as we shall see is that he too assumes a notion of a contradiction which is untenable for the non-hybrid Relativist.

For Kölbel individuals within a Relativist framework are "subject to the norm that they should believe or assert only propositions that are true in the actual world and on their own standards of taste"<sup>4</sup> and what it means to be at *fault* is to violate this norm (Kölbel, 2009, 390). Thus we should follow the following principle:

(TR) It is a mistake to believe a proposition that is not true in one's own perspective.

(Kölbel, 2004a, 70)

Kölbel explains faultless disagreement in the same manner as Lasersohn. Since both speakers believe something true from their own perspectives neither has committed a fault but they have expressed contradictory propositions:

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<sup>4</sup>As noted by MacFarlane (2014, 135), this means that Kölbel cashes out the faultlessness part in terms of norm rather than truth. Thus, there is a clear difference between Kölbel and Lasersohn. My critique of Kölbel is to point out that he cannot account for disagreement, thus for this section I am not concerning with which notion of faultlessness he adopts.

The only way to allow faultless disagreement is therefore to relativize truth to perspectives: one disputant's belief is true in his or her own perspective, and the other disputant's *contradictory* belief is true in his or her own perspective.

(Kölbel, 2002, 100, added emphasis)

As such, we run into exactly the same issues we did with Lasersohn and MacFarlane, there is a lack of contradiction in the cases of faultless disagreements. If we find RELCON convincing, then Matty and Billie are not expressing contradictory beliefs in CARLING. I will not repeat the whole argument from §2.1.1, but my complaints will be the same.

### 2.3.2 Egan

Egan proposes a *de se* Relativist dispositional account of PPTs, where uttering a taste sentence requires us to self-attribute a property of being disposed to behave in a certain way toward the object of taste. For example, when Matty utters *Carling is tasty* she also self-ascribes a property of *being disposed to like Carling in certain circumstances*. Egan adopts Stalnaker's<sup>5</sup> account of assertion, whereby when you assert you put something into the common ground to be accepted. Thus, successful communication involves both *production conditions* (the speaker is required to be sincere in their assertion), but also *uptake conditions* (that the participants in the conversation are required to accept the proposition into the common ground). We will see that the disagreement will arise because the participants in the conversation refuse to accept a certain assertion into the common ground.

For Egan an assertion *A* will have as its content *P* namely *being somebody in whom *x* is disposed to cause *R** (Egan, 2014, 87) (also see Egan (2010, 277)). Thus, if we take Matty's assertion *Carling is tasty* this will have the content of *being somebody in whom Carling is disposed to cause liking* or less cumbersome *being someone who*

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<sup>5</sup>See Stalnaker (1999, 2014)

*is disposed to like Carling*. This might seem suspiciously close to the Contextualist's picture, if Matty and Billie are both self-ascribing properties, do we not just end up back with the indexical account, namely the following:

(42)       Matty is disposed to like Carling.

              Billie is not disposed to like Carling.

Here we would face exactly the same issues about the lack of inconsistent propositions and the presence of indexicality for which we rejected Indexical Contextualist accounts in Chapter 1. This is not the case, however, as there is no indexicality in Egan's account, thus the contents of Matty's and Billie's utterances are as follows:

(43)       Matty: Being someone who is disposed to like Carling.

              Billie: Being someone who is not disposed to like Carling.

The presupposition that is attempted to be added to the common ground is that the property (*being someone who is disposed to like Carling*) should be self-ascribed by the participants of the conversation. The reason why disagreement arises is because Matty and Billie are attempting to add two incompatible propositions into the common ground. There is conflict here, as neither speaker could rationally self-ascribe both properties  $p$  and  $\sim p$ . That is neither Matty nor Billie could hold both that they are someone who is disposed to like and disposed not to like Carling. This conflict is cashed out in there being incompatible conversational demands placed on the context (Egan, 2010, 255–256). In CARLING Billie cannot accept Matty's assertion without withdrawing her own and Matty cannot accept Billie's assertion without withdrawing her own. Because neither speaker can self-ascribe the properties of *being disposed to like Carling* and *being disposed to not like Carling* we have a conflict. Egan further notes that a third party could not sincerely accept both of the assertions presented by Matty and Billie (Egan, 2010, 257).

Regarding this latter point about a third party observer, I think that Egan is mistaken here. In Chapter 1, §1.2.2, we saw that there is empirical data which supports faultless disagreement, where the participants of the experiments seem to have taken

on precisely the role of third party observers in judging whether both speakers of the experiments could have spoken truly. Furthermore, in this Chapter §2.2.2 we saw that utterances like in example (40) *Matty and Billie disagree, but what they believe is true*, seem felicitous. This should not be the case if, as Egan would have it, a third party was not able to accept two apparently conflicting assertions.

Regardless of whether a third party could sincerely accept both utterances in CARLING, there is a bigger critique against this view. My critique of Egan is of the same kind as my critique against other Relativists discussed thus far. Although Egan is not trying to cash out disagreement in terms of a contradiction (like Lasersohn), the criticism I presented against MacFarlane would work just as well. We need to ask why should a disagreement arise if the speakers are *self-ascribing* a property of being disposed to like/dislike a certain object. When I self-ascribe a property of *being disposed to like Carling* in a certain context, there is no reason why I should presuppose that the participants in the conversation should also self-ascribe this property. Marques (2016) makes a similar point against Egan, concentrating on self-ascribing a certain desire:

#### OLIVES

*A* desires drinking martinis with green olives at a party. *B* desires drinking martinis without any olives (since she hates olives). *A* can have all the olives at the party, for all *B* knows. There is no attitudinal conflict between *A* and *B*. There is also no incompatibility in thought between *A*'s self-ascription of a desire to drink martinis with green olives, and *B*'s self-ascription of a desire to drink martinis with no olives.

(Marques, 2016, 733)

Similarly to Marques' martini drinkers, there should be no conflict in Matty self-describing a property of *being disposed to like Carling* in one CA and Billie self-ascribing the property of *being disposed to not like Carling* from her own CA. Because of this there is no reason to assume that Matty's and Billie's assertions in CARLING

place any incompatible conversational demands on the context.

The only way to make sense of a disagreement on this view is if it's exocentric in the sense that it applies to the whole group. We saw however, that this would not account for faultlessness, for if we're taking into consideration the whole group then the *de se* content does not just apply to the individual but the group in question. As such, there would be a matter of fact whether *Carling is tasty* for the whole group. Furthermore, this would have to be reflected on the semantic level. If when uttering *Carling is tasty*, Matty means for the whole group then the judge will be the group rather than just Matty. Since there will be a matter of fact whether *Carling is tasty* for the group, then on the propositional level either Matty or Billie would be at fault. As such, we would not be able to ascribe faultlessness to these disagreements (again failing to secure faultless disagreements).

Although Egan's proposal appears to be of a very different kind to the Assessment-Sensitive Relativists we've explored thus far, we saw that the same strategy of arguing for the lack of contradiction (or lack of incompatibility) works here just as well. Because of this we have motivation to look elsewhere for an account of PPTs.

## 2.4 Indexical Relativism

Before I conclude this chapter I would like to briefly consider a view that fills a much less discussed part of logical space, especially in relation to PPTs, a view called Indexical Relativism. In a nutshell, this view argues that the content of a proposition is not complete until the correct judge is picked out, so it's the context of assessment that gives the *full* content of a proposition.

I will mostly focus a version put forth by Weatherson (2009), however several words of caution are needed before I delve into the discussion. Although Weatherson takes inspiration from Stephenson (2007) who does discuss PPTs, Weatherson's account was not designed for nor was it intended to be applied to PPTs. Weatherson's goal



was to apply Indexical Relativism to indicative conditionals and not PPTs, as such the arguments I present in this section may not have any bearing on Weatherson's own application (I will stay silent on the issue of indicative conditionals). One big difference between Weatherson and most of the accounts we have been considering thus far is that faultless disagreement is *not* a motivating factor for his Indexical Relativism (Weatherson, 2009, 347). As far as I'm aware, Indexical Relativism has not been applied to PPTs, so in a sense, I'm thinking of this section as responding to a possible, rather than actual, proponent who would adopt the view even if they may never exist.

The last bit of caution I would like to give is on the terminology. Some of the authors have used the label Indexical Relativism for a view that I've been calling Indexical Contextualism, for example: Dreier (2009), Einheuser (2008), Kölbel (2004b), López de Sa (2008). For the purposes of this thesis, the view which I call Indexical Contextualism is the view that the context of use influences the *content* of the sentence, whereas the Indexical Relativism is the view that it is the context of assessment that supplies the content for a proposition. Furthermore, Indexical Relativism has also been referred to as Content Relativism (see for example Cappelen (2008) and MacFarlane (2014, 72–76)).

Weatherson applies the idea of a *silent nominal* PRO<sub>J</sub> present in Stephenson (2007). For Stephenson, when we utter taste claims the PRO<sub>J</sub> is present in some of the cases and the value of it is a judge. The judge is supplied by the CA and will function to complete the proposition. To demonstrate how Indexical Relativism functions, Weatherson frames it in respect of moral claims<sup>6</sup>. Take the following moral claim:

(44) Premarital sex is morally worse than driving drunk.

(Weatherson, 2009, 339)

Take  $P$  to stand for 'premarital sex' and  $D$  for 'driving drunk'. The relation  $D < P$

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<sup>6</sup>Weatherson is explicit that he rejects Moral Relativism (2009, 242) and merely uses this example as an illustration.

states that driving drunk is morally not as bad as having premarital sex. Now to complete our propositional frame for (44) we need to specify a moral standard:  $D < P$  in  $M(PRO_J)$ , which would be read as *Premarital sex is worse than driving drunk in  $PRO_J$ 's moral code* ( $PRO_J$  being the  $ca_j$ ). Evaluated from Matty's perspective, (44) expresses a proposition that *Premarital sex is worse than driving drunk in Matty's moral code*, if we take the judge to be Billie then the proposition expressed is *Premarital sex is worse than driving drunk in Billie's moral code*. We can apply this to the case of PPTs and, notice, we end up with the same propositions as Indexical Contextualism, the main difference being that the judge is supplied by the context of assessment and not the context of use.

(45) Sentence: Carling is tasty.

Content: Carling is tasty for  $ca_j$

Truth-Conditions: True iff Carling is tasty at  $ca_w$ .

Supposedly, the reason why we can have disagreements, as those in CARLING, is because for Matty the proposition expressed will be with her as the judge (which will be true), however, when Billie is evaluating the utterance it is Billie who completes the propositional frame and thus *Carling is tasty for Billie* will be false. Thus, it seems that under Indexical Relativism the disagreement arises not because there are inconsistent propositions, but one speaker disagrees with the propositional frame.

This is where some issues arise. It seems that Indexical Relativism makes the same predictions as Indexical Contextualism and thus faces the same criticism. Importantly, since both theories predict the same descriptive content, Indexical Relativism must face the same burden when trying to give an account of disagreement. The reason for this is that Billie and Matty must be evaluating proposition itself as true or false rather than a propositional frame. Propositional frames are not the sort of phenomena which can be given a truth-value. For comparison consider a sentence involving a demonstrative:

(46) This book is blue.

Before we know the referent of *this*, we cannot agree or disagree with the sentence. Without knowing which book we're talking about, Billie and Matty could not disagree (without making some mistake). Once the referent is fixed then it would make sense for two agents to disagree about whether *book<sub>x</sub> is blue*. Similarly, if a PPT contains a judge parameter that contributes to the proposition and thus makes the propositional frame complete, there is nothing to disagree about when the propositional frame is not complete. Now I'm not trying to conflate demonstrative sentences with PPT-sentences, but I think the same idea stands. We can only evaluate a sentence for truth once we have all its content fixed.

If what I have argued above is correct, then Indexical Relativism will fail to account for disagreement for precisely the same reason as the non-hybrid version of Indexical Contextualism, there are no inconsistencies between the propositions that Matty and Billie express namely, *Carling is tasty for Matty* and *Carling is not tasty for Billie*. When Billie disagrees with Matty, she surely cannot be disagreeing with the proposition *Carling is tasty for Matty*. Note that although Indexical Relativism makes the same predictions as Indexical Contextualism regarding the descriptive content, Indexical Relativism also has in common with Assessment-Sensitive Relativism that it fails to account for disagreement. Thus far none of the views considered manage to provide us with a suitable account of faultless disagreement. As such, although I think that Indexical Relativism is a view that occupies an intriguing part of the logical possibilities, it does not seem to be a suitable account for PPTs.

## 2.5 Summary

In this Chapter, we've considered two very influential Relativist views and their accounts of faultless disagreement. With Lasersohn, I endorsed the straightforward approach of accounting for the faultlessness aspect, we simply say that both judges have uttered something true and a relativistic semantics can accommodate this. Trouble arose, however, when looking at the explanation of a disagreement via contradiction. I concluded that CON was not a suitable notion for a Relativist to adopt

for, as has been pointed out by many authors, why should there be a contradiction when two separate CAs are under discussion? Adopting a suitably relativistic notion of contradiction - RELCON - showed that there are no contradictions in examples like CARLING, which meant that the Relativist cannot rely on contradiction to explain disagreement.

We then moved on to consider a view which does not seem to assume contradiction as a basis for disagreement. We considered MacFarlane's preclusion of joint accuracy, but concluded that, similarly to Lasersohn, there should be no reason why one attitude precludes another if assessed from different CAs. We then considered MacFarlane's criticism of *faultless<sub>t</sub>*. We saw that there is no good reason to reject faultlessness as couched in terms of what is true for the judge.

We also considered a different kind of Relativism - Indexical Relativism. This view has not been much discussed in the literature, specifically in respect to PPTs, and it does not seem like plausible semantic account of PPTs.

Although this Chapter has been largely critical towards Relativism, I want to be clear that I do think there is a lot of merit to the semantic framework. It avoids the issues raised in Chapter 1, for it does not posit a covert indexical element that we saw we had reasons to doubt. Moreover, as noted, Relativistic semantics can give a straightforward explanation of faultlessness. The task now is to find a way to account for disagreement. To do this I will adopt an Expressivist semantics to complement Relativism. This is the goal for the remainder of the thesis.

# Chapter 3

## Expressivist Semantics

Let's take stock. Thus far we have seen how two giants in the field of semantics have fallen short of giving a satisfactory account of PPTs and particularly faultless disagreement. With the Contextualist approaches I raised issues of how one is able to account for faultless disagreement and in respect to Indexical Contextualism there were some internal worries about the semantics. With Relativism, the descriptive part that accounts for faultlessness, to me, seem very plausible, however the Relativist's treatment of disagreement seems unsatisfactory. This Chapter is devoted to exploring a semantic account which will complement Relativism and give us disagreement. The inspiration for this move comes from exploring hybrid approaches, and particularly Gutzmann's (2015; 2016) Expressive-Contextualism. Before we can dive into Expressive-Contextualism and do it justice, we need to have the basis of Expressivism laid out. As we shall see, there are issues with non-hybrid Expressivist semantics, particularly when dealing with expressives in predicative positions. I will address these worries with Expressivist semantics first.

Exploring expressives (and particularly when they occur in predicative positions) will lead us to an interesting and somewhat unexpected consequence. Although the goal thus far has been to try and find an account of faultless disagreements in relation to PPTs, we will see that the theory developed in Chapter 4 - Expressive-Relativism - will be able to deal with problems raised in this Chapter. I say that

this is an interesting consequence as it broadens my project and shows that there are some strong similarities between expressives and PPTs, similarities strong enough to warrant the application of the same semantic theory.

### 3.1 Potts' Expressive Semantics

In this Chapter I focus on Expressive semantics put forth by Christopher Potts, first developed in his *The Logic of Conventional Implicature* (2005), and then later in a pair of papers (Potts, 2007b,a). We can describe expressives as words conveying the agents' attitudes, for example *ouch*, *oops*, *damn*, *bastard*, *fuckhead*. Depending on the context these attitudes can either be positive or negative. There are various ways in which expressives differ from 'ordinary' descriptive words, Potts (2005, 2007b) notes six properties that are typically associated with expressives. Although only the first three will be principal to us (Independence, Perspective Dependence and Descriptive Ineffability) it's worth discussing all of them for completeness sake<sup>1</sup>.

#### *Independence*

Independence is the property which seems to be the most distinctive of expressives. This property allows for the expressive content to reside in a different dimension to the descriptive content. Whereas descriptive terms contribute to the proposition and thus are truth-conditional, expressives only occupy the expressive dimension and bear no influence on the truth-conditions<sup>2</sup>. We can test whether the expressive contributes to the truth-conditional content with a couple of tests. Firstly, we can see whether the truth-conditions of a proposition change when we remove the expressive:

- (47) a. That fuckhead Bevan forgot the Carling.  
b. That Bevan forgot the Carling.

When the expressive is removed in (47b), the truth-conditions stay the same, the

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<sup>1</sup>Note that here I will largely focus on expressives which interact with other truth-conditional content. I will not consider interjections such as *boo!* or *hurray!*. For expressive accounts of these please see Gutzmann (2015), Kaplan (1999), Predelli (2013))

<sup>2</sup>As noted in the Introduction, by descriptive content what we mean here is content that truth-conditional at the first instance. In his earlier work, Potts (2005) referred to this content as *at-issue* content, by using 'descriptive content' I am keeping with his later (Potts, 2007b,a) terminology.

proposition will be true just in case Bevan forgot the Carling in both examples. This gives us a good reason to think that the expressive contributes to the expressive dimension only. Secondly, we can see if a direct denial of an utterance will have an effect on the expressive:

- (48) Matty: That fuckhead Bevan forgot the Carling.
- a. Billie: That's not true.
  - b. Billie: #No he isn't!

Billie's denial in (48a), only targets the descriptive content, i.e. she does not deny that Bevan is a *fuckhead*. We can see that direct denial of the expressive content is not possible as shown by the infelicity of her attempt in (48b)<sup>3</sup>. Both of these tests suggest that the expressive content does not contribute to the descriptive dimension and thus is independent from it.

### *Perspective Dependence*

Expressives are always evaluated from a certain perspective. This perspective is most often the speaker's, for example:

- (49) That bastard Webster has asked me to marry him!

Here we see that it is the speaker's negative attitude being portrayed towards Webster. Now consider:

- (50) My father screamed that he would never allow me to marry that bastard Webster.

(Kratzer, 1999, 6)

In (50), the speaker is no longer conveying a negative attitude towards Webster, but rather she's communicating her father's attitude. As such we need to allow for the expressive to be evaluated from a perspective that is someone other than the speaker, in the example above the speaker's father. To handle cases like these, we will need

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<sup>3</sup>This is not to say that one cannot express their disagreement about Matty's use of *fuckhead* towards Bevan, for example: *Now wait a minute, Bevan is not a fuckhead*, however this is not an instance of a direct denial.

to include a judge parameter in the context of use that the expressive is sensitive to. The judge parameter will pick out the relevant agent (or judge) from the context and the expressive will be evaluated from that perspective (we will discuss the role of the judge in the CU in more detail below). Regardless of whether the perspective is of the speaker or some other judge, the important point is that expressives are always evaluated from *some* perspective.

### *Descriptive Ineffability*

Expressive content cannot be given a full descriptive paraphrase. By a full descriptive paraphrase I simply mean, as does Potts, that “[s]peakers are never fully satisfied when they paraphrase expressive content using descriptive, i.e., nonexpressive, terms” (Potts, 2007b, 166).

Potts notes that the word *bastard* can be “claimed to mean ‘vile contemptible person’. But this paraphrase misses its wide range of affectionate uses”, as well as, uses that apply to objects rather than people (Potts, 2007b, 177-178). For example:

(51) Here’s to you, ya bastard.

(Potts, 2007b, 178)

(52) If my bastard laptop would work properly that would be great!

Furthermore, even if we tried to paraphrase *bastard* in (52) it’s clear that the paraphrase would be missing something. If we paraphrase *bastard laptop* as *bad/useless laptop* then we would be missing the potency of the agent’s attitude in (52).

### *Nondisplaceability*

Expressives say something about the context of use. For example:

(53) Last night that fuckhead Bevan forgot the Carling.



In (53), although the speaker is talking about last night, by using the expressive they tell the hearer that they've got a negative attitude towards Bevan *now*, i.e. the current context of use.

### *Immediacy*

Expressives achieve their intended purpose simply by being uttered. Potts makes a comparison with promises. A promise is made simply by uttering 'I promise' (or some variant of this), similarly the agent's attitude is conveyed simply by uttering the expressive (Potts, 2007b, 180).

### *Repeatability*

Repeating an expressive strengthens the expressive content. For example:

- (54)      Damn, I left my keys in the car.  
            Damn, I left my damn keys in the car.  
            Damn, I left my damn keys in the damn car.

(Potts, 2007b, 182)

With each use of *damn* the agent's expression of annoyance at leaving their keys in the car increases. By repeating the expressive, they convey more and more of a negative attitude towards the situation.

As noted only the first three properties will be explored in any great detail. The independence property is probably the one which gets highlighted as the most characteristic of expressives as it gives them a status of being completely separate from the ordinary descriptive words. As I will argue, I do not think that expressives have the independence in the way that Potts describes it and what is special of expressive terms is that they have perspective dependence and descriptive ineffability. Before I make the case for these latter points, however, let's consider in more detail how Potts' Expressivism handles expressive terms.

Potts introduces two new parameters into the context of use to account for the expressives - the *judge parameter* and the *expressive setting*. The judge parameter we're already familiar with, it plays a similar role as it does with Indexical Contextualism and Relativism - it picks out the relevant agent from who's perspective the expressive should be evaluated from. Unlike with Indexical Contextualism the judge parameter does not contribute to the *descriptive* content and unlike Relativism the judge parameter does not play a role in determining the truth-value of a proposition. For Potts, expressive content resides in the expressive dimension separate from the descriptive dimension, thus the judge parameter will play a role in helping to determine the expressive content only. The judge parameter will help to account for the perspective dependence property, it will ensure that the expressive is *always* evaluated from some perspective. Typically the judge will coincide with the speaker, however because of examples like those presented by Kratzer in (50), the judge and the speaker may diverge. As such, in the context we need to have two parameters relating to individuals the judge parameter  $cu_j$  and the agent parameter  $cu_a$ .

The second parameter which is new to us is the expressive setting -  $cu_{\mathcal{E}}$ . We can think of the expressive setting as capturing all the expressive information available to us at a CU. For example one judge may have a positive attitude towards Carling but a negative attitude towards Jeremy, the expressive setting will capture this. The expressive setting consists of a set of expressive indices. An expressive index will provide us with not only who holds an attitude, but what kind of attitude it is (e.g. positive/negative, how intense) and who the attitude is directed towards. More formally, an expressive index is a triple of  $\langle a \mathbf{I} b \rangle$ . Where  $a$  is the judge;  $b$  is the subject of the judge's attitude;  $\mathbf{I}$  is an interval  $\mathbf{I} \subseteq [-1,1]$ . The interval measures two things, the intensity of the attitude (the narrower the interval the more intense is the attitude); positive and negative feeling that  $a$  has towards  $b$  (Potts, 2007b, 177).

To demonstrate how the expressive index helps to capture the expressive content

consider the following scenario: Mark and Jeremy are preparing Christmas dinner<sup>4</sup>. To Mark’s horror, it becomes clear that Jeremy has forgotten to provide the turkey that they had agreed he would acquire. Mark utters the following to make his attitude towards Jeremy clear:

ATTRIBUTIVE: That fuckhead Jeremy forgot the turkey.

Take  $cu_1$  to be the context before Mark finds out that Jeremy forgot the turkey and Mark’s attitude towards Jeremy is pretty indifferent, take  $cu_2$  to be the context after Mark utters ATTRIBUTIVE:

$$(55) \quad \begin{array}{ccc} cu_1 & & cu_2 \\ \langle \llbracket Mark \rrbracket [-\mathbf{1}, \mathbf{1}] \llbracket Jeremy \rrbracket \rangle & \Rightarrow & \langle \llbracket Mark \rrbracket [-\mathbf{0.8}, \mathbf{0}] \llbracket Jeremy \rrbracket \rangle \end{array}$$

In  $cu_1$ , Mark’s indifferent attitude towards Jeremy is captured by the interval  $[-\mathbf{1}, \mathbf{1}]$ , once Mark utters ATTRIBUTIVE, the interval narrows and becomes more negative, as such we can see that Mark has a very negative attitude towards Jeremy. When an expressive is uttered it either introduces a new expressive index or replaces one that was already present. If a new expressive index is introduced or if the expressive index replacing an existent one is sufficiently different, then the context itself changes, we can see in (55) the indifferent expressive index is replaced by the highly negative one. The expressive content is represented by the expressive index.

Potts places one important constraint on admissible contexts which he calls *Expressive Consistency* constraint. Potts defines this as “a context is admissible only if  $[cu_{\mathcal{E}}]$  contains at most one expressive object  $\langle a \mathbf{I} b \rangle$  for every salient pair of entities  $a$  and  $b$ ” (Potts, 2007b, 179). That is, if every expressive setting contains only one expressive index towards one salient object. This constraint prevents a context in which a judge has both negative and positive feelings towards the same entity. Taking ATTRIBUTIVE, we could *not* have a context where  $cu_{\mathcal{E}}$  contained

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<sup>4</sup>This example is borrowed from a British sitcom *Peep Show* (2010, Season 7, episode 5). I have simplified the example quite drastically, Mark’s full utterance is: “You what? No turkey? You fucking idiot, Jeremy! You total fucking idiot! That was your job, you fucking moron! You cretin! You’re a fuckhead! That’s what you are! A fucking shithead!”.

both  $\langle \llbracket \text{Mark} \rrbracket[-\mathbf{1}, \mathbf{1}] \llbracket \text{Jeremy} \rrbracket \rangle$  and  $\langle \llbracket \text{Mark} \rrbracket[-\mathbf{0.8}, \mathbf{0}] \llbracket \text{Jeremy} \rrbracket \rangle$ . In other words, we cannot have one *cu* where Mark feels both positively and negatively towards Jeremy. When discussing example ATTRIBUTIVE, we saw that introduction of *fuckhead* changed the context from  $cu_1$  to  $cu_2$ , this is in line with the expressive consistency constraint for both attitudes are not held at the same context. This does not mean that an expressive setting could not contain various expressive indices concerning different entities, for example if Mark has a negative attitude towards Jeremy but a positive attitude towards Carling we can capture these two expressive indices in the same CU (i.e.  $\langle \llbracket \text{Mark} \rrbracket[-\mathbf{0.8}, \mathbf{0}] \llbracket \text{Jeremy} \rrbracket \rangle$  and  $\langle \llbracket \text{Mark} \rrbracket[\mathbf{0.9}, \mathbf{1}] \llbracket \text{Carling} \rrbracket \rangle$ ).

What follows from this is that we can give a straightforward explanation of what examples like ATTRIBUTIVE mean, represented below:

(56) ATTRIBUTIVE: That fuckhead Jeremy forgot to get the turkey.

Descriptive Content: Jeremy forgot to get the turkey.

Expressive Content:  $\langle \llbracket \text{Mark} \rrbracket[-\mathbf{0.8}, \mathbf{0}] \llbracket \text{Jeremy} \rrbracket \rangle$

To go back to our earlier terminology, we can say that a character of an expressive is a function from context to expressive content. What's interesting about expressives is that can also change the context one is in, as we saw the context of use can change from one where the attitude of Mark is indifferent to one where the the attitude is negative. Before pointing to some issues with Potts' analysis let's have a quick summary of how Potts' semantics accounts for all of the properties. The *Independence* property is accounted for by the fact that expressive terms can only affect the context and not the truth conditions of the sentence. The expressive content resides in the expressive dimension and has no direct influence on the descriptive content. The *Perspective Dependence* property is accounted for by the use of the judge parameter, this ensures that the expressive will always be evaluated from some perspective. The *Descriptive Ineffability* is covered by the fact that we use an expressive index to represent the expressive content. We could paraphrase the expressive content of ATTRIBUTIVE as something like *Mark has a very negative attitude towards Jeremy*, however, this paraphrase would not fully capture the emotional aspect that is tied to

the term *fuckhead*. We can account for *Nondisplaceability*, by noting that expressives only affect the context of use. By uttering an expressive one tells information about the current context of use. *Immediacy* is accounted for by the fact that the expressive immediately operates on the context of use. Lastly, the *Repeatability* property can be explained by the fact that when you repeat the expressive you replace an expressive index with a more intense one. Like I have mentioned, the last three properties are not of our concern, however the first three are. In the next section, I shall argue that Independence should not be held a distinctive property of expressives and then I will, go on to argue that what makes expressives special are their descriptive ineffability and perspective dependence.

### 3.2 Expressives and Independence

Potts' semantics works really well for terms that occur in attribute positions like *fuckhead* in ATTRIBUTIVE. It also works well for expressives that do not even syntactically interact with the rest of the sentence, for example *oops* in *oops, I dropped the turkey* or *damn* in *damn, Jeremy forgot the turkey*. However, when we put expressive terms in predicative positions, the story changes primarily because expressives in predicative positions do appear to contribute to the descriptive content of the sentence. Take the following example:

PREDICATIVE: Jeremy is a fuckhead.

Recall the two tests we ran when considering the independence property - the removal of the expressive and direct denial. We see that *fuckhead* in PREDICATIVE does not (so to speak) pass those tests. Firstly, removing *fuckhead* from PREDICATIVE does change the truth-conditions of the sentence, doing so leaves the sentence incomplete:

(57) Jeremy is a ...

We also see, that direct denial is possible. Dobby's denial targets Mark's claim that Jeremy is a *fuckhead*:

(58) Mark: Jeremy is a fuckhead!

Dobby: That's not true/That's false.

When the expressive occurs in a predicative position, it seemingly loses what often is cited as the most distinctive property of expressives, their independence from the descriptive dimension. Although there isn't a prolonged discussion of expressives in predicative positions in Potts, he is very explicit over what he thinks of cases like PREDICATIVE. Potts claims that “[a]ll predicates that appear in copular [/*predicative*] position must necessarily fail to be expressive” (2007b, 194). As such, it seems the word *fuckhead* is highly sensitive to the syntactic position in which it occurs: whilst *fuckhead* in ATTRIBUTIVE would be given a completely expressive treatment, the same word would be given (only) a descriptive treatment in PREDICATIVE.

This does not seem like a satisfactory avenue to go down, not because we treat the expressive occurring in predicative positions as descriptive, but because Potts attempts to remove any expressivity from the predicate. By claiming that the word in predicative position fails to have any expressive element, one fails to explain the fact that the word *fuckhead* (regardless of what position it occurs in) communicates Mark's negative attitude towards Jeremy. Furthermore, the word *fuckhead* when in predicative position still shares properties with the lexeme in attributive position. Zimmermann (2007, 249) notes that even when expressives occur in a predicative position they still exhibit the properties of descriptive ineffability and perspective dependence. We will focus on these particular properties in §3.3.

The next issue with Potts' treatment of examples like PREDICATIVE, is that it can be conceived as an *ad hoc* stipulation that only follows from the semantics sketched out, rather than the linguistic data available. Particularly it is the independence property that prevents expressives in predicative positions from carrying any expressive content. If we consider how people use expressives, it is very common to see these words in predicative positions and agents seem to communicate not only truth-conditional content but also their attitudes. We will look at the linguistic data in more detail below, but the overall point is that it simply does not seem to be the

case that *fuckhead* in PREDICATIVE loses all of its expressivity just because of the syntactic position it occurs in.

### 3.2.1 Expressive and Descriptive Content

In this section, I look at some linguistic data where the expressive seems to contribute to both dimensions. If we accept that an expressive item can contribute to both dimensions then this will give us good reason to reject the independence property as a crucial aspect of expressives and look for a semantic account which incorporates both expressive and descriptive dimensions. Firstly, let's consider the following example where we may take an expressive to be a modifier, where the modified item is a descriptive one:

(59) Really fucking brilliant.

(Geurts, 2007, 211)

In (59), the expressive *fucking* modifies *brilliant*, which Geurts takes to (descriptively) mean 'very brilliant' or 'very very brilliant' (2007, 211). If this is the case, then removing the expressive would affect the truth-conditional content. After all there is a difference between *brilliant* and *very brilliant*. This suggests that the expressive seems to be descriptive in some respect. Furthermore we still get the speaker portraying a certain attitude with the use of *fucking* (depending on the context it can be either positive or negative). Again there would be a difference in saying that something is *very brilliant* and *fucking brilliant*. Examples like that of Geurts are very common, the following sentences seem completely natural to hear:

- (60) a. I'm not just hungry, I'm fucking hungry.  
b. This really fucking hurts.  
c. It was one of those very bad shitty days.

Further linguistic data which appears to support the claim that expressives contribute to both descriptive and expressive content can be found in languages that utilise a

honorific system. One such example present in Japanese is discussed by McCready (2010):

- (61) sensei-ga irasshaimasi-ta  
teacher-Nom came.Hon-Pst  
'The teacher came' (the teacher is being honored)

(McCready, 2010, 17)

Here the verb *irassharu* (come[Honored]), conveys both descriptive and expressive content. It communicates that the teacher has come and that the teacher is being honored. Furthermore, as noted by McCready (2010, 17), these two contents cannot be separated, that is you cannot remove the expressive or the descriptive content from *irassharu*. Removing *irassharu* from the sentence would remove both contents - that the teacher came and that the teacher is being honoured. Thus honorifics seem to be a good example of an expressive which cannot be divorced from its descriptive content, yet manages to communicate the expressive content as well<sup>5</sup>.

Treating *fuckhead* so differently when it occurs in different syntactic positions does not seem to be a satisfactory solution as it fails to explain any relationship between *fuckhead* in ATTRIBUTIVE and *fuckhead* in PREDICATIVE. We saw that there is linguistic data available that goes against the independence property. Assuming that we allow the expressives in (59) and (61) to contribute to both expressive and descriptive dimensions then there's little reason to say that *fuckhead* only contributes to the descriptive dimension. As such, we can move away from the idea that expressive content is completely independent from descriptive content.

### 3.2.2 Syntactic Independence, Not Semantic

Before we move on to discussing the distinguishing properties of expressives, I would like to make another argument against the independence property, which relies on

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<sup>5</sup>Honorifics present somewhat of a different type of expressive content, at least they are not as straightforward communicating a positive or a negative attitude. One might want to make the expressive indices more complex to account this, please see Chapter 5, §5.2 for a suggestion along these lines. One might also think that honorifics do not produce expressive content in the same manner as 'typical' expressives and they are more to do with what is appropriate in a social context. That is, they concern matters of register. For a discussion of register please see Chapter 5, §5.4.



showing that the supposed independence in cases like ATTRIBUTIVE comes solely from the syntactic position that the word occurs in, it has nothing to do with the type of word the expressive is. I will do this by considering examples where other words, which are typically seen as ordinary descriptive words, also appear to have the property of independence.

I consider appositives which are considered by Potts (2005) along side expressives. Appositives are constructions where a noun phrase is used to refer to the noun in a sentence to describe, rename, identify, etc. that noun. Take the following examples:

- (62) a. Jeremy, **who is Mark's flatmate**, forgot the turkey.  
b. Bevan, **the son of Evan**, threw out all the Carling.  
c. Charles, **the cult leader**, was found guilty on all the charges.

In (62) the boldface phrases show the appositives, phrases that describe the noun. Just like with expressives we can perform the two tests of independence and we see that appositives 'pass' those test, I'll use (62a) to demonstrate this.

- (63) a. Jeremy, who is Mark's flatmate, forgot the turkey.  
b. Jeremy forgot the turkey.

- (64) Jeremy, who is Mark's flatmate, forgot the turkey.  
a. That's not true.  
b. #No he isn't!

Just like with expressives in ATTRIBUTIVE, removing the appositive has no effect on the truth-conditions of the utterances. Furthermore, direct denial is not available, directly denying a sentence with an appositive only denies the descriptive content and not the appositive itself. The point of bringing the appositives into the discussion is to show that they behave like cases of ATTRIBUTIVE at least in the sense of independence. This is not news, Potts (2005) himself provides a very similar treatment of appositives as he does of expressives. But the point is to highlight that it

is nothing to do with the semantics of words themselves that gives rise to the independence feature. It seems that it is down to the syntactic position in which these terms occur, rather than anything about the meanings of expressives or appositives.

As a consequence of this discussion, I want to be clear that I am not arguing that expressive terms cannot be completely independent from the descriptive dimension, sometimes they are. However, since the same word loses its independence when placed in a predicative position I argue that it is not a semantic feature of expressives. If it is not a semantic feature of expressives, then it seems like we do not need to force the claim that the same words fail to be expressive just because they're placed in predicative positions.

The argument demonstrating linguistic data and highlighting the fact that independence seems to be a feature of syntax and not semantics, gives me enough reason to reject independence as the indicative property of expressives.

### **3.3 Perspective Dependence and Descriptive Ineffability**

Before we can move to try and give a suitable account of expressives in predicative positions, we need to be clear over what types of words expressives really are, what it is that we need to account for. Having put doubt on the independence property, we may rethink whether expressives do really possess the status of being different to ordinary descriptive words, for if they do not maybe we don't even need to trouble ourselves with Expressive semantics. Geurts, for example, ponders whether there is anything more special to expressives than ordinary words:

I am inclined to adopt the opposite course, and argue that expressives are perfectly ordinary lexemes. Granted, words like *damn*, *fucking*, and *bastard* are special in certain ways, but then all words are special in certain ways.

(Geurts, 2007, 29, original emphasis)

I disagree with Geurts that expressives are just like perfectly ordinary words, for they always carry with them two properties which are distinctive to expressives: perspective dependence and descriptive ineffability.

Perspective dependence is rather straightforward. We saw how unlike most ordinary descriptive words, to get the meaning of an expressive we must introduce the judge parameter into the context of use. That certain expressions are context dependent is of no surprise. For example, the indexical word ‘I’, is dependent on the agent parameter in the context of use to gain its content. What is distinctive about expressives, however, is that in virtue of having a judge parameter we get the content from a certain point of view. The expressive tells us something about the judge - the judge’s attitude. This is different from an indexical ‘I’ for the agent parameter merely picks out the referent of the utterance, rather than telling us anything about the judge’s point of view or their mental state.

Descriptive ineffability on the other hand is more contentious. Seemingly, it is apparent that replacing an expressive word with one which is meant to be wholly descriptive does leave out something important, for example:

- (65) a. Jeremy is an asshole.  
b. Jeremy is obnoxious.<sup>6</sup>

If we equate example (65a) with (65b) then it seems that we are missing out on the *expressive punch*<sup>7</sup> that the word *asshole* carries with it. We will miss out on the highly negative attitude that the word *asshole* has and that the word *obnoxious* seems to be missing.

One might argue at this point that there are some ordinary words that also lack a sufficient descriptive paraphrase. There are purely descriptive words which seem to

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<sup>6</sup>The comparison between *asshole* and *obnoxious* is taken from Lasersohn (2017, 233), wherein he suggests a relativistic treatment of expressives, we’ll consider this view in the next section.

<sup>7</sup>The term ‘expressive punch’ is taken from (Lasersohn, 2017, 233)

exhibit ineffability, thus we cannot claim that the special property of expressives is ineffability. This is precisely the argument that Geurts makes:

As a matter of fact, it [descriptive ineffability] is all over the lexicon, as witness such disparate items as *the*, *at*, *because*, *languid*, *green*, *pretty*, and so forth. Descriptive ineffability doesn't draw the line between descriptive and expressive language.

(Geurts, 2007, 210, original emphases)

As discussed, descriptive ineffability in respect to expressives means that “[s]peakers are never fully satisfied when they paraphrase expressive content using descriptive, i.e., nonexpressive, terms” (Potts, 2007b, 166). If we consider it as a property of descriptive content, then we may say that the speakers are unsatisfied with a paraphrase of one descriptive content into another. Bearing this in mind there are several points to note about the quote above. Firstly, it appears that some of the words mentioned do seem to have a pretty good descriptive paraphrase. For example: *the* may be defined “as a function with domain the set of sets with exactly one element” (Barwise and Cooper, 1981, 166)<sup>8</sup>; *because* as in ‘*a* because *b*’ may be defined as ‘*b* is the reason *a* happened’; *green* may be defined as a colour that is between blue and yellow or it could be given a more formal definition in terms of wavelength interval<sup>9</sup>.

Geurts’ point can still stand given that there could be multiple suitable paraphrases to a word and we can pick one depending on the context. This however, I see as a point about polysemy rather than descriptive ineffability. The reason why there isn’t simply one suitable paraphrase for words aforementioned is that they can have multiple meanings, normally determined by a context. Take the word *green* again, in a context where I am trying explain to a child what *green* means, it could be

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<sup>8</sup>For a more formal definition and discussion of the logic of generalised quantifiers see Barwise and Cooper (1981).

<sup>9</sup>I will not try to define every example Geurts has given. I do want to highlight, however, that subjective words like *pretty* can be classed as predicates of personal taste which under some approaches count as (at least in some sense) expressive, see for example Gutzmann (2016). As we will see, my own account will treat PPTs as having an expressive element as well.

sufficient to say ‘it’s the colour between blue and yellow’; in a context where I’m carrying out some scientific experiment I might want to adopt the definition of ‘it’s the colour with the wavelength interval between 500-570 nanometers’. The case is different with expressives, for no matter what context we are in we cannot give a sufficient descriptive paraphrase for the expressive. If we are to agree that *asshole* has the descriptive meaning of *obnoxious* (as in cases (65a) and (65b)), we would still be missing that crucial ingredient that makes expressives *expressive*. We would be missing the expressive punch which conveys the judge’s attitude. Putting the expressive in purely descriptive terms fails to convey this and this is precisely the reason why they cannot receive a satisfactory descriptive paraphrase.

Showing that descriptive words can have a suitable paraphrase might not be enough to show that descriptive ineffability is a feature of expressives. In fact, Drożdżowicz (2016) argues just that point against using descriptive ineffability as a criterion for distinguishing between different types of meanings. Drożdżowicz’s aim is to show that the patterns of descriptive ineffability are not stable enough to distinguish between procedural/expressive and conceptual/descriptive meanings. We’re already familiar with the expressive and descriptive distinction. Procedural meanings are more akin to conventional implicatures, they include words such as *but*, *however*, *so*, *the* and are “taken to guide the inferential comprehension process by imposing constraints on the contexts and cognitive effects that the hearer uses in constructing a particular interpretation” (Drożdżowicz, 2016, 3). Conceptual meanings, on the other hand, encode concepts and are used to contribute to the content of propositions (as such affecting the truth-conditions), for example *tree*, *bark*, *chair*. Take the following examples:

- (66) a. She was small and strong.  
b. She was small but strong.

Both sentences in (66) will have the same truth-conditions, they will be true if both conjuncts are true. However, only in (66b) will there be a - what Drożdżowicz (2016, 8) calls - a *denial of expectation*. Using *but* gives something extra to the conversation,

something like one should expect small people to be weak.

Just like I'm claiming that one of the ways that expressives differ from ordinary terms is that they show descriptive ineffability, others have claimed that procedural terms differ from concept terms as the former also carry descriptive ineffability. Drożdżowicz groups procedural and expressive meanings together (and concept and descriptive meanings) in the arguments that she provides against employing descriptive ineffability as a demarcating factor between different types of meanings. One of the arguments she provides is to show that we can give a suitable paraphrase of procedural terms (she takes this argument to carry over expressives as well). This is a very similar approach to what I have taken to argue against Geurts. Here is one of the examples Drożdżowicz presents:

Take Frank in the movie "The Object of My Affections", who responds to his mother's description of a young woman, "She's an Italian girl but she's pretty" by objecting "What do you mean, but she's pretty, Ma? Why not '*and she's pretty*'?" [...] Such cases show that ordinary speakers can become conscious about and exploit the meaning or applicability of some function words. It is plausible that as an effect of such practice, especially if repeated, some ordinary speakers will gain some ability to paraphrase their meanings, e.g. 'What do you mean, you seem to suggest that there is a contrast between being Italian and being pretty'.

(Drożdżowicz, 2016, 9)

The other argument provided by Drożdżowicz, is to flip the coin and show that concept terms can be ineffable. She notes more abstract terms such as *freedom*, *truth* and *future* and argues that they are much more difficult to paraphrase than other concept words like *chair* or *run*. The argument is that although we have no issue in using these more abstract words in different contexts we cannot paraphrase them successfully.

We have all experienced difficulty in paraphrasing abstract words when confronted with questions concerning truth, freedom or the future. We have no problems in applying abstract words in particular contexts, and yet when asked about their meaning we are at a loss.

(Drożdżowicz, 2016, 9)

I will respond to the first argument, before moving onto the second. Although Drożdżowicz and I both agree to the paraphraseability of procedural words, we come to very different conclusions about what this means for descriptive ineffability. For her this shows that descriptive ineffability is not a unique feature of procedural/expressives, for me it shows that descriptive content (of procedural meanings) can be effable. I don't think that the argument she has provided would apply to expressives, for as I have already noted what is missing from the paraphrase of an expressive (e.g. *fuckhead*) is the highly negative attitude of the speaker/judge. The point is that this cannot be captured in any context successfully. The reason why this is not an issue for procedural meanings like *but*, *so*, *however* is because they do not seem to carry this expressive feature that cannot be given a paraphrase. Drożdżowicz's aim was not to explore the semantics of expressives, I presume that's why in her argument she only considers procedural terms. However, what applies to procedural terms does not seem to apply to expressives - precisely because of this attitude factor. As such, I'm happy to say that procedural terms can be effable, but I still maintain that descriptive ineffability is a special characteristic of expressives.

Regarding the second argument, I don't think the situation is as dire as Drożdżowicz describes, it doesn't seem to me that we're at a loss when asked to give meaning, rather (again) what paraphrase to give will be very context dependent. For example, take the word *freedom*. Within the judicial system *freedom* could mean not being incarcerated and having all the suitable rights. In a different context, say when you were a child, freedom could mean not being grounded and being able to make certain choices. In a philosophical context, freedom could mean something awfully

technical. The point being, regardless of whether these words are more abstract than *chair*, *run*, *bark* they can still be paraphrased within a context.

So far, I believe that we have demonstrated that expressives do not need to have independence as a crucial property and when they do it's down to the syntactic position they occur in rather than a fundamental property of the kind of term they are. What is more important for their status as expressives is the perspective dependence and descriptive ineffability.

### 3.4 A Descriptive Approach to Expressives

Before I go on to consider a hybrid approach to expressives, I would like to give some thought to a descriptive approach to expressives. Such an approach would not claim that expressives are independent from the descriptive dimension. Rather they are part of it. Note that Potts' approach to PREDICATIVE is also descriptive, where fully descriptive approaches and Potts diverge is when we consider ATTRIBUTIVE, for purely descriptive accounts would class cases of ATTRIBUTIVE as descriptive as well.

The account that I will investigate is a suggestion by Lasersohn (2007, 2017). Since we are dealing with expressives in two different syntactic positions, I will briefly discuss Lasersohn's treatment of both cases: ATTRIBUTIVE and PREDICATIVE, I start with the latter.

In a paragraph of his (2017, 233) book, Lasersohn makes a quick suggestion that derogatory epithets like *jerk* and *asshole* could be a candidate for his Relativism, here he particularly focuses on a case like PREDICATIVE. He claims that the truth-conditions of *John is an asshole* are roughly the same as those of *John is obnoxious*. He notes there's some stylistic difference and the former sentence packs more of an "emotional punch", however:



[T]here seems to be no objective way to classify people as obnoxious, let alone assholes [...] If a person with one set of tastes says that John is an asshole, and a person with conflicting tastes says he is not, we take them to be disagreeing. But ultimately, who counts as an asshole seems to depend on our tastes in human behavior. Such epithets are in some sense, expressions of personal taste.

(Lasersohn, 2017, 233)

Thus, on Lasersohn's suggestion, the character of an expressive would be a constant function from context to content - meaning that the content of an expressive would be the same in all of the CUs. The judge of the *ca* would then judge whether it is true that *John is an asshole*, just like the judge of the CA judges whether *Carling is tasty*.

I do agree with Lasersohn in that there are no objective facts out there that make someone an *asshole*, *fuckhed*, *jerk*, etc., thus it seems plausible that we might want to employ a judge in the CA to account for this. However, the big issue with employing a purely descriptive account is that it fails to give any recognition to the expressive effect that these words carry. Expressives reveal information about the emotional state of the speaker/judge. Furthermore, they do so by default, expressing this information in all standard contexts of use. If a speaker utters *John is an asshole*, speakers of English sufficiently acquainted with the context of her utterance know immediately that she is in a heightened emotional state and has a negative attitude towards John.

We have discussed the importance of descriptive ineffability - one cannot sufficiently paraphrase an expressive in purely descriptive terms. This can be seen in Lasersohn's attempted paraphrase of *John is an asshole* as *John is obnoxious*. There may be a similarity in what is communicated by utterances of these two sentences, but the latter is lacking the former's ability to encode information concerning the judge's emotional state or attitude. Lasersohn admits as much when he acknowledges that the first sentence has "a stronger expressive punch" (Lasersohn, 2017, 233) and that

expressives are “emotionally charged” (Lasersohn, 2007, 228). But no account is offered of what this expressive punch amounts to and how it is incorporated into the content of the expressive. But this means that a defining semantic characteristic of expressives that distinguishes them from non-expressives – ineffability – is left unexplained on his account. Furthermore, so long as that account is restricted to an account given in terms of propositional content, it is hard to see what resources are available for the description of ineffability. Just like Potts’ account, Lasersohn’s application of Relativism to expressive terms would fail to give us a satisfactory account of the expressive power that is carried by utterances like PREDICATIVE.

In his earlier work, Lasersohn (2007) considered expressives as used by Potts, namely those like ATTRIBUTIVE. Since these cases do not directly contribute to the descriptive content a straightforward approach like that discussed above, where we can apply a direct Relativist treatment, will not work. In this paper, Lasersohn suggest treating expressive content as a presupposition (Lasersohn, 2007, 227). Thus in ATTRIBUTIVE, the presupposition would be that *Jeremy is a fuckhead* and this presupposition would receive a Relativistic treatment. One of the arguments against treating expressive content as a presupposition is that expressives in attributive positions *project*, whereas presuppositions do not. Projection is the property of being immune to any operators that would shift the expressive content away from the perspective of the judge. On Potts’ account, we should expect the judge’s emotional state to be expressed in all contexts of use and to be immune to any operators on that expressive content. If the function of an expressive is to encode the judge’s emotional state or attitude then they will effectively function as a form of indexical, contributing this information about the judge in all contexts of use. This means that they will not fall within the scope of operators such as propositional attitude verbs. Thus, expressives project their content into wide scope with respect to such operators, and cannot be embedded under them (excluding metalinguistic operators like quotation). For example take the typical case of negation:

- (67) a. Jeremy didn’t forget the fucking turkey.

- b. It's not true that Jeremy forgot the fucking turkey.

In this variant of ATTRIBUTIVE, negation leaves the expressive content untouched. The expressive is outside the scope of the negation. In other words, the expressive content still projects onto the *cu<sub>j</sub>* even though negation is involved. We have seen as similar phenomenon when discussing the tests for the independence property in §3.1, example (48).

Relating the discussion back to the behaviour of presuppositions and expressives, we get expressives projecting under what have come to be called presuppositional *plugs*, for example the attitude verb *believes*<sup>10</sup>. Presuppositional plugs are “predicates which block off all presuppositions of the complement sentences” (Karttunen, 1973, 174), they prevent the presupposition from carrying over to the speaker of the sentence. For example:

- (68) a. Mark believes that Jeremy forgot the turkey.  
b. Mark believes that Jeremy forgot the fucking turkey.

In both instances of (68), there's a presupposition that Jeremy was supposed to get the turkey, however this presupposition is not attributed to the speaker of the utterance but rather to Mark. The reason for this is that the plug *believes* plugs the presupposition from being carried onto the speaker - it blocks projection of the presupposition. In (68b), however, even though the plug is present, the negative attitude conveyed by *fuckhead* is attributed to the speaker/judge of the the sentence. The expressive content manages to project past the plug. This suggests expressive content functions differently to presuppositional content.

To defend Relativism for expressives by appeal to a reduction of expressive content to presuppositional content for expressive terms in attributive positions, Lasersohn must provide an explanation for this apparent difference in respect to projection over plugs. His approach is twofold. Firstly, he seeks to challenge the assumption that

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<sup>10</sup>It should be noted that Karttunen expressed some reservations about whether propositional attitude verbs are plugs (1973, 189).

expressive content *always* projects by providing examples that are alleged to demonstrate plugging of expressive content; secondly, he seeks to explain why projection is the default behaviour of expressives, by appeal to extra-linguistic considerations, thus arguing that the projection data does not reveal any irreducibly linguistic difference between expressive and presuppositional content.

He begins by offering an example intended to demonstrate that expressive content, like presuppositions, can be *filtered*. A presupposition filter, as defined by Karttunen (1973, 174) is a predicate which allows presuppositions to project only under certain conditions, blocking them when these conditions are not met. The example Lasersohn considers is ‘if’ which filters the presuppositions of its consequent clause, allowing them to project unless they are implied by the antecedent clause:

- (69) a. If Jeremy forgets the turkey, then Mark will scold him for being forgetful.  
b. If Jeremy comes to the party, then Mark will scold him for being forgetful.

The sentence *Mark will scold him [Jeremy] for being forgetful* carries the presupposition that Jeremy is forgetful. However, this presupposition only projects in (69b) and not (69a). The reason for this is that Jeremy being forgetful is implied by the antecedent - *If Jeremy forgets the turkey* - of (69a). Whereas, no such implication is given in the antecedent of (69b). Lasersohn offers an example, where he believes that the expressive content can be filtered in a similar manner:

- (70) I consider John a saint. But if he ever screws me over, I’ll crush the bastard like a bug!

(Lasersohn, 2007, 227)

The expressive content of *bastard* does not project up to the sentence as a whole (we already know from the previous sentence, after all, that the speaker thinks John is a *saint*, not a *bastard*, and there is no contradiction in the conditionalized continuation). Lasersohn also thinks that we can find examples where expressive content is plugged - here the verb *rant* acts as a plug. He offers the following:

(71) Can you believe how unfairly Mary has reacted to John? He's a saint, really, but she practically exploded at him, and after he left, she went into this long rant about how she would kill the bastard.

(Lasersohn, 2007, 228)

It is not at all clear that this is a compelling example. Lasersohn (2007, 227, original emphasis) himself admits that “it is harder to construct examples in which expressive content fails to project past *believe* or other plugs” than it is to find examples of filters. The example seems to show that this is an understatement. No example is given by him of a case where expressive content is plugged by *believe*. The only example we have invokes *rant* as a plug. To me, both examples seem to project onto the speaker. However, I shall put my intuitions to the side, because even if one is persuaded by the example that plugging of expressive content is possible, Lasersohn's presuppositional analysis faces two further serious problems: (i) a convincing account of why expressives project past plugs by default, unlike normal presuppositions, is needed; (ii) account for the *apparent* projection failure. Thus, Lasersohn's account of why expressive content projects past plugs by default needs to be more convincing than Potts's account of why these apparent cases fail to project, if the data Lasersohn appeals to is going to provide him with a compelling case for his theory. As we will see below, Potts actually denies projection failure for expressives, explaining this apparent data by appeal to a distinct mechanism. I start by exploring problem (i).

Lasersohn's explanation for why expressive content is so rarely plugged takes as a starting point Karttunen's observation that “all plugs are leaky” (1973, 175). He then notes that the consequences of a leaking plug of expressive material can impose substantial social risk on speakers. If I seek to report my colleague's negative evaluation of my manager using expressive terms to encode the colleague's attitude towards the manager (an attitude I do not share), it would be socially awkward for me, to say the least, if a leaking plug of the expressive content led listeners to attribute the expressive content of the expression of those attitudes to me instead of my colleague.

It is important to note that Karttunen's position was that plugs leak only in special cases. The default is that they do not leak. But, in the case of expressive content, we see the reverse: projection is the norm; plugs are rare in the extreme. Thus, it would seem that the only available explanation here would be that what makes these cases special is that they involve expressive content. But that surely means that expressives carry a feature or set of features which are lacking in presuppositions, and it is very hard to see how this can be consistent with any theory which seeks to reduce the content of expressives to presuppositions. Perhaps this is why Lasersohn is forced into the 'social risk' argument: it is simply not open to him to appeal to a linguistic feature of expressives that would make them special cases if he wants to reduce the content of an expressive to that of a presupposition (which is not special in this sense). This in turn, however, places an apparently intolerable demand on his account. For surely the only explanation available for this social risk has to rest on the identification of some feature which marks expressives out as special compared to other linguistic items. Indeed, Lasersohn does not manage to avoid appeal to features unique to the semantic profile of expressives when appealing to the social risk incurred by their use:

Because expressives are so emotionally charged, and because their use can carry a significant social risk, I suspect that speakers are especially cautious about using them in embedded contexts where there is a chance of their content "leaking" [...] This, I suspect, is the correct explanation for why expressive content normally projects, rather than any theoretical distinction between presupposed and expressive content.

(Lasersohn, 2007, 228)

As we have seen above, features like *emotional charge* or *expressive punch* are central to the semantic profile of expressives. It is thus circular for Lasersohn to appeal to such features as a way of marking out expressives as special cases of presuppositions

which can escape plugs – this feature of expressives *is* tracking a theoretical distinction between presupposed and expressive content. Presuppositions lack it, which is why they are normally affected by plugs; expressives have it, which is why they normally project beyond them. That does not mark expressive content as a special kind of presuppositional content – it marks it as distinct from presuppositional content.

Now to address problem (ii): Lasersohn assumes that a demonstration that expressives do not always project will lend credence to the assimilation of expressive content to presuppositional content. However, this overlooks the fact that it is just these sorts of cases that motivates Potts to incorporate a judge parameter into his semantic theory in the first place. Potts denies that they are cases of projection failure, taking the examples instead to demonstrate that expressives are subject to a distinct mechanism facilitating perspective shifts. We have already seen an example from Kratzer where the perspective seems to be something other than the speaker (repeated as (72) below):

(72) My father screamed that he would never allow me to marry that bastard Webster.

(Kratzer, 1999, 6)

There's also an often discussed example from Schlenker:

(73) I am not prejudiced against Caucasians. But John, who is, thinks/claims that you are the worst honky he knows.<sup>11</sup>

(Schlenker, 2003, 98)

Here the negative content carried by the slur *honky* is supposed to apply to John and

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<sup>11</sup>Lasersohn is careful to note that he would not apply his Relativism to slurs (Lasersohn, 2017, 233, ft.nt. 16). I would also not apply account of slurs to my own hybrid account, for a thorough discussion why slurs are unsuitable for Expressive-Relativism please see Chapter 5, §5.3. This example is often used in the literature because even if expressives and slurs are different in some fundamental respects they do behave the same under projection. I merely use this example to demonstrate a possible perspective shift.

not the speaker of the utterance<sup>12</sup>. In both of these examples, we have exocentric perspectives which can be explained by the employment of the judge parameter. As noted, with expressives, the judge and the speaker often coincide but this need not be the case. If we're convinced by exocentric uses of expressives then these are precisely the cases where the judge and the speaker diverge and the judge parameter will pick out the speaker's father in (72) and John in (73). As such, the supposed failure of projection can be explained within the semantic framework provided by Potts.

Note that I recognise that Lasersohn's expressive account is not fully developed, nor was it supposed to be. In his (2017) he only quickly suggests that expressives might receive the same treatment as PPTs, a suggestion that seems more like a passing remark rather than a full blown argument. His (2007) paper is a speculative comment/response to Potts' account presented in Potts (2007b). However, I wanted to demonstrate how I might go about responding to *any* view that wishes to provide a fully descriptive account of what we have been calling expressives. A fully descriptive account would fail to explain the expressive potency of these terms. Furthermore, it seems clear that those wanting to give a presuppositional account of expressives would have to give a good reason for why expressives project by default and seem difficult to plug or filter, unlike typical presuppositions. Now we can proceed by looking at an account which attempt to cover both - expressive and descriptive - dimensions.

### 3.5 Gutzmann's Expressive-Contextualism

The trouble with Potts' account is that it's too restrictive as it can only deal with expressives which do not contribute to the descriptive dimension. What is needed to account for examples like PREDICATIVE is a theory that allows for the expressive and the descriptive dimensions to co-exist. Since pure Expressivist semantics can

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<sup>12</sup>Now one might argue, that there's some kind of quotational way of explaining these examples, since both Potts and Lasersohn seem to find these examples convincing I shall proceed as if they do really shift the perspectives. There is some experimental data discussed by Harris and Potts (2009) where in they show that speakers find exocentric perspectives plausible. The point here, however, is that in cases where expressives project Potts has the tools to explain this projection away.



only deal with the expressive dimension, we need to supplement it with a descriptive account, in other words, we need a hybrid approach. Such an account is presented by Gutzmann (2015, 2016)<sup>13</sup> who utilises the foundations laid by Kaplan (1999) in his exploration of non-truth-conditional meaning.

The rough idea behind Gutzmann’s Expressive semantics is that just like ordinary descriptive utterances have truth-conditions under which the proposition is either true or false, expressive utterances have use-conditions under which the utterance is felicitous or infelicitous<sup>14</sup>. Take the following examples:

- (74) a. The turkey is in the fridge.  
b. Oops!

In (74a), what would make the utterance true is that in the world  $w$  the turkey is in the fridge. If in  $w$  the turkey is not in the fridge then the utterance fails to meet the truth-conditions and thus would be false. When it comes to expressive items we talk about conditions under which the expressive is felicitous. We consider the questions - ‘What conditions must be meant so that the expressive is felicitously used?’. We say that (74b) is felicitously uttered just in case the agent of the context of (74b) has observed a minor mishap in the world of that context<sup>15</sup>.

In Gutzmann’s hybrid semantics each dimension can be accounted for by using both truth-conditions and use-conditions. If this is the case, then we do not need to deny that *fuckhead* in PREDICATIVE fails to carry an expressive element, but rather that this expressive element can be fleshed out in terms of the conditions under which the

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<sup>13</sup>Gutzmann’s project in (2015) is to provide a formal framework in which we can allow for an expression to contribute to both the expressive dimension and the descriptive dimension (or use-conditional and truth-conditional in Gutzmann’s terminology). The logic put forth by Gutzmann (which he calls  $\mathcal{L}_{TU}$ ) develops on the Potts’ (2005) logic ( $\mathcal{L}_{CI}$ ) and McCready’s (2010) modification of Potts’ system which she calls  $\mathcal{L}_{CI}^+$ . Gutzmann develops new types and compositional rules for  $\mathcal{L}_{TU}$  (Gutzmann, 2015, see especially pp. 106-107 and pp.117-125). Gutzmann’s system is admirable, but the complexity and intricacy of it goes beyond the scope of this project. As such I will give an informal discussion drawing from both the material in the book (Gutzmann, 2015) as well as the less formal representation given in Gutzmann (2016).

<sup>14</sup>See also Predelli (2013) for a largely use-conditional account of expressives and slurs.

<sup>15</sup>The use-conditions for *oops* are taken from (Kaplan, 1999, 12).

expressive is felicitously used.

Gutzmann (2015) does not seem to focus on the cases like PREDICATIVE:

PREDICATIVE: Jeremy is a fuckhead.

He does, however, focus on constructions which appear similar to PREDICATIVE, for example ethnic slurs<sup>16</sup>:

(75) Jeremy is a honky.

Here the slur *honky* is supposed to communicate two things: (i) Jeremy is white and, (ii) the speaker has a negative attitude towards white people. Thus we can say that (75) is true just in case Jeremy is white (truth-conditions) and felicitously used just in case the speaker has a negative attitude towards white people (use-conditions)<sup>17</sup>.

Ethnic slurs and expressive epithets like *fuckhead* differ in two important ways. Firstly, slurs are what Gutzmann calls *isolated expressive* items as they do not take a particular argument in the construction: the negative attitude is not aimed at Jeremy by the use of *honky*, but white people in general. As such the argument passes onto the truth-conditional level untouched by the expressive dimension. *Fuckhead*, on the other hand, takes Jeremy as its argument and the negative attitude is directed only at him (rather than people or Jeremys in general), Gutzmann calls these *functional expressive* items (2015, 39).

Secondly, the truth-conditions are much more factual in cases like (75) than in PREDICATIVE. This is because *honky* appears to have an attitude neutral counterpart (*white/Caucasian*) whereas the closest we can come with *fuckhead* is a *contemptible person*. This is because the expressive *fuckhead* does not pick out a particular group,

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<sup>16</sup>I am not proposing that the account presented in this paper should be or will be applied to slurs (ethnic, gendered, etc.). The literature on slurs is vast and cannot be done justice here, for discussion of slurs see: Cepollaro (2020), Jeshion (2013a,b), Nunberg (2018), Popa-Wyatt and Wyatt (2018), Scott and Stevens (2019), Sosa (2018), Cepollaro and Zeman (2020).

<sup>17</sup>Note that felicitously used does not mean that the speaker is doing something correct/is not blameworthy for using a racial slur. It just means that one should not use this term if one do not have a negative attitude towards whatever group the term picks out.

but rather a particular subject.

Gutzmann only briefly mentions cases like PREDICATIVE, with the example:

(76) Pete is *bastard*.

(Gutzmann, 2015, 270, original emphasis)

Interestingly, this example is being treated as a *shunting* expressive item. Shunting is a term applied to “those semantic objects that ‘shunt’ information from one dimension to another, without leaving anything behind for further modification” (McCready, 2010, 18). In other words, the expressive object will take with it all the information to the expressive dimension without leaving any descriptive content to be evaluated for truth, resulting only in expressive content. Consider *how*-exclamatives:

(77) How tall Michael is!

(Gutzmann, 2015, 37)

In (77), every word is descriptive but no descriptive content is produced, rather (77) communicates the expressive content of the speaker being surprised by Michael’s height. The expressive construction moves or ‘shunts’ the information conveyed by (77) to the expressive dimension without leaving anything behind to be evaluated for truth.

It appears that this is what Gutzmann wants to say about PREDICATIVE. The expressive *fuckhead*, shunts all the information to the expressive dimension not leaving anything substantial to be evaluated at the descriptive dimension. Gutzmann claims that examples like (76) “only give back trivial truth-conditional content” (2015, 270), which means that nothing meaningful is communicated in the descriptive dimension.

*Prima facie*, this explanation is better than the one provided by Potts. Gutzmann is allowing the expressive *fuckhead* to contribute to the expressive dimension. As such, we can at least explain the relationship between the occurrence of *fuckhead*

in PREDICATIVE and ATTRIBUTIVE - both occurrences carry expressive content. However, we are still left with some pressing questions to be answered, such as how are we able to have what seem to be meaningful (although subjective) disagreements or denials involving cases like PREDICATIVE? For example:

- (78) a. Mark: Jeremy is a fuckhead.  
b. Dobby: That's false/No he's not!

If *fuckhead* failed to contribute anything meaningful to the descriptive dimension, then it would seem odd that Dobby could disagree with Mark and negate his utterance. It seems however that (78b) is completely felicitous and communicates something non-trivial namely that Dobby does not believe Jeremy to be a *fuckhead*.

Because of this I reject Gutzmann's claim that examples like PREDICATIVE lack any meaningful descriptive content. If the reasoning above is correct and *fuckhead* in PREDICATIVE does carry meaningful descriptive content, we need to consider which semantic theory can best account for the descriptive content, as well as, the expressive content.

Gutzmann's project in (2015) does not seem to be to explore which *descriptive* semantic approach can best capture the nature of expressives, but rather to find a formal framework which allows for both descriptive and expressive dimensions to meaningfully contribute to the overall meaning of a sentence. Consequently, there is no consideration of the merits of different descriptive approaches (Contextualism vs Relativism, for example). However, there is discussion of this kind in Gutzmann (2016) which will be the focus for the remainder of this section.

Gutzmann (2016) suggests a hybrid semantics for the treatment of PPTs. The idea is to combine Expressivist semantics with an Indexical Contextualist semantics in order to fully capture the meanings of PPTs - I will refer to such a view as *Expressive-Contextualism*<sup>18</sup>. If we recall Indexical Contextualists posit a covert

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<sup>18</sup>This is not a term used by Gutzmann, I introduce it for ease of reference.

indexical element in the PPT, this indexical element will be filled in by the judge parameter and will contribute to the descriptive content of the proposition:

(79) Mark: Turkey is tasty  $\Rightarrow$  Turkey is tasty *for* Mark.

Thus we can spell out the truth conditions in the following manner:

‘Turkey is tasty’ is true in a context  $c$  and world  $w$  iff the  $cu_j$  likes turkey in  $w$ .

Gutzmann takes inspiration from Stevenson’s (1937) emotive approach towards ethical terms to flesh out the expressive part of PPTs. In his earlier work, Stevenson argued that by using an ethical term one is not merely expressing one’s approval or disapproval, one is also attempting to change the hearers mind/behaviour (Stevenson, 1937, 19). Gutzmann argues that, similarly to this, “the expressive component of a PPT-statement as an affective expression of a deontic attitude” (Gutzmann, 2016, 40). When Mark utters (79), he’s not only expressing his positive attitude towards turkey, he is also trying to change his audience behaviour in such a manner that they behave as if turkey is tasty. Thus, the expressive component signals towards something more objective than turkey being tasty for Mark, the wider project is to claim that turkey should count as tasty in the current context of use. This normative character (or deontic force) is build into the use-conditions of the PPT and we get the following:

(80) Mark: Turkey is tasty  $\Rightarrow$  Turkey shall count as tasty in  $cu$ .

Gutzmann further ties the use-conditions to the truth-conditional content, with the reasoning that this normative content of a predicate of personal taste is dependent on truth-conditional content being asserted (Gutzmann, 2016, 43). The final product results in a biconditional:

(81) Mark: Turkey is tasty  
 $\Rightarrow$  Turkey is tasty *for* Mark  $\leftrightarrow$  Turkey shall count as tasty in  $cu$ .

To summarise, *turkey is tasty* is true iff the judge of the  $cu$  finds turkey tasty and *tasty* is felicitously used iff turkey shall count as tasty in the current  $cu$ .

Examples including predicates *tasty* and *fun* are very similar to our example in PREDICATIVE. They both seem to be subjective in a similar manner: there are no objective properties in the world corresponding to *tasty* or *fuckhead*. It seems that it is down to the judge to class something as *tasty* or a *fuckhead*. Unlike ethnic slurs, predicates of personal taste do not have truth-conditions which depend on some objective property. Recall in example (75), we took the truth-conditions of the expressive *honky* to be associated with ‘a white person’. Truth-conditions for *tasty*, however, are completely subjective and agent dependent “‘Tofu is tasty’ is true in context *c* and world *w* if the judge of *c* likes tofu in *w*” (Gutzmann, 2016, 40, original emphasis). Because of the considerations above it is reasonable to allow the same treatment for the expressive *fuckhead* as is given to *tasty*.

If we are to allow an Expressive-Contextualist treatment of examples like PREDICATIVE, then we would get the following truth-conditions and use-conditions:

- (82) Jeremy is a fuckhead.
- a. Truth-Conditions: Jeremy is a fuckhead to Mark.
  - b. Use-Conditions: Jeremy shall count as a fuckhead in *cu*.
  - c. Jeremy is a fuckhead to Mark  $\leftrightarrow$  Jeremy shall count as a fuckhead in *cu*.

I have a couple of critical remarks that I would like to present against Gutzmann’s account. The first concerns his use of Indexical semantics, the second concerns the expressive element spelled out in terms of use-conditions.

### 3.5.1 Against Contextualism (again)

The first argument we’re already familiar with from Chapter 1, it’s the difficulty in locating the indexical element in the content of the terms. Recall the critique against Indexical Contextualism in respect to PPT-sentences was that explicit mention of the indexical in examples like (33) (repeated as (83) below) seems to add new semantic information:

- (83) a. Matty: Carling is tasty.

- b. Billie: No, Carling is not tasty.
- c. Matty: Well, Carling is tasty for me.

Well, we can make the same argument but replacing the PPT with an expressive. Note that I will be diverging from using PREDICATIVE, for the word *fuckhead* appears to take on a different sense when an explicit indexical reference is introduced. Take Mark to utter:

(84) Mark: Jeremy is a fuckhead to me.

The sense in which Mark is using the word *fuckhead* is a relational one, to mean that Jeremy is acting mean, nasty, selfish, etc., towards Mark. This is different from the case we see in PREDICATIVE, for there Mark is expressing his negative attitude towards Jeremy without the suggestion that Jeremy is acting negatively towards Mark (although we can make that inference). The issue is that as soon as *to me* is added where the subject is a being who can perform actions against one, then the relational reading is the first one we get. Because I want to keep the examples similar in form to (83c), I will use an example that takes the preposition *for me* rather than *to me*.

We can make a Kölbel style example showing that there does not seem to be a contradiction where an Indexical analysis ought to predict there is. Take a band called *Man Feelings*. Everyone thinks they're terrible except Dobby, as such she might utter:

(85) Dobby: *Man Feelings* are shit but they're not shit for me.

It seems that Dobby's utterance is grammatical and felicitous. Which should not be the case if the first occurrence of '*Man Feelings* are shit' has a hidden indexical element. Again we can expand on this example when we consider Mark and Dobby disagreeing over whether *Man Feelings* are shit:

- (86) a. Mark: *Man Feelings* are shit.
- b. Dobby: No, *Man Feelings* are not shit.
- c. Mark: Well *Man Feelings* are shit for me.

As before, the response from the Contextualist may be that in (86a) we are not sure which judge is getting picked out, so Mark is making it clear that it's him in (86c), we can further expand on this example:

- (87) a. Mark: I know most people like them, but *Man Feelings* are shit.  
b. Dobby: No, *Man Feelings* are not shit.  
c. Mark: Well *Man Feelings* are shit for me.

To say that *shit* in (87a) has a hidden indexical is to say that it essentially communicates the proposition expressed by (87c). However, in (87c), new propositional information seems to be communicated which we should not expect if it was already present in (87a).

This argument only targets the descriptive aspect of Expressive-Contextualism. I believe this gives us enough motive to look for a different descriptive theory. Before I do so, however, I want comment on Gutzmann's use-conditions and why I don't think they they are appropriate for either expressives or PPTs.

### 3.5.2 Deontic Force

As noted, Gutzmann's account relies on the idea that PPTs carry a deontic force or normative character. You do not merely express your positive attitude towards some object, but you make a normative demand that in the current context of use everyone should have this positive attitude towards Carling, turkey, etc. He further makes an explicit tie between truth-conditions and use-conditions resulting in a biconditional (as we saw in (81)). One way to undermine this claim is to question the biconditional and show that the truth-conditional and use-conditional contents can come apart. That is, one can reject the truth-conditions yet retain the deontic force by accepting use-conditions. This idea has been proposed by Zouhar (2019) who presents the following case (where 'Choco' is a name for a cake):

- (88) A: Choco is tasty.



B: You are not speaking truly, because you obviously dislike the cake. Anyway, people should definitely consider it tasty. In fact, I find it delicious.

(Zouhar, 2019, 15)

Here the first part of B's utterance - *You are not speaking truly, because you obviously dislike the cake* — is negating A's proposition, but it is not supposed to negate the deontic force, as B goes on to say that people ought to find Choco tasty and B herself finds it delicious. Thus, even though B is rejecting A's truth-conditional content, she is retaining the use-conditional content and thus the deontic force.

Zouhar's example is convincing, however, I believe that there is room for Gutzmann to respond. He may say that what B is doing by uttering that first part of the sentence is not only negating the proposition expressed by A, but also pointing out that A has spoken infelicitously. Recall the biconditional relation between truth-conditions and use-conditions as noted in the section above: "one shall only assert the subjective truth-conditional content of a PPT-sentence, iff one believes that the taste judgment shall objectively hold in the utterance context" (Gutzmann, 2016, 43). By challenging A's utterance, B is not only saying that *Choco is tasty for A* is false, but (precisely because the proposition is false), B is also saying that A has used the word *tasty* inappropriately. This is different from rejecting the deontic force in itself, as would be the case if B uttered *You are not speaking truly, Choco is not tasty*. The deontic force of the overall sentence uttered by B is retained and is felicitous, but that's only because B herself goes on to say that people should consider Choco to be tasty and, in fact, she finds it delicious. Simply put, B is using the PPTs *tasty* and *delicious* in accordance with use-conditions, but this is separate from negating A's proposition.

This does not decisively show that truth-conditions and use-conditions are connected in a biconditional as suggested by Gutzmann, but rather, that more work needs to be

done to show that they need to be kept separate. Instead of undertaking this task, I suggest showing that the deontic force itself is simply inappropriate for PPTs. Zouhar does have a suggestion on this in a footnote:

(89) A: Choco is tasty.

B: Yeah, you're right. I agree that people should like its flavor.

(Zouhar, 2019, 16, ft.nt. 12)

B's response seems a little strange and this suggests that the normative aspect (as carried by deontic force—i.e. that Choco should count as tasty in this context of use) is simply not present in A's utterance and is not up for debate. Since it's not up for debate there is nothing one can agree or disagree with (in respect to the normative element) and that's why it seems inappropriate for B to utter *Yes, you're right. I agree that people should like its flavour.*

A more concrete case can be made, when considering that one can hold the truth-conditions to be true but not what the use-conditions communicate. Essentially, the reverse of what (88) attempted to show. Take Matty, who as we know, loves Carling but she does not think that in the context of use it should hold objectively that Carling counts as tasty. Thus, it's completely felicitous for Mary to utter:

- (90) a. It's okay if everyone disagrees with me, but Carling is tasty.  
b. Carling is tasty, I don't care if you don't think so.  
c. I know you don't like Carling, and that's okay, but this is tasty.

If Gutzmann is correct, then (90) should be infelicitous. This is because of the condition that Matty is only to utter *Carling is tasty* if she objectively holds that Carling should count as tasty in the context of use. This, however, is not the intuition that we get. Mary need not think it's the case that Carling should count as tasty objectively in the context of use in order to utter (90).

Note that although I have placed the arguments above as attacking the deontic force of PPTs, we can make the same argument when considering expressives. If it is the case that there is some normative character to the use-conditions (Jeremy shall count as a *fuckhead* in this *cu*), then just like with (90), we should not find the following utterances made by Mark felicitous:

- (91) a. It's okay if everyone disagrees with me, but Jeremy is a fuckhead.  
b. Jeremy is a fuckhead, I don't care if you don't think so.  
c. I know you like Jeremy, and that's okay, but he is a fuckhead.

Again these utterances seem completely felicitous. Although I have presented a critique against Gutzmann's use-conditions I do not think that they are too far off being correct. What I would like to do is make them connected to the judge of the context of use. It is not that when Mark utters *Jeremy is a fuckhead* he has correctly/felicitously used the expressive iff it should count as a fuckhead in *cu*, but rather we should connect what the expressive conveys with the use-conditions. When one uses an expressive what they convey is their negative/positive attitude towards some entity, this should be some part of one uttering the expressive felicitously. As such I propose, that one uses an expressive felicitously iff they have the relevant attitude associated with that expressive in that context. Thus, use conditions for PREDICATIVE ought to be:

- (92) Jeremy is a fuckhead.

Use-Conditions: Felicitously used iff the *cu<sub>j</sub>* has a negative attitude towards Jeremy.

Having the use-conditions tied to the judge of the *cu* provides a clear connection between the expressive content and the use-conditions. It also explains why we shouldn't use expressives if we do not hold positive/negative attitudes towards the subjects. Lastly, these use-conditions can explain why utterances in (90) and (91) are felicitous. One can recognise that everyone else in the *cu* need not share the same attitude in order to utter the expressive felicitously. In the next section we will see how the use-conditions and truth-conditions are tied to one another.

### 3.6 Summary

In this chapter we have explored Expressive semantics in relation to expressives. We saw that Potts' semantics suffered from not being able to account for cases like PREDICATIVE. We ended up concluding that we need an descriptive account to supplement the expressive side. Gutzmann's hybrid theory - Expressive-Contextualism - appeared as a very plausible candidate. However two issues were raised, the first brought back the argument about applying an Indexical Contextualism, the second had its concerns with deontic force.

Where we are left now, is to try and apply the Relativist semantics to Expressivism to solve the problems raised for both Relativists and Expressivists. We will end up with an account which can provide, what I take to be, very satisfactory solutions to faultless disagreement and expressives in predicative positions.

# Chapter 4

## Expressive-Relativism

So far in this thesis we have considered a plethora of views relating to the subjective nature of PPTs and expressives. We have learnt that none of the non-hybrid theories were satisfactory in accounting for disagreements in PPTs or expressivity in expressives.

There was a lot that we took away, however. Assessment-Sensitive Relativists gave us a way of accounting for the descriptive content which didn't involve indexicality, the Expressivist semantics seem to provide a good way of explaining disagreement that does not rest on the notion of contradiction. Now we need to consider both and explore in more detail how Expressive-Relativism can account for disagreement and expressives in predicative positions.

### 4.1 Combining Expressivism and Relativism

In this section, I outline my hybrid account. I will first consider how it applies to expressives, showing how we can overcome the obstacles that the pure Expressivist view faced. I will then go on to consider how Expressive-Relativism can deal with PPTs and, finally, give us a suitable account of a disagreement.

When we have instances like PREDICATIVE, we need a theory that deals with both expressive and descriptive dimensions. By combining Relativist and Expressivist se-

mantics we can achieve this goal. Relativism will be used to deal with the descriptive dimension by giving us relativised truth-conditions:

- (93) PREDICATIVE Jeremy is a fuckhead!
- a. Descriptive Content: Jeremy is a fuckhead.
  - b. Truth-conditions: True just in case  $ca_j$  has contempt for Jeremy.

Here as my descriptive content of PREDICATIVE I will just keep with *Jeremy is a fuckhead* however if the reader feels uneasy about using the predicate in its expressive form they can substitute it for something more neutral like *Jeremy is a contemptible person* as a paraphrase for PREDICATIVE. Bear in mind however that, as argued in Chapter 3, §3.3 no descriptive paraphrase can successfully capture the meaning of an expressive as expressives carry with them the property of descriptive ineffability. Thus, although one can give somewhat of a descriptive paraphrase, the full meaning will never be captured via the descriptive means. Further, unlike Expressive-Contextualism, the descriptive content does not contain an indexical element. As such, there is no mention of a judge in the descriptive content of the expressive. This will help us avoid the problems that we brought up against the Indexical Contextualist and Gutzmann’s account as we’re not positing an indexical element which does not seem to be present in utterances like PREDICATIVE.

From the Expressivist semantics I propose the expressive content is delivered in the way we saw with Potts in Chapter 3, where the judge and the expressive index is needed to capture the expressive content. Furthermore, as Gutzmann does, we should employ use-conditions to explain when the expressive is felicitously used:

- (94) PREDICATIVE: Jeremy is a fuckhead!
- a. Expressive Content:  $\langle \llbracket Mark \rrbracket [-\mathbf{0.7}, \mathbf{0}] \llbracket Jeremy \rrbracket \rangle$
  - b. Use-conditions: Felicitous just in case the  $cu_j$  has a negative attitude towards Jeremy.

Here we see the divergence from Gutzmann’s suggestion that the use conditions ought to be *Jeremy shall count as a fuckhead in cu*. Instead the use-conditions

should be explicitly tied to the judge of the context of use - as shown in (94b). The subjective nature of an expressive is reflected in the truth-conditions with the explicit inclusion of the judge in the condition. We want the same for the use-conditions. By including the judge in the use-conditions we will be able to reflect the subjective nature of expressives in the expressive dimension. We will absolutely tie the use of the expressive to the judge having the relevant attitude. By doing so we can make sense of cases where it is clear that the judge is only talking about themselves and their attitudes, for example:

(95) Mark: I know everyone likes him but Jeremy is a fuckhead.

Furthermore, having the use-conditions explicitly tied to a  $cu_j$ , as in (94b), reflects the perspective dependence property of expressives. Expressives are not evaluated just from some context of use, but *from a particular perspective* in a context of use. As such, we should judge whether an expressive is felicitously used in a given CU from a particular perspective.

Expressive-Relativism accounts for the descriptive nature of PREDICATIVE via a Relativist semantics which utilises the judge parameter in the context of assessment to give relative truth-values. The expressive dimension is given a treatment via the Expressivist semantics where the judge plays a key role in determining the expressive content of the predicate.

There is a clear link between the judge in the context of use and the judge in the context of assessment. In order for the truth-conditions to be satisfied, the expressive has to be felicitously used. We can only say that the judge has contempt for Jeremy if the judge has a negative attitude towards Jeremy. This might seem like a trivial point and in fact it's encouraging that it is. The triviality helps to support the idea that there is a link between use-conditions and the truth-conditions. It explains that one should not use an expressive which communicates a negative attitude if one does not want to commit oneself to the truth of that proposition. As such, when Mark utters PREDICATIVE in virtue of him using that expressive he commits himself only

to those contexts of assessment in which PREDICATIVE will come out as true. If Mark did not in fact hold a negative attitude towards Jeremy then the proposition expressed would not be true where Mark is the  $ca_j$  and the expressive would not be used felicitously. The triviality between the idea that  $ca_j$  having contempt for Jeremy can only be true if the  $cu_j$  has a negative attitude towards Jeremy explains why there is such an apparent link between the judge of the context of use and the judge of the context of assessment.

I will add a caveat to what I have said above. As noted, when one asserts an expressive one commits oneself to certain CAs. Just like when one asserts a non-subjective proposition (e.g. ‘the turkey is in the fridge’), one intends for this to be true in a particular context. Simply by asserting the sentence one commits oneself to the truth of that proposition. Since the use-conditions and truth-conditions are linked together when Mark utters a sentence like PREDICATIVE, one might think that Mark commits himself only to that CA in which he has a negative attitude and thus his utterance will only convey something true at the particular CA in which he is the judge. However this is not the case, Mark is not merely committing himself to one CA (i.e. the CA in which he is the judge), but rather a set of CAs in which the judges share the same attitude. As such, we can say that one commits oneself to the *correct* CAs where the attitude of the judge in CU matches the attitude of the judge in the CA. In other words, Mark commits himself to the claim that only those CAs are correct wherein the  $ca_j$  has a negative attitude towards Jeremy.

It might seem odd to say that Mark commits himself to a set of CAs rather than a particular CA or that the correct CAs is a set where the judge shares the same attitude. After all it is your attitude that decides in which CA your utterance comes out as true or false, so why should we even consider other CAs? However, intuitively it seems correct that one sentence can be assessed from more than one perspective and thus it can be true or false from more than one perspective. This is backed up with the agreement and disagreement data. Consider the following:



- (96) a. Mark: Jeremy is a fuckhead!  
b. Aurora: I agree, he is a fuckhead!

In (96), it seems that Aurora is agreeing with the descriptive content that *Jeremy is a fuckhead* produces, but she is not agreeing that the proposition is *only* true as evaluated from the context of assessment in which Mark is the judge<sup>1</sup>. Rather, Aurora agrees that she too finds the proposition to be true. As such, we have a change in the context of assessment as the judge parameter fixes Aurora as the judge rather than Mark. Because of this we need to be able to accommodate the appropriate attitude matching two different CAs -  $ca_1$  where Aurora is the judge and  $ca_2$  where Mark is the judge. Thus, a set of CAs in which the proposition *Jeremy is a fuckhead* comes out as true will be those CAs in which the judge has a negative attitude towards Jeremy. And in the case of (96), this set will include both  $ca_1$  and  $ca_2$ .

A brief reflection on the disagreement data provides further justification for why an utterance needs to be evaluated at more than one CA (I will elaborate on how disagreement works in the next section). Take the following:

- (97) a. Mark: Jeremy is a fuckhead.  
b. Dobby: No, he is not a fuckhead.

Similarly to the agreement data, when Dobby disagrees she's not disagreeing that the proposition *Jeremy is a fuckhead* is false as evaluated from the CA in which Mark is the judge. Instead she is disagreeing with the proposition expressed by (97), and she is rejecting the claim that the right CA from which (97) ought to be evaluated is that where  $ca_j$  has a negative attitude towards Jeremy. Simply put, (97a) will come out as false where the  $ca_j$  is Dobby or anyone who does not have a negative attitude towards Jeremy. Unlike with (96) where both Mark and Aurora were part of a set of judges who share a negative attitude towards Jeremy, Dobby is doing quite the opposite. By disagreeing she is being explicit that she is not a member of a set of

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<sup>1</sup>This does not mean that it is impossible for Aurora to agree with Mark that Jeremy is a *fuckhead* as evaluated from Mark's perspective, but this would have to be made clear from the context. Aurora may make it clear by saying *Yes I can see why you think he is a fuckhead*. This, however, is a very different situation where from the one in (96).

judges for whom (97a) comes out as true.

By adopting Expressive-Relativism we can explain both descriptive and expressive aspects of *fuckhead* in PREDICATIVE. Assessment-Sensitive Relativism can provide us with a way of accounting for the truth-conditions of PREDICATIVE. The Expressive semantics explain the expressive aspect of *fuckhead* when occurring in predicative position. This provides a straightforward explanation of the similarities between *fuckhead* in ATTRIBUTIVE and PREDICATIVE:

- (98) ATTRIBUTIVE: That fuckhead Jeremy forgot the turkey.
- a. Descriptive Content: Jeremy forgot the turkey.
  - b. Expressive Content:  $\langle \llbracket Mark \rrbracket [-0.7, 0] \llbracket Jeremy \rrbracket \rangle$
- (99) PREDICATIVE: Jeremy is a fuckhead!
- a. Descriptive Content: Jeremy is a fuckhead.
  - b. Expressive Content:  $\langle \llbracket Mark \rrbracket [-0.7, 0] \llbracket Jeremy \rrbracket \rangle$

Although the descriptive content is different in each example, we can explain the relationship between *fuckhead* occurring in both syntactic positions. Since we allow for *fuckhead* in PREDICATIVE to have expressive content this is the link between the two occurrences. What they have in common is that they both convey Mark's negative attitude towards Jeremy. This is a big advantage over purely descriptive approaches to expressives in predicative positions, for they do not have this link and cannot explain the relationship between the two occurrences of *fuckhead*.

## 4.2 Explaining Disagreement

Having shown how Expressive-Relativism can give an account of expressives in predicative positions we are in a position to explain how disagreement works for both expressives and PPTs. My claim is that PPTs also carry an expressive element, that is when one says something is *tasty* or *fun*, they are not merely conveying the descriptive content which is true or false depending on the tastes of the  $ca_j$ , but one is also conveying something about their attitudes towards a particular object. As

such, the full meaning of a PPT will be captured by both descriptive and expressive content:

- (100) Carling is tasty.
- a. Descriptive Content: Carling is tasty.
  - b. Expressive Content:  $\langle \llbracket cu_j \rrbracket [0.5, 1] \llbracket Carling \rrbracket \rangle$

With this in mind let us consider our paradigm faultless disagreement example:

CARLING

Matty: Carling is tasty.

Billie: No, Carling is not tasty.

The faultlessness of both Matty's and Billie's utterances can be captured in a straightforward manner. Both speakers/judges have uttered a true proposition as evaluated from a CA in which they are the judges. Now, as argued at length, the Relativist's semantics is not suitable for capturing the disagreement aspect *if* we're trying to cash out disagreement in terms of a contradiction. Truth at one context of assessment should have no bearing on a distinct context of assessment. Let's recall RELCON:

RELCON

$\Phi$  relative to  $(j_n, w_n)$  contradicts  $\Psi$  relative to  $(j_n, w_n)$  iff:

- a. The truth of  $\Phi$  relative to  $(j_n, w_n)$  excludes the truth of  $\Psi$  relative to  $(u_n, w_n)$ ; and
- b. The falsity of  $\Phi$  relative to  $(j_n, w_n)$  excludes the falsity of  $\Psi$  relative to  $(j_n, w_n)$ .

Here we see that in CARLING there is no contradiction as Matty's utterance is evaluated from a CA in which she is the judge, whilst Billie's utterance is evaluated from a CA in which she is the judge. Thus, so far, our account abides by the Relativist's commitments, at least in terms of following a relativistic notion of a contradiction. To explicate disagreement we are able to borrow tools from the Expressivist's toolbox.

As argued above, when one uses an expressive term one commits oneself to those CAs in which the judge shares the attitude that the expressive conveys. Since Matty and Billie have different attitudes they commit themselves to incompatible sets of admissible CAs. When Matty utters that *Carling is tasty* she is essentially saying that the correct CAs that her utterance ought to be evaluated from are those in which the judge has a positive attitude towards Carling. When Billie denies this she is committing herself to *incorrectness* of those CAs. In other words, she is denying that those CAs are correct as Billie does not share the same attitude. This is basically what disagreement boils down to: refusal to accept that the correct set of CAs that they commit to is those in which the judge shares a particular attitude.

One important point to keep in mind is that by disagreeing Billie is cancelling the positive effect that *tasty* carries. That is, she is not committing herself to a set of CAs where the judge has a *negative* attitude towards Carling, but merely an *indifferent* or a *neutral* one. Saying something is not *tasty* is not equivalent to saying that one has a negative attitude toward the object (i.e. saying something is not tasty is not equivalent to saying something is disgusting). This point might be questioned, for if we hear Billie say that *Carling is not tasty* for example, we might interpret her as claiming that she has a negative attitude towards Carling and not merely a neutral one. The same would go for *Jeremy is not a fuckhead*, we might think that the speaker/judge has a positive attitude towards Jeremy and not just an indifferent one. The idea that the attitude is not indifferent can be explained via a conversational implicature rather than the negative/positive quality being semantically encoded. This is supported by the fact that the implication that one has negative/positive attitude rather than an indifferent one can be cancelled as shown below.

- (101) a. Carling is not tasty, but it's okay.  
b. Carling is not tasty, but it will do.  
c. Carling is not tasty, but it's not disgusting.
- (102) a. Jeremy is not a fuckhead, he's just okay.  
b. Jeremy is not a fuckhead, but he's not great.

As such, we should think about negating expressive content not as producing the opposite expressive index (i.e. negating a positive expressive does not produce a negative expressive index), but rather as producing a neutral one. With this in mind we can capture the expressive content of CARLING in the following manner:

(103) Matty: Carling is tasty.

$\langle \llbracket \text{Matty} \rrbracket [0.5, 1] \llbracket \text{Carling} \rrbracket \rangle$

Billie: No, Carling is not tasty.

$\langle \llbracket \text{Billie} \rrbracket [-1, 1] \llbracket \text{Carling} \rrbracket \rangle$

Disagreements like those in CARLING, do not rely on a contradiction but rather our protagonists endorsing incompatible sets of CAs. Ultimately, however, the reason why they endorse incompatible sets of CAs is because they have different attitudes. It is the expressive content that commits the speaker to a certain set of CAs and the expressive content explains why one would refuse to endorse a certain set of CAs, given that the expressive was used felicitously.

Now that we have outlined how disagreement works in detail for PPTs, the same can be said for more traditional expressives like *bastard*, *asshole*, *fuckhead*, etc. It seems that faultless disagreements are also possible when we use expressives. There are no objective ways of labeling someone as a *fuckhead*. There's no such property in the external world. As Lasersohn points out: who counts as a *bastard*, *asshole*, *fuckhead*, etc. "seems to depend on our tastes in human behavior" (2017, 233). As such, two people with different tastes in human behaviour can have disagreements which are faultless in the same way that disagreements over PPTs are faultless. Thus our disagreement concerning claims that someone is a *fuckhead* can be analysed in the same manner:

(104) Mark: Jeremy is a fuckhead.

$\langle \llbracket \text{Mark} \rrbracket [-0.8, 0] \llbracket \text{Jeremy} \rrbracket \rangle$

Dobby: No, he is not a fuckhead.

$\langle \llbracket Dobby \rrbracket[-1, 1] \llbracket Jeremy \rrbracket \rangle$

Since we have our Relativist semantics at hand, we can explain faultlessness in a straightforward manner: both speakers/judges have uttered something true when their utterances are assessed from the CAs in which they are the judges. Thus, neither Mark nor Dobby have committed a fault by speaking falsely. Mark's and Dobby's disagreement comes down to them committing themselves to different sets of CAs where they have differing attitudes and thus they are not committing themselves to truth/falsehood of the same proposition. We can see how their attitudes differ towards the same object by looking at the expressive indices, thus we know that their commitments to a set of CAs will also differ. Just like with Billie in CARLING, here Dobby is not conveying anything positive about Jeremy, but merely that she has an *indifferent* or a *neutral* attitude. Dobby is cancelling the negative effect that the word *fuckhead* carries.

### 4.3 Objections

Now that we have set out Expressive-Relativism and how it can solve the problems that we raised for both Assessment-Sensitive Relativism and Expressivism, we need to consider some potential objections to this view. Although a major benefit of proposing a hybrid account is that we have more semantic tools to address issues raised thus far, a big disadvantage of a hybrid is that we inherit other problems that both views might face. In this section I hope to cover as many worries as one might have about Expressive-Relativism.

#### 4.3.1 Is it Too Easy to Make Someone a *Fuckhead*?

One of the concerns about Expressive-Relativism, particularly as applied to expressives, is that it makes it too easy to claim that someone is a *fuckhead* or an *asshole* and for that claim to be rendered true. The discomfort comes from the idea that merely by uttering a sentence and the judge of the sentence holding it as true, you

may become a *fuckhead*. There are two closely related worries here that I would like to separate: the first is that truth becomes ‘too easy’, the second is that saying of someone that it is *true* that they’re a *fuckhead* is unpalatable. I start with the first worry.

The first worry concerns the notion of truth. Typically we think that declarative sentences aim towards truth - when I assert a sentence sincerely I intend to communicate something that corresponds to how the world is. In some ways, we may think of *truth* as being an authority in the way we navigate through life. If we allow for sentences containing expressive terms to be true and this truth is wholly judge dependent, then are we not losing something integral to the way we perceive truth? After all, it seems like our assertions containing these terms cannot be challenged with any serious success for in a sense we are the one’s who make those assertions true. It seems that Relativism make truth too easy and too obsolete.

The worry above, to me, is not distressing. What it demonstrates is that if we accept that expressives express our attitudes and tastes towards individuals then it does not seem that there’s any qualms in rendering those propositions as true *from a certain perspective*. We are still aiming towards truth, it’s just that this truth is not picking out anything objective in the world. In fact, I believe that applying non-monadic truth to such propositions is theoretically beneficial. The reason why we can make truth so easy is precisely because these terms are *subjective*, they do not pick out any concrete property out there in the world. Having relative truth demonstrates that it wouldn’t make sense for there to be an objective truth of whether *Carling is tasty* or *Jeremy is a fuckhead*. So, although, it is easy to make it true that *x is a fuckhead* merely by having the correct attitude, this truth corresponds to how subjective terms like PPTs and other expressives differ from the absolute truths that correspond to objective facts.

The second worry points to the uneasiness of making it true that someone is a *fuck-*

*head*, in virtue of uttering the words and having the corresponding attitude. One reason why it seems more palatable to apply relativistic truths to PPTs is because they're typically applied to objects rather than people. Furthermore, as Lasersohn (2007, 228) has noted, using expressives as potent as *fuckhead* in a social context might cause some social embarrassment, especially if we consider formal contexts where such language is frowned upon. Because of the taboo nature of an expressive like *fuckhead*, we may not want to freely go around making claims that, even though subjective, are socially risky. The overall point is that it's just too easy to make someone a *fuckhead*.

I think this worry would be justified if we're considering words that are derogatory towards someone because they belong to a certain race, sex, sexuality, etc., namely slurs. For example, if one was to utter *Justina is a honky* and this was rendered true purely because of one's attitude this would be a very unwelcoming consequence. I, however, would not apply Expressive-Relativism to slurs so this worry can be set aside. For a thorough discussion of why slurs are not a suitable linguistic phenomenon for an Expressive-Relativist's treatment see Chapter 5, §5.3. In relation to individual pejorative terms like *fuckhead*, I do not think that this worry is justified as long as we keep in mind that these terms only pick out subjective properties. They do not say anything about how the world is objectively, they merely reflect the attitudes of the judges.

Regarding the social embarrassment argument, it is true that certain expressive terms can propose social risk to the speaker, but again this does not affect the status of these terms being subjective and amenable to a relativistic treatment. All it means is that sometimes we will want to be careful about which expressive terms we use. It's worth noting, that we could think of a similar argument regarding PPTs. If Matty is attending a high end wine tasting event, where lager (especially Carling) is considered to be a very lowbrow beverage, she may not want to utter *Carling is tasty* even though the proposition is true as evaluated from a CA where she is the judge,



because that might cause her some embarrassment (she might be judged or looked down on by the other attendees at the event). Thus, she would avoid expressing her taste towards Carling due to social risk. This, however, has no impact on the semantics of the PPT. It is still true from Matty's perspective that Carling is tasty<sup>2</sup>.

To sum up, the worries about truth being too flimsy or it being too easy to make someone a *fuckhead* do not present any great worries for Expressive-Relativism as presented here. What these worries do is highlight the highly subjective nature of these terms.

### 4.3.2 Some Internal Worries

There are a few internal worries I would like to address concerning Expressive-Relativism. The first concerns using what appear to be conflicting expressives towards the same object; the second concerns matter of perspective plurality; the third questions expressive content interacts with double negation and under conditional constructions.

#### Carling is Tasty but Boring

A worry for the account I have presented appears when we consider that we can evaluate the same object both positively and negatively at the same time. Consider the following: Matty goes to a beer festival with many different beers on offer. Considering her pint of Carling she may utter (105a); or Mark who holds a negative attitude toward Jeremy but when reminiscing all the good times he's had with his goofy flatmate may utter (105b):

- (105) a. Matty: Carling is tasty but boring.  
b. Mark: Jeremy is a fuckhead, but I can't help loving him.

Recall in the previous chapter, we adopted Potts' *expressive consistency* constraint:

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<sup>2</sup>One could say that the social risk arguments comes down to the matters of *register* - what is appropriate to say in a context - rather than the semantics of the word itself. For a discussion of register please see Chapter 5, §5.4.

[A] context is admissible only if  $[cu_{\mathcal{E}}]$  contains at most one expressive object  $\langle a \mathbf{I} b \rangle$  for every salient pair of entities  $a$  and  $b$ .

(Potts, 2007b, 179)

This constraint requires us to only have *one* expressive index for a salient pair of objects. I noted that Mark could not have both a positive and negative attitude towards Jeremy *in the same context of use*. Similarly, since I'm applying Expressive-Relativism to PPTs, Matty should not be able to hold both positive and negative attitudes towards Carling at one CU. If this is the case then, *prima facie*, under Expressive-Relativism utterances in (105) should be infelicitous. Intuitions, however, do not support this idea. Both Matty and Mark seem to have uttered perfectly coherent sentences. Furthermore, it's not clear that the truth conditions given are captured in a reasonable way. Recall the truth-conditions of PREDICATIVE: True at a CA just in case  $ca_j$  has contempt for Jeremy. If we consider (105b), however, it seems that something more is needed to capture the correct truth conditions, perhaps something like: True at a CA just in case  $ca_j$  has contempt for Jeremy but also loves Jeremy. This seems questionable, for although the truth-conditions are not quite contradictory, the contrast between contempt and love creates a tension.

One response to this critique might be to simply reject the expressive consistency constraint. We could allow many different contrary indices in the expressive setting. This, I think, would be a little hasty. It would undermine the claim that expressives operate on contexts that we're in. If we're allowed to have many different expressive indices concerning the same salient pair of individuals in the same expressive setting then we would fail to capture the change in a judges attitude, which affects the contextual information.

Instead of rejecting the expressive consistency constraint, we can provide a very plausible explanation of what is happening in cases like (105). Thus far, we have taken the expressive objects to be quite simple, whenever we have talked about them

we have taken the attitude to point to the whole entity (whether the whole of Carling or the whole of Jeremy). However, it is not unreasonable to diagnose this as evidence that expressive objects are a little more complicated than our deliberately simplistic analysis so far has suggested. In (105a), it seems clear that Matty is aiming at two different aspects of the Carling when she is expressing her attitude - the very same Carling is tasty with respect to the gustatory aspect, but it's boring in the varietal sense since it's an unadventurous lager. Accordingly, we will need a less simplistic semantics that endorses more complex expressive indices. Expressive indices that reference different *aspects* of the object that the attitude holds under. If we allow this then we can have the same definition as above where two separate expressive indices get introduced into the context, because the expressive object is not simply the object but the object under a given aspect:  $\langle \llbracket \text{Matty} \rrbracket [\mathbf{0.7}, \mathbf{1}] \llbracket \text{Carling}_{\text{gustatory}} \rrbracket \rangle$  and  $\langle \llbracket \text{Matty} \rrbracket [-\mathbf{0.5}, \mathbf{0}] \llbracket \text{Carling}_{\text{varietal}} \rrbracket \rangle$ . Introducing this additional complexity is well motivated for it seems quite natural to hear sentences that recognise, the different aspect of an entity in just this manner, for example, 'Mudhoney look amazing, but sound shit' or 'Durian smells disgusting, but is tasty'. Thus, we should not reject the expressive consistency constraint but instead make it more fine-grained to account for this feature of our language:

A context is admissible only if  $cu_{\mathcal{E}}$  contains at most one expressive object  $\langle a \mathbf{I} b \rangle$  for every salient pair of entities  $a$  and  $b$  when judged in the same regard.

This approach would also solve the tension concerning the truth-conditions as all we would have to do is make the truth-conditions more precise:

(105a) is true at a CA just in case Carling meets the tastiness standard of  $ca_j$  in respect of the gustatory quality and meets the boringness standard of  $ca_j$  in respect of the varietal quality.

The examples we have considered through this thesis were not aimed to be so fine-grained, but I hope this shows that we can make the expressive objects more complex

should the need arise and the truth-conditions can reflect this complexity.

Although so far we have only considered classic PPTs, the same could go for the expressive example. One might think it's possible to think that someone is a *fuckhead* and yet hold no contempt towards them. This could happen in two ways. Firstly, one might be using the expressive in a positive way/figurative way similar to the use of *bastard* in *Here's to you, ya bastard* (example (51), Chapter 3). Or, the second way like (105b), where the judge is evaluating the entity in two different respects. Mark may hold a negative attitude towards Jeremy in respect of his memory because he's forgetful and didn't remember the turkey, but have love towards him in respect of him being his flatmate. Just like with the Carling example we can make our expressive indices more complex, where Jeremy becomes more than one object (so to speak):  $\langle \llbracket Mark \rrbracket [-\mathbf{0.7}, \mathbf{0}] \llbracket Jeremy_{memory} \rrbracket \rangle$  and  $\langle \llbracket Mark \rrbracket [\mathbf{0.7}, \mathbf{1}] \llbracket Jeremy_{flatmate} \rrbracket \rangle$ . Again, just like with the Carling example, we can be more precise with our truth conditions:

(105b) is true at a CA just in case the the  $ca_j$  has contempt for Jeremy in respect of his forgetfulness and has love towards Jeremy in respect of him being  $ca_j$ 's flatmate.

### Perspectival Plurality

A slightly different worry than the one outlined above, is one of perspectival plurality. This is the issue of having *two* or more different judges in the same sentence. This phenomenon has recently received some attention in the form of a problem for the Relativist (see for example, Kneer (2015), Kneer et al. (2017), Zeman (2019)). The evidence for multiple perspectives can be found in experimental data presented in (Kneer, 2015, ch. 9), wherein he shows that participants to the experiments allow there to be multiple judges of the same following sentences:

- (106) a. Over the summer I went to a holiday resort in Italy with the children.  
The wine was delicious and the water slide was a lot of fun.

(Kneer, 2015, 194)

- b. On Halloween the kids dress up and knock on the doors of the neighbors. They either get a delicious treat, or else they play a silly prank on the neighbors.

(Kneer, 2015, 195)

Kneer showed that participants take the multiperspectival readings to be dominant in cases like these. For example, in (106b) 55% of the participants took the reading to be multiperspectivals, whereas in (106a) 91% took the readings to be multiperspectival (Kneer, 2015, 195)<sup>3</sup>.

Plural perspectives pose a huge issue to those Relativists that want to adopt a single stance perspective account, i.e. those who insist that only one perspective can occur in a sentence. Zeman (2019, 12) notes in Lasersohn's discussion of the sentence *Every man gave a woman a fun ride and a tasty dish*, Lasersohn appears to be committed to the single stance perspectives. Lasersohn writes of the sentence:

It can be interpreted at least three ways: The speaker might be expressing his or her own opinion that the rides were fun and the dishes were tasty, or claiming that the each man gave a ride that was fun for him and a dish that was tasty for him, or that each woman received a ride that was fun for her and a dish that was fun for her; but the sentence cannot mean that each man gave some woman a ride that was fun for him, and a dish that was tasty for her.

(Lasersohn, 2008, 325)

Here Lasersohn seems to be committing to the view a sentence can only be evaluated from one judge's perspective. The mere existence of data as presented in Kneer (2015) lessens the strength of Lasersohn's arguments. Of course, not everyone will

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<sup>3</sup>For the full method and results see (Kneer, 2015, 194–201). I think my brief discussion of the experiments is enough to motivate plurality in perspectives.

take Lasersohn’s hard stance of perspectival plurality. Those Relativists that do not adopt a single stance view still ought to provide an explanation of how one might be able to account for more than one perspective in a single utterance. Since the view that I’m adopting is largely Relativistic, I will need to consider how plural perspectives can function within my account. As we shall see, I find Zeman’s account convincing and I think that it can compliment the theory outlined thus far<sup>4</sup>. To explain how a Relativist can account for perspectival plurality we will use the following examples:

Johnny’s father, who is famously known to hate licorice, is explaining to other parents how they’ve spent Halloween holidays, he utters:

(107) Johnny played a silly prank and got some tasty licorice.

(Zeman, 2019, 10)

Matty and Billie have just come back from a night out where they both went to separate gigs. Matty saw *County Rats* whereas Billie saw *Man Feelings*. Matty had a wonderful time, whereas Billie thought that *Man Feelings* were mediocre. Describing the night to their mutual friend Bevan, who knows that each woman went to a separate gig, Matty utters:

(108) *County Rats* were amazing, but *Man Feelings* were shit.

In both of the examples, we (arguably) get a sentence that carries two different perspectives. In (107), *silly* is attributed to Johnny’s father or maybe a third person (e.g. the person who was pranked), whereas *tasty* is attributed to Johnny’s perspective. In the second example, the expressive *amazing* is supposed to be evaluated from Matty’s perspective (for she’s the one who saw *County Rats*, whereas *shit* is supposed to be attributed from Billie’s perspective, after all Matty didn’t even go to

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<sup>4</sup>One thing to note, this issue might seem similar to the one outlined in the section above, but there is a major difference. In all of the examples above, we took them to be evaluated from a *single perspective*, whereas the main issue with plural perspectives is precisely that, namely plural perspectives occurring in a single sentence.

the gig<sup>5</sup>.

Zeman (2019) has a neat explanation of how to capture perceptual plurality. Instead of just allowing one judge parameter in the context of assessment<sup>6</sup> we can have two (or as many as we need). After doing so, we can adjust the truth-conditions accordingly. Zeman adopts a non-hybrid version of Relativism to analyse (107):

- (109)  $[[\text{Johnny played a silly}^1 \text{ prank and got some tasty}^2 \text{ licorice}]]^{c,w,<p1,p2>} = 1$  iff Johnny played a silly prank in  $w$  according to the value of  $p1$  and got some tasty licorice in  $w$  according to the value of  $p2$ .

(Zeman, 2019, 18)

Note here perspectives would correspond to judge parameters. The superscripted perspectives -  $p^1$  and  $p^2$  - correspond to superscripted predicates. Thus,  $p^1$  is the perspective of the predicate *silly*<sup>1</sup> and  $p^2$  is the perspective of the predicate *tasty*<sup>2</sup>. If we are to interpret (107) as *silly* being evaluated from the speaker's perspective and *tasty* as evaluated from Johnny's perspective we get the following truth-conditions:

- (110)  $[[\text{Johnny played a silly}^1 \text{ prank and got some tasty}^2 \text{ licorice}]]^{c,w,<p1[speaker],p2[Johnny]>} = 1$  iff Johnny played a silly prank in  $w$  according to the speaker's perspective and got some tasty licorice in  $w$  according to Johnny's perspective.

(Zeman, 2019, 19)

“[W]here  $pn[v]$  should be read as “ $v$ 's perspective is the value of the  $pn$ -th parameter for perspectives” (Zeman, 2019, 19). This allows us to evaluate propositions with multiple perspectives in a straight forward manner. Different predicates will correspond to different perspectives (or judges), these predicates will be ordered, this order is represented with superscripts and this corresponds to the superscripted

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<sup>5</sup>I admit that the shift in perspective is a little harder to capture in (108), but I don't think that it's impossible. I think the difference between (107) and (108) is down to the potency of expressives, this is discussed in the next section.

<sup>6</sup>Note however that Zeman is neutral between which context provides the values for the parameters, he refers to context of use (or context of utterance in his terminology), but he does not commit to the claim it is only context of use that can provide these values. In fact, his hunch is that it is the context of assessment (Zeman, 2019, p.19, ft.nt 17).

judges. What's nice about this solution is that we can easily account for different interpretations of the sentence. For example, if we take *silly* to refer to not to the speaker of the utterance but to Sam, the person who was pranked, then *p1* would correspond not to the speaker but to Sam, namely:

- (111)  $[[\text{Johnny played a silly}^1 \text{ prank and got some tasty}^2 \text{ licorice}]]^{c,w,<p1[Sam],p2[Johnny]>}$   
 $= 1$  iff Johnny played a silly prank in  $w$  according to Sam's perspective and got some tasty licorice in  $w$  according to Johnny's perspective.

I propose we amend the terminology, the format and include the use-conditions to reflect the exposition so far. However, we'll keep Zeman's framework to explain how plural perspectives can be handled in an Expressive-Relativist's theory. Let's consider (107) first, where the first judge is the speaker and the second judge is Johnny.

- (112)  $[[\text{Johnny played a silly}^1 \text{ prank and got some tasty}^2 \text{ licorice}]]^{cu,ca,<j1[speaker],j2[Johnny]>}$
- a. Truth-Conditions: True at a CA just in case Johnny played a silly prank according to speaker's standard and got some tasty licorice in according to Johnny's perspective.
  - b. Use conditions: Felicitous just in case the speaker has a slightly negative attitude towards Johnny and Johnny has a positive attitude towards licorice.

We can apply the same idea to example (108):

- (113)  $[[\text{County Rats were amazing}^1 \text{ but Man Feelings were shit}^2]]^{cu,ca,<j1[Matty],j2[Billie]>}$
- a. Truth-Conditions: True at a CA just in case Matty liked *County Rats* and Billie hated *Man Feelings*.
  - b. Use conditions: Felicitous just in case Matty has a positive attitude towards *County Rats* and Billie has a negative attitude towards *Man Feelings*.

Adopting Zeman's explication of plural perspectives, we can capture the more sophisticated sentences in a straightforward manner.



One might wonder whether my inclusion of the more complex indices or multiple judge parameter in the context of assessment are not just *ad hoc* stipulations to answer these quite serious issues that Expressive-Relativism faces. I don't think this is a fair worry for if we consider the kinds of examples presented in these last two sections, I hope it is clear that the explanations given are not *ad hoc*, but carry a lot of explanatory power. Consider the reason why Expressive-Relativism was proposed in the first place; to deal with simple exchanges such as those in CARLING or utterances like PREDICATIVE. The simpler the examples the less semantic tools we will need to account for them. Thus, a simple account of Expressive-Relativism sufficed. Once we start making examples more complicated, as we have done in these two sections, we will need to make our semantics more complex and detailed. The answers I have given above do not just avoid the objection in *any* way that they can to save the hybrid theory, but rather provide a further theoretical explanation for how to handle subjective language with rich and complex structures.

### Double Negation and Conditional Statements

Another worry for Expressive-Relativism is how to explain cases of double negation. In typical non-expressive circumstances, the first negation would cancel out the second. For example: *It is not the case that Carling is not on the table*, the double negation functions in such a manner that the truth-conditions for the proposition will be the same as *Carling is on the table*. I argue that the same should be said when PPTs and other expressives in predicate positions are involved, consider the following examples:

- (114) a. Matty: It is not the case that Carling is not tasty.  
 b. Billie: It is not the case that Carling is not disgusting.

According to Expressive-Relativism *not tasty* returns a neutral expressive index, because negation cancels the positive attitude encoded by *tasty* (failing to express this positive attitude is not the same, it will be recalled, as expressing the negative attitude encoded by *disgusting*). Thus the judge is not expressing either a positive or

negative attitude, but the judge is claiming that an object lacks the property of being tasty. Double negation by Matty denies that Carling lacks the property of being tasty at the descriptive level. Expressively, she cancels the effect that that ‘not tasty’ has on the context, namely she cancels the neutral attitude that it produces. As such, we can read (114a) as having the same descriptive and expressive content as *Carling is tasty*. The same can be said for (114b). The use of *not disgusting* would tell us that Carling lacks the property of being disgusting and produces a neutral expressive index. Billie’s use of double negation denies that Carling lacks the property of being disgusting and conveys a negative expressive index, meaning it will be evaluated in the same manner as *Carling is disgusting*.

The last problem I will address in this section concerns conditional constructions involving PPTs and other expressive terms:

- (115) a. Matty: If Carling is not tasty, then it’s disgusting.  
b. Mark: If Jeremy is not a fuckhead, then he is amazing.

Here two PPTs are used, but (115) does not seem to express any attitude as Matty’s utterance is hypothetical: the condition under which her attitude would hold has not been asserted to hold, hence neither the antecedent nor consequent is asserted. Matty is neither expressing her positive nor negative attitude towards the Carling. Since Matty is not actually asserting that *Carling is tasty* or *Carling is disgusting*, she is not committing herself to any attitude by uttering (115a). As such the expressive index is not introduced and context shifting does not take place. This has the consequence for Expressive-Relativism that when PPTs are in predicate positions and thereby contribute to the truth-conditional content, an attitude can only be expressed when the judge asserts or denies a proposition. As such, when under conditional constructions, the PPT does not communicate anything about the judge’s tastes<sup>7</sup>. The same will follow for the expressive *fuckhead*. Mark is not actually asserting that *Jeremy is a fuckhead* nor that *Jeremy is amazing*, thus no expressive

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<sup>7</sup>For a similar interpretation of conditionals see Gutzmann (2016, 43–44) in defence of his hybrid Expressive-Contextualism.

index is produced. To put it differently, Mark has not committed to either CAs where judges share a negative attitude or CAs where judges share a positive attitude towards Jeremy<sup>8</sup>.

### 4.3.3 PPTs and Expressives are Too Different

Thus far, I have discussed how similar PPTs and expressives are, particularly in terms of the subjective quality they carry. Neither expressives nor PPTs seem to pick out anything objective in the external world, Carling does not have a property of being *tasty tout court* but only when evaluated from a certain perspective, similarly Jeremy is not a *fuckhead* objectively, but only when taken from a perspective where the judge holds a negative attitude towards him. We cannot finish, however, without considering the possibility that expressives and PPTs are just too different to warrant the same semantic treatment.

#### PPTs and Expressives Project Differently

One way in which PPTs and expressives are said to be different is if we consider projection when both phenomena are placed in attributive positions. Hess (2018), in arguing against the indexical analysis of expressives, notes how expressives do not follow the same pattern in perspectival shifting when embedded under report verbs:

- (116) a. Jim said that he ate some **tasty** Brussels sprouts again.  
b. Jim said that he ate some **damn** Brussels sprouts again.

(Hess, 2018, 19, original emphases)

Hess argues in (116a) the PPT *tasty* is interpreted as expressing Jim's tastes and not the speaker's, however *damn* in (116b) projects onto the speaker<sup>9</sup>. My feeling towards

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<sup>8</sup>The same would go for disjunctive variants of (115), for example *Carling is tasty or disgusting* or *Jeremy is a fuckhead or amazing*. The speaker neither asserts or denies the positive or negative labeling of the entities.

<sup>9</sup>A similar argument has been made in (Berškýtė and Stevens, 2019, 17), wherein we used Hess' examples to show that expressives should not be treated as PPTs. However, our arguments only concerned PPTs as purely descriptive phenomenon and we did not consider the idea that PPTs could have an expressive dimension. Furthermore, as noted my intuitions about examples like (116a) have changed since Berškýtė and Stevens (2019).

examples like (116a) is that they're not as clear cut as what has been presented here, it is not clear to me that *tasty* does not represent the speaker's attitude. In fact, an example from Potts shows how *lovely* which is arguably a PPT, behaves like an expressive, consider Potts' example below:

Edna is at her friend Chuck's house. Chuck tells her that he thinks all his red vases are ugly. He approves of only the blue ones. He tells Edna that she can take one of his red vases. Edna thinks that the red vases are lovely, selects one, and returns home to tell her housemate, 'Chuck said that I can have one of his lovely vases!'

(Potts, 2005, 18)

Here we know that Chuck thinks the red vases are ugly, so it's only natural to interpret the positive attitude that *lovely* expresses as being projected onto Edna, the speaker/judge of the sentence. This example is very much like that of (116a), but it gives us a completely different result than that which Hess proposes, hence my feeling that it is not clear that the behaviour of PPTs and expressives is all that different under report embeddings. Now, one might point out that here *lovely* is not a paradigm PPT, so using data from it to support paradigm PPTs like *tasty* and *fun* is a little sneaky. However, we can construct very similar examples using *tasty*.

When stocking up on beer, Billie has accidentally picked up some Carling, which she finds disgusting. She tells Matty of her misfortune in beer buying and offers Matty the Carling. Matty comes home and tells her housemate 'Billie said that I can have her tasty Carling'.

I am not going to argue that the feeling of projection is as clear in (116a) as it is in (116b), especially without the extra contextual information. I will speculate a reason for why this might be. PPTs like *tasty* seem to be much milder in their expressive power than expressives like *damn*, perhaps because of this the projection of the speaker/judge is not as apparent. If we pick more 'expressive' PPTs, I think that projection is much more clear, consider the following variants to the Hess example:

- (117) a. Jim said that he ate some **delicious** Brussels sprouts again.  
b. Jim said that he ate some **disgusting** Brussels sprouts again.

In both examples, it seems to me that the positive or the negative attitude towards Brussels sprouts is no longer attributed to Jim, but rather the speaker/agent of the sentence. As such, I do not think that the examples which attempt to show that PPTs and expressives behave differently under report embedding are as decisive as presented.

### Disagreements Differ

Another difference that might be pointed to is how differently people behave when they disagree with PPTs compared to when they disagree with expressives. Disagreements over PPTs seem non-important, Matty and Billie may disagree over whether *Carling is tasty*, but they are likely to drop the subject fairly quickly and agree that they have different tastes. No real consequences or fall outs seem to come from disagreements involving PPTs. I think most would agree that it would be unreasonable for Matty and Billie to stop being friends just because one finds Carling tasty, whilst the other does not.

Things seem to be more serious when we consider disagreements that involve calling someone a *fuckhead*. When Mark calls Jeremy a *fuckhead*, one can object on a much more concrete level. Because *fuckhead* is such a potent expressive especially when directed at a person, the disagreements are not as easily dropped. Dobby for example, might find Mark very unreasonable when he calls Jeremy a *fuckhead* and might decide to no longer interact with him.

There are a few of things I would like to note about this worry. Firstly, the offence that is caused by calling one a *fuckhead* is not so much about difference in subjectivity between *fuckhead* and *tasty*, but rather it's about conveying such a strong *negative* attitude towards a person. *Fuckhead* being a swearword carries with it an

effect that *tasty* does not, it conveys contempt which is a very strong attitude. In the case of Dobby and Mark, since Dobby is a friend of Jeremy's she has a higher stake in the game, she does not want to have her friend talked about in such a negative way. Note that the story would be very different if we consider *fuckhead* to be applied to an inanimate object for example, *That chair is a fuckhead*. It would be much harder (although not impossible) to construct a scenario where two people have a disagreement with serious consequences, because one calls a chair a *fuckhead*.

Secondly, it is not the case that we always have more heated disagreements when we use forceful expressives. It could be the case that if Dobby is not *too* concerned about Jeremy being called a *fuckhead*, she might just leave the disagreement without arguing further. The following dialogue is completely plausible:

(118) Mark: Jeremy is a fuckhead.

Dobby: No, he is not a fuckhead.

Mark: He absolutely is.

Dobby: Fine, that's your opinion.

Lastly, we can construct scenarios where we have heated disagreements over PPTs. This could particularly happen if one person is trying to convince the other to like the similar things that they like and they get frustrated when their persuasions do not work. For example, if Matty is trying to get Billie to like Carling and it's not working she might be disappointed and frustrated with Billie for not liking the same things as she does. These examples are perhaps a little far fetched when it comes to Carling, but they become more common when we consider food, art or activities. One could be annoyed that the other person does not find one's favourite dish *tasty*, one's favourite band *good*, or one's favourite activity *fun*.

We could come up with different examples to show that either potent expressives do not need to lead to a heated disagreement or that PPTs can lead to disagreements with serious consequences, however the overall point is simple. Disagreements with

*fuckhead* (or other formidable expressives) only seem worse when applied to people, this does not mean that expressives and PPTs differ semantically in kind.

#### 4.3.4 Should We Really be Disagreeing?

The last objection I am going to tackle is perhaps the biggest one. A large part and the starting point of this thesis was to see whether we can find a suitable account of faultless disagreement. Although we have found that many accounts can deal with faultlessness in a fairly straightforward manner, we have rejected lots of good semantic accounts on the basis that they do not seem to explain disagreement in a plausible manner. Now, I shall consider some worries with my own account to see whether it stands up to scrutiny.

If I am to be completely transparent, then I should ask whether my account of disagreement does not face the same issues as Lasersohn’s, or perhaps more worryingly MacFarlane’s. Recall in Chapter 2, we rejected both views on the grounds that what should count at one context of assessment should not matter for another. Perhaps cashing disagreement out in terms of attitudes which link us to certain sets of CAs faces the same issue, after all the expressive content conveyed in CARLING are not ‘contradictory’<sup>10</sup>, the expressive content expressed by Matty is  $\langle \llbracket \text{Matty} \rrbracket [0.5, 1] \llbracket \text{Carling} \rrbracket \rangle$  and Billie expresses  $\langle \llbracket \text{Billie} \rrbracket [-1, 1] \llbracket \text{Carling} \rrbracket \rangle$ . The expressive indices contain two different judges and thus should not be in any conflict. Furthermore, Matty’s and Billie’s expressive contents get produced at different contexts of use. When Stojanovic wrote that following Relativism there is no clash in truth values between the speakers and “that their “disagreement” is thus nothing more than a divergence in preferences” (Stojanovic, 2007, 697), I think she intended to make the point that what we’re left with is not really disagreement - hence the quotation marks around the word disagreement. Similarly one can make the point that there’s no clash in the values of expressive indices, it’s just that both Matty and Billie have different preferences. It is a fair question to ask why should a divergence

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<sup>10</sup>Here I put ‘contradictory’ in quotation marks for expressive content is not propositional.

of preferences result in disagreement, however, we can give a plausible answer. Since preferences rely on attitudes and attitudes commit us to certain CAs, we have a reason to disagree. We want to point out and make it clear that we do not belong in a set of those CAs where our attitudes do not match up and thus the truths of those propositions would not apply to us.

We can make an analogy with non-subjective disagreements here, consider the following:

(119)       Matty: Carling is on the table.

              Billie: No, Carling is not the table.

Here the proposition *Carling is on the table* will be true if indeed Carling is on the table at the world in which the proposition is evaluated from. The reason why Billie disagrees is because the world is not in such a way that the Carling is on the table. In other words, Billie is not committing to the correctness of the CA in which Carling is on the table. Similarly, when we disagree using PPTs or other expressives we're making it clear which sets of CAs are correct from our perspectives. The reason why disagreement arises is because the truth of those CAs that we want to commit ourselves to do not match up with what the other party is putting forth as truth. Thus Billie disagrees with Matty, as for Billie the context of assessments that she is willing to commit herself to is *not* one where a positive attitude towards Carling is conveyed rendering *Carling is tasty* as true. Instead, for Billie, the CAs that she is willing to commit herself to are those in which the judge (at most) has a neutral/indifferent attitude towards Carling.

Because of the link between judges' attitudes in the CU and the correct set of CAs we have a stronger explanation of disagreement than just mere divergence in preference. There is a divergence in preference, but this matters a great deal to us for we do not want to commit ourselves to a context of assessment which would include false propositions (as evaluated from our perspectives).



We do not need to claim that subjective disagreements are as concrete or serious as those which involve objective matters<sup>11</sup>, they can be in some sense flimsy. But because our attitudes commit us to certain CAs, according to Expressive-Relativism, we would not want to be placed (so to speak) in incorrect sets of CAs and thus we voice our disagreements concerning tastes.

#### 4.4 Summary

In this chapter, I have laid out a novel hybrid account called Expressive-Relativism. I have demonstrated that when it comes to PPTs and other expressives, we can account for both dimensions of meaning by adopting two complimentary accounts. Relativism can deal with the descriptive aspect of meaning which provides us with a big advantage over a pure Expressivist semantics account since we can account for expressives in predicative positions. Expressivist semantics can give us an account of disagreement which was a major obstacle in adopting non-hybrid Relativism.

I tried to consider a wide variety of possible objections to this view. I accept that both Expressivism and Relativism in their own right might seem a little extreme, thus putting them together (at least *prima facie*) seems like an interesting move. However, I hope I have answered at least some of the worries and the reader is convinced of the potential of this view.

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<sup>11</sup>This is typically the case, however we can imagine situations where these disagreements can be very serious. We can also imagine situations where disagreements over objective facts are inconsequential. For example, imagine Matty and Billie are disagreeing over how many hairs Ham the cat has. Matty utters *Ham has 40 million hairs* and Billie disagrees *No, Ham has 40 and 1 hairs*. This disagreement would probably not be a very serious one.

# Chapter 5

## How Far Can

## Expressive-Relativism Go?

In this last Chapter, I want to give some thought to other linguistic phenomena that are good candidates for either the Relativist or Expressivist semantics, but not necessarily applicable to the Expressive-Relativist semantics. These are epistemic modals and slurs. I argue that epistemic modals are not expressive enough, whilst slurs are not relativistic enough for an Expressive-Relativistic treatment. I also want to consider predicates referred to as *aesthetic predicates* that appear to be borderline cases. As we shall see, under certain circumstances I think these could be susceptible to an Expressive-Relativist treatment. Lastly, I consider, not an extension of the hybrid view as such, but issues surrounding appropriate contexts for certain words (i.e. register of words).

### 5.1 Aesthetic Predicates

Throughout this thesis I have taken the liberty of borrowing aesthetic predicates to support my views about PPTs. For example, in Chapter 1, we saw Foushee and Srinivasan (2017) use *pretty* which is arguably an aesthetic predicate<sup>1</sup>. A case can be made that aesthetic predicates are not quite on par with PPTs because with

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<sup>1</sup>I have used the word *arguably* here because it is not clear to me that *pretty* is a purely aesthetic predicate, it does seem to borderline as a predicate of personal taste, it is down to a judge whether a person or an object is pretty. We will see in the next section that seeming aesthetic predicates like *pretty* or *beautiful* are of the kind that can be amenable to the Expressive-Relativist semantics.

words such as *beautiful, good, balanced, harmonious, etc., who* the assessor is matters a great deal. That is, some standards are seen as more valuable or superior than others. However, a case can be made that aesthetic predicates are exactly like PPTs and thus an Expressive-Relativist treatment is very appropriate. I start by considering an argument in support of the claim that aesthetic predicates are amenable to an Expressive-Relativist treatment and then consider arguments against the claim. I conclude that for *some* predicates it seems that Expressive-Relativism should be employed, however, I will not go as far as to argue that we should apply Expressive-Relativism to *all* aesthetic predicates.

### 5.1.1 For Expressive-Relativism and (Some) Aesthetic Predicates

The idea that aesthetic predicates can be given a similar treatment to PPTs and expressives can be motivated by considering some empirical data. Cova and Pain (2012) carried out an experiment to challenge Aesthetic Realism. The aim for Cova and Pain was to show that an ordinary speaker (or a ‘lay person’) is not a normativist regarding aesthetic predicates. To be a normativist you have to believe that there’s correctness or incorrectness concerning aesthetic judgments. Say Matty believes that *x is beautiful* “she considers her judgment as being either correct or incorrect so that, in a contradictory aesthetic debate, each side believes that at most of them is right” (Cova and Pain, 2012, 241). In other words, ordinary speakers should not allow faultless disagreement over aesthetic predicates.

Cova and Pain focused on nine different scenarios using the predicate *to be beautiful*<sup>2</sup>: three scenarios judging works of art to be beautiful, three scenario judging natural objects to be beautiful, and three scenario judging people to be beautiful. For

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<sup>2</sup>Cova and Pain repeated this experiment with the predicate *to be ugly* (and again they had control scenarios). Just like with the *to be beautiful* scenarios, 30 people participated. I omit this experiment from the discussion for the results were essentially the same, see Cova and Pain (2012, 250–251).

control reasons, they also included three scenarios concerning objective matters (e.g. Is Proust the author of *In Search of Lost Time*?) and three scenarios concerning subjective matters (e.g. Are Brussels sprouts good?) (Cova and Pain, 2012, 246–247). Below are the kinds of vignettes that 30 subjects were presented concerning each scenario:

Agathe and Ulrich are on holidays in the country. While having a walk in the fields, they hear a nightingale singing. Agathe says: “What beautiful singing!” But Ulrich answers: “No. It’s definitely not beautiful.”

After reading the vignette, subjects are asked: According to you:

1. One of them is right and the other is not.
2. Both are right.
3. Both are wrong.
4. Neither is right or wrong. It makes no sense to speak in terms of correctness in this situation. Everyone is entitled to his own opinion.

(Cova and Pain, 2012, 245)

Option 1. would suggest that the subjects were Normativists about aesthetic predicates. Options 2. and 3. would suggest that they are Relativists, whilst Option 4. would suggest that they are Expressivists. Observe that I am not going to argue that the participants of the experiment were either Relativists or Expressivists about aesthetic judgments, I merely want this experiment to motivate the idea that the participants take aesthetic predicates to be subjective enough.

If the subjects chose answer 1. for a scenario then 1 point would be given to them, if they chose 2., 3. or 4., then 0 points were given for the answer. Thus, the highest score each category could receive was 3 points. See Figure 2 below for a summary of the results.

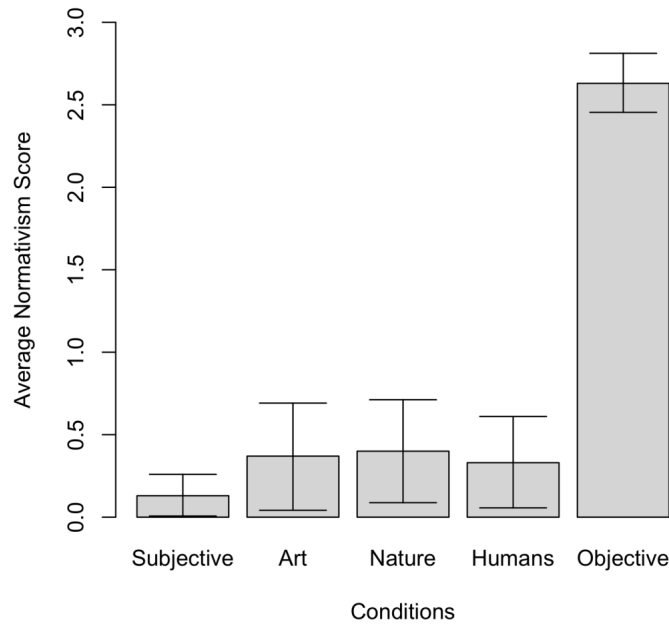


Figure 2: The Beautiful (Cova and Pain, 2012, 249)

The categories of Art, Nature and Humans are of relevance to us, for those are the ones where the predicate *to be beautiful* was employed. It is apparent from the results that the subjects took *to be beautiful* as applied to those categories to either not have truth conditions or both be right/wrong. This demonstrates that the vast majority of answers support the view that people do not take aesthetic judgments to be of the kind where one person has made a mistake.

I'm aware that the data collected here cannot be generalised to everyone nor can it cover all of the aesthetic predicates. It is enough motivation, I think, to claim that at least with predicates like *beautiful* Expressive-Relativism can provide appropriate semantics, as it has with PPTs and expressives. Perhaps predicates like *beautiful* are what Brogaard describes as expressing “thin, evaluative attributes (e.g., ‘great’ and ‘excellent’)”, this is opposed to “predicates that express thick aesthetic attributes (e.g., ‘balanced,’ ‘delicate,’ ‘insipid’)” (Brogaard, 2017, 123). If so, then perhaps Expressive-Relativism ought only to apply to predicates only exhibiting thin aesthetic properties. I'm inclined to agree with this claim. We will now consider why the hybrid account would be unsuitable for aesthetic predicates such as *balanced*, *delicate* or *insipid*<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup>I do have some reservations for classing *insipid* as having thick aesthetic properties, for it seems

## 5.1.2 Against Expressive-Relativism and (Some) Aesthetic Predicates

In this section we will consider aesthetic predicates which appear to have more of an *objective* feel to them. Lasersohn has a very nice illustration of a wine-taster, which is a great starting point:

An experienced wine-taster, for example, may base his or her judgment on subtle nuances of flavor that play little or no role in the judgement of a less experienced wine-taster – nuances which one must learn to appreciate, but which, with sufficient education and experience, practically everyone agrees are important evaluation to wine [...] I would suggest that the more experienced wine tasters judgement *should* carry more weight in the assessment of sentences like *This is a high quality wine*, or *This is a good wine*.

(Lasersohn, 2017, 214–215, original emphases)

When Lasersohn talks about subtle nuances being at play, I think what he is pointing to is a something more objective than standards of taste we have been considering for PPTs. There is actually something out there in the wine that the experienced wine taster can recognise. The point being, there are certain aesthetic predicates that appear to depend not just on *any* judge's tastes, but ones that have some experience or superiority in the field. If this is the case, then it seems that we cannot apply a simple Relativist semantics to aesthetic predicates, for the Relativist semantics we have laid out does not take one perspective to be privileged in any way. Recall in the Introduction, when considering Relativism as a serious account we considered equal validity as a characteristic of Relativism. No perspective is more important/correct than another. With Lasersohn's wine illustration, it's clear that we would take the views of a wine connoisseur more seriously than someone, like me, who enjoys really

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to be that this can be a matter of taste, in a similar way that *spicy* can. If we seriously take the idea that Expressive-Relativism can apply to thin aesthetic terms we will come across a lot borderline predicates that could either fall into the thin or thick category. Since nothing hangs on this for the discussion, I shall not try and give a full argument for this claim.

cheap wine. We can think of similar examples concerning music, an experienced musician will tell you whether a certain song is *harmonious*, or in art an experienced painter can tell you if a work of art is well *balanced*.

The difference between PPTs and aesthetic predicates (that carry thick aesthetic properties) comes down their subjectivity. Certain aesthetic predicates seem to pick out something objective, for example a wine will be of good quality because the wine taster can recognise some qualities in it that are deemed to count towards it being good quality (presumably these qualities are set by the wine tasting community)<sup>4</sup>. The wine taster had to train and practice to be able to recognise these qualities. If that is the case then they are not just picking out subjective properties that do not really exist outside the experiencer, they're picking out something that is actually present in the wine.

We can further demonstrate the difference between PPTs, thin aesthetic terms and thick aesthetic terms by considering whether faultless disagreement would occur:

(120)      Matty: Carling is tasty.

            Billie: No, Carling is not tasty.

(121)      Matty: *Mudhoney* are excellent.

            Billie: No, *Mudhoney* are not excellent.

(122)      Matty: *Witches' Sabbath* by Goya is well balanced.

            Billie: No, *Witches' Sabbath* by Goya is not well balanced.

For the first disagreement we would have no issue in calling it faultless. We have done so throughout this whole thesis. The disagreement in (121), I would also feel no qualms in calling faultless, if what I have said in the previous section is correct then thin aesthetic terms can be given exactly the same analysis as PPTs and other expressives. The third disagreement is different. Since I am not an art critic, I could

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<sup>4</sup>To be clear when I talk about wine thick aesthetic predicates picking out more of an *objective* property, I do not wish to claim that this property is objective absolutely. When wine critics judge wine there is some standard they follow, however it is not of our concern exactly how this standard is set.

not tell you exactly what would count as *balanced*, however I'm sure an experienced art critic could recognise the relevant properties in the painting and tell me whether *Witches' Sabbath* is a balanced piece of art. Say in (122) it is Billie who's the art critic, we should therefore defer to her perspective as the correct one.

There is one worry I have about the discussion above. We saw that we ought to take the wine connoisseurs or the art critics perspective as the authoritative one. This might be true if we are picking out something like an objective property (e.g. this is a full bodied oaky wine), but if the disagreement is down purely to taste then I do not think that we should allow a privileged perspective. For example if in CARLING Billie is an expert on beers we might think that her perspective is the privileged one and thus Matty is at fault for uttering something false - after all, Billie has the expertise in judging whether Carling is in fact tasty or not. This is not the claim I want to make. Since *tasty*, *fun*, etc. are PPTs those *do not* take privileged perspectives. It is completely down to the judge whether Carling is tasty, regardless of the experience of the judge. As such, we ought to only give more weight to the critic when we consider thick aesthetic predicates and not when considering PPTs, expressives, or thin aesthetic predicates.

Brogaard (2017) present a Relativist framework which attempts to account for thick aesthetic terms. The rough idea is that only a qualified critic can assess a certain proposition. Just as before the propositional content will be judge neutral, but the context of assessment will contain judges who are experts or qualified critics. So we can ask a question of whether with the qualified critic in mind we can apply the Expressivist semantics to Brogaard's Relativism. I still do not think this would be a good idea for two reasons: firstly, there are some issues with Brogaard's proposal concerning the nature of the judge; secondly, the critics judgment does not merely depend on the attitude but some objective properties one can observe. I'll first elaborate on the former worry.



In the quote below Brogaard notes a question which is very pertinent to her Relativism:

This raises the question of which art critics are relevant for the determination of the truth-values of aesthetic judgments? This is not something that a semanticist can, or should, answer but it is bound to be a difficult issue to resolve. Moreover, the answers to the questions of which art critics are qualified and in which circumstances of assessment they are qualified are likely to be inflicted with vagueness.

(Brogaard, 2017, 134)

Perhaps Brogaard is right that it is not the job of semantics to tell us exactly who the critics are, but it would be nice to have some kind of story to go along with the semantics. Otherwise we would not know how to use the semantics presented. That is, if we do not know exactly how to classify who the art critic is then we have no way of knowing who can judge a certain proposition as true or false. Furthermore, leaving the story lacking, raises more question. Particularly, keeping in line with this thesis, we want to know whether faultless disagreements are possible when two critics are involved. For example if in (122) both, Matty and Billie, are art critics who is correct or are they both correct? For the sake of this example, consider both Matty and Billie be very similar in respect of their expertise (let's ignore the issue of precisely how to measure expertise). They are both evaluating the painting as being balanced, this will depend on some objective properties, as well as, their own opinions. The issue here is that these objective properties will have some standard according to the art community, so it seems at odds that both of the critics can be correct. However, Brogaard writes "the art critic's utterance may have one truth-value relative to her aesthetic taste standards and another truth-value relative to a different art critic's taste standards" (Brogaard, 2017, 134). This implies that both critics can be correct. But if both critics can be correct when observing the same objective properties, then why limit the evaluation to the critics and not allow everyone to be able assess thick aesthetic properties? I do not think this is an unsolvable

worry and perhaps some story can be given of who counts as a critics, but I do think it places some serious pressure on the account. Until this worry is solved, no simple extension to the Expressive-Relativism can be made.

The second worry I have concerning extending Expressive-Relativism to Brogaard's framework is that the critic does not make their assessment purely because of the attitudes that they have. For thin aesthetic terms, PPTs and other expressives, we can say that the truth-value is tied to the attitude that the judge has towards a certain object. Thus, *Carling is tasty* is true at a CA if it meets the standard of the  $ca_j$  and it can only meet the standard of the  $ca_j$  if the  $cu_j$  has a positive attitude towards Carling. *Jeremy is a fuckhead* can only be true if the  $ca_j$  has contempt for Jeremy, and the  $ca_j$  can only have contempt if the  $cu_j$  has a negative attitude towards Jeremy. This is not the case with thick aesthetic terms. Whether *Witches' Sabbath* by Goya is *balanced* will be true just in case it meets certain criteria according to the critic judge. But this can be true even if the critic judge has a completely negative (or positive) attitude towards Goya's painting. Furthermore, in cases we have been considering (e.g. CARLING) two judges cannot agree if they have opposing attitudes for they commit themselves to different sets of CAs. This is not the case with thick aesthetic terms. Again take Matty and Billie to be experts considering Goya's *Witches' Sabbath*, even if one despises the painting and the other thinks it's amazing they can still agree that the painting is balanced. Furthermore in (122), both Matty and Billie can have the same attitude towards the painting and yet still disagree. This second point is the main reason why I would not extend the hybrid theory presented in this thesis to thick aesthetic predicates.

## 5.2 Epistemic Modals

Assessment-Sensitive Relativism has been proposed as a popular approach to explaining epistemic modals. We have briefly touched on epistemic modals in Chapter 1, §1.6, where in discussion of Non-Indexical Contextualism we presented reason to question retraction data motivated by example (35). I will not dwell on the retraction

data in this section. I will merely quickly explain how epistemic modals can receive a Relativist analysis and why Expressive-Relativism could not suitably capture this phenomenon.

Consider the following examples involving the epistemic modal *might*:

- (123) a. Carling might be in the fridge.  
b. Bevan might be in Wales.  
c. Jeremy might have forgotten the turkey.

Take a speaker to utter any of the sentences in (123), what is it that they actually mean? Intuitively, we may say it means something like the speaker is confident with the knowledge they have, but they are not completely sure. That is, the claim that they're making is compatible with the knowledge that the speaker holds (i.e. nothing rules out the possibility that Carling is the fridge, Bevan is in Wales or that Jeremy has forgotten the turkey). We can thus, characterise the epistemic modal *might* as *what is known by the judge* (MacFarlane, 2014, 254) or *what is compatible with the judge's knowledge* (Laserson, 2017, 226).

Here it's easy to see how we can give a Relativist's treatment of terms like *might*. We can say that the character of *might* is a constant function from context of use to content. Thus, (123a) for example, conveys the same proposition uttered by Billie and it does uttered by Matty. The content is a function from judge-world pair to the truth-values. Here it is not the judge's tastes that will determine whether utterances in (123) are true or false, but their knowledge base (i.e. true or false regarding what is known by the judge)<sup>5</sup>. So far the story given here is very similar to that of PPTs and Relativism, we may think of *faultlessness* of these terms in a similar manner. For example, imagine there is no Carling in the fridge, but Matty does not know this. Matty can utter (123a) and at  $ca_1$  this utterance will convey a true proposition for all Matty knows there might be some Carling in the fridge. Thus, even if at  $ca_2$

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<sup>5</sup>One can also think of the content being a function from epistemic standard-world pair to the truth-values, if they prefer something more abstract than a judge, nothing hangs on this for subsequent discussion

it turns out that there is no Carling in the fridge and (123a) is now false, we cannot hold Matty at *fault* for uttering (123a) as it was true at  $ca_1$ .

Lasersohn notes a big difference between epistemic modals and PPTs, he writes:

Even though epistemic modal sentences express contents which vary in truth value from perspective to perspective, some of these perspectives may be seen as objectively superior to other for the purposes of assessing contents.

(Lasersohn, 2017, 227)

The idea here is that if one perspective (or judge) has more information, that perspective is held superior. This is unlike PPTs, where the judge *completely* decides the assessment of a PPT-sentence, regardless of the tastes of other judges. To illustrate, consider Billie knows that there's no Carling in the fridge, so when Matty utters (123a), Billie can correct her and change Matty's perspective. Now, one might read this as not that some perspectives are superior, after all at the time of her utterance Matty's knowledge was compatible with Carling being in the fridge, but with the more knowledgeable perspectives updating the *what is know by the judge* and essentially changing the context of assessment. I will not dive into the precise issues of how to interpret the faultlessness of epistemic modals, but instead bring back the discussion to our novel hybrid account.

Whilst it's clear that Relativism is a good candidate for epistemic modals, Expressive-Relativism is not. What is missing from epistemic modals, but is present in PPTs and other expressives is the negative/positive attitude that is carried by the terms. The epistemic modal under discussion - *might* - does not seem to possess the same qualities as an expressive term. Most importantly, there does not seem to any expressive content that lets us know the mental state of the speaker (regarding the attitudes). Recall we said that we should only use expressive terms if we have the corresponding attitudes, for example if I use *fuckhead* negatively then this use is

only felicitous if I have a negative attitude towards a certain entity. No such corresponding use-condition appears to be present for *might*. Furthermore, we have seen how *might* has perspective dependence (as expressives do), but it is not clear that there's any descriptive ineffability. I agree that there might be some issue in how exactly to spell it out in theoretical terms, however we managed this section pretty well with *what is known by the judge* or *what is compatible with the judge's knowledge*.

One could object and argue that *might* shows a certain type of confidence towards a proposition, since we're saying that when we use *might* we mean that nothing in our knowledge excludes the truth of the proposition we express, the attitude we put forth is one of confidence. The confidence attitude can vary between epistemic modals too. Consider the difference between *might* and *must* - the latter seems to have more confidence than the former. Why not, then, construct our expressive indices in such a way that we do not merely capture this level of confidence? We have already seen an example of an expressive that does not simply follow the standard positive/negative/neutral pattern. Recall McCready's example (61) from Chapter 3, §3.2.1, where the verb *irassharu* conveyed the descriptive content that someone (the teacher) came and expressed honor toward that entity. It is not completely obvious that to honor someone one must have a positive attitude towards someone. We can also consider the use of formal and informal pronouns in languages other than English. In Lithuanian, for example, one can use the informal pronoun for *you* - *tu* - to refer to someone who one is familiar with. When it comes to people one wants to show respect towards (e.g. someone of a higher ranking, elder or someone that one is unfamiliar with), one would use the formal pronoun of *you* - *jūs*<sup>6</sup>.

Perhaps, then, we could construct more complex expressive indices to reflect these different types of attitudes. For epistemic modals we could have something like  $\langle a \mathbf{I}_{confidence} b \rangle$ ; for honorifics and formal pronouns  $\langle a \mathbf{I}_{respect} b \rangle$ . After all, we have already complicated our expressive indices to explain utterances like *Carling is tasty*,

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<sup>6</sup>Note that, in Lithuanian, *jūs* is also the plural version of *you*.

*but boring* (§4.3.2 of this Chapter.), there is no reason why we cannot make the intervals more complicated to reflect the different *kinds* of attitudes people can have towards entities.

I will make one simple remark concerning this point. If one wants to extend Expressive-Relativism to include epistemic modals then one has to explain the fundamental differences between expressives and epistemic modals. For example, the difference in descriptive ineffability has already been noted. Recall also, expressives seem to project out of belief reports. Compare the following:

- (124) a. Mark believes that Jeremy forgot the fucking turkey.  
b. Mark believes that Jeremy might have forgot the turkey.

In (124a), the negative attitude is attributed to speaker/judge of the utterance, whilst in (124b) the confidence of *might* (if this is what we're taking the proposed expressive content to be), is clearly attributed to Mark and not the speaker/judge of the sentence. As things stand, I do not think that there is enough motivation from the expressive side to apply Expressive-Relativism to epistemic modals.

### 5.3 Slurs

Another linguistic phenomenon which, *prima facie*, might be a candidate for Expressive-Relativism is slurs. Slurs are derogatory epithets which target groups or individuals qua membership in those groups. For example, the *n-word* target black people because they are black, *honky* targets white people because they are white, *limey* targets British people because they are British. What is special about slurs is that they convey a very potent negative attitude towards a group of people because they belong to that group. For example, if one utters *Justina is a honky*, the negative attitude does not just pick out Justina, but the whole group of white people.

In this section, I argue that Expressive-Relativism should not be applied to slurs. Intuitively we would not want to in any way attest to the truth of a racist's, sexist's,

homophobe's, etc., opinion. Doing so would render Expressive-Relativism as implausible as traditional Relativism when applied to the moral domain. On this front I am in the same boat as Lasersohn who makes it very clear that his Relativism, whilst it could apply to expressives, should not be applied to slurs:

I would *not* extend this claim to derogatory epithets which are reserved for people belonging to particular racial or ethnic groups, such as *kike* or [*n-word*]. Any perspective which yields a truth value for assertions that someone belongs to one of these categories must be regarded as objectively inferior for the assessment of such assertions than perspectives which do not.

(Lasersohn, 2017, 233, ft.nt.16, original emphases)

Here Lasersohn does not provide an argument for his claim, perhaps because it seems intuitively true (and I agree that it does). But intuitions by themselves only go so far. They can however, guide us. To support the idea that slurs cannot be given an Expressive-Relativistic (or a purely Relativistic) treatment I will highlight the difference between slurs' descriptive content and the kind of descriptive content that Relativism handles. However, first lets start with similarities between slurs and expressives:

- Most clearly a certain (in typical uses negative) attitude gets conveyed when a slur is used, thus slurs appear to have expressive content.
- Slurs are evaluated from a certain perspective. If Matty utters *Justina is a honky* then this utterance will be evaluated from Matty's perspective and the negative attitudes towards white people will be attributed toward Matty.
- Just like non-slurring expressives, slurs seem to exhibit descriptive ineffability. You could try and paraphrase *Justina is a honky* as something like *Justina is white and because of that should be discriminated against/is bad*, but this seems to miss that potent negative attitude.

- Just like typical expressives, slurs are nondisplaceable and they project onto the speaker. Take Billie to utter the following:

- (125) a. Billie: Matty believes that Justina is a honky.  
 b. Billie: Yesterday that honky Justina was late.

In (125a), even though the slur is embedded under a report, the negative attitude is attributed to Billie and not Matty, the slur projects onto the speaker/judge of the utterance. In (125b), even though Billie is referring to yesterday, what we get is information about the current context of use (i.e. Billie feels negatively towards white people in *the current* context). That is, just like expressives, slurs are nondisplaceable.

These are just a few similarities between expressives and slurs and this is why it might be tempting to think that the same semantic treatment can be given to slurs as is given to expressives. This, I argue, is not the case. The main reason is that, although there are some similarities between slurs and expressives, the descriptive content that the slur carries is not of the kind that can be relativised. The dominant account in the philosophy of language and linguistics is that slurs (whether racial, sexist, etc.) have a neutral counterpart - a counterpart which does not carry the negative attitude of the speaker. As Anderson et al. put it: “what can be said with a slur can often be said another way without offense” (Anderson et al., 2012, 754)<sup>7</sup>. For example, the slur *honky* has as its neutral counterpart *white*, the neutral counterpart of *limey* is *British*, etc. Most pragmatic and semantic views take the neutral counterpart to explain the truth-conditional or the descriptive content of a slur. For example by uttering ‘he is a *Kraut*’ “I assert that the referent of *he* is German, and express that I have negative feelings about him.” (McCready, 2010, 6).

If we take the neutral counterpart idea seriously then it does not make sense to say that a slurs can be true or false depending on a judge. Following the neutral coun-

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<sup>7</sup>For just a handful of accounts that endorse the neutral counterpart idea see: Anderson and Lepore (2013a,b), Bolinger (2017), Camp (2013), Hom (2008), Jeshion (2013a,b), McCready (2010), Scott and Stevens (2019)



terpart thesis slurs will (descriptively) pick out some objective property, e.g. *Justina is a honky* would have as its counterpart *Justina is white/Caucasian* and this would either be true or false merely by looking at how the world is<sup>8</sup>.

The idea of a neutral counterpart or picking out some objective property is what draws the line between a slur and an expressive. Recall that to render *Jeremy is a fuckhead* true all we need is for the judge of that utterance to have contempt towards Jeremy, that is, they simply need to have a negative attitude towards him. This makes sense for individual pejoratives like *fuckhead*, for *fuckhead* does not pick out an objective property in the world. This is not the case with slurs. Having a negative attitude towards a group of people does not render that group of people objectively deserving of that evaluation. Slurs' descriptive content picks out an objective property, not something subjective that can be relativised.

What I have said thus far only carries weight if slurs do in fact have neutral counterparts. This idea has recently been challenged by bringing gendered slurs (e.g. *slut*, *bitch*, *sissy*) to the forefront. For example McConnell-Ginet notes the difference between racial and gendered slurs:

Long histories of sexism and misogyny have, however, given English speakers a wealth of resources for demeaning women, *as* women: *slut*, *bitch*, *hag*, *harridan*, *hussy*, and many, many more. Such words differ from most of the canonical racial and ethnic S-words in having semantic content beyond designating a particular group: they fault a woman's appearance, her sexual behaviour, her assertiveness, or the like. In addition, these expressions cannot generally be used to designate women as a general group irrespective of any other properties they might have.

(McConnell-Ginet, 2020, 158)

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<sup>8</sup>Although it is accepted that slurs communicate something over and above the descriptive content that captures the bigoted attitude of the speaker. Thus, a lot of accounts on slurs would not take a sentence such as *Justina is a honky* to be true, even if the slur has a neutral counterpart.

The idea is that whilst ethnic slurs for example will pick out a class of people because of their ethnicity, gendered slurs will pick out behaviours or certain traits, rather than a class of people. So, although it is only women that are slurred by the typical use of *slut*, it is not *all* women. For example, *slut* would seem ‘inappropriate’ to use against a nun or a woman with high religious values<sup>9</sup>. Thus, *slut* does not slur on the basis of gender as a whole, but rather gender plus some behavioural trait.

Ashwell (2016), in particular, challenges the view that gendered slurs (and possibly the more ‘typical’ slurs) have neutral counterparts. If this is the case, then perhaps Expressive-Relativism can apply to at least gendered slurs. Again, at least intuitively, not the result we want. Ashwell (2016, 234) sets out the following criteria for a description to count as neutral:

- (i) It should not be evaluative. The description should not carry any negative judgment.
- (ii) It should be purely descriptive. The description should not carry any normative component.

Ashwell discusses gendered slurs and argues that they do not meet the criteria. To illustrate this point consider Ashwell’s (2016, 235) definition of the slur *slut*:

SLUT: A woman who is inappropriately disposed towards sexual relations.

Criterion (i) is not met for there is a clear negative evaluative claim that is present in the definition. Within the social context it is decided what the inappropriate sexual relations are that a woman is presumed to have. Whether it’s the number of sexual partners, or what she does with them, or the type of clothing she chooses to wear. Regardless of what the social criteria might be to be branded a *slut*, its supposed neutral counterpart is a description that is couched in negative value judgements. Furthermore, Ashwell argues that although the supposed neutral counterpart seems

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<sup>9</sup>Note that *inappropriate* is in quotation marks because it is not like it would be appropriate to use the term *slut* against a woman who is said to have the alleged behavioural trait.

less offensive “this is mostly because it is harder to hiss or spit out” than the description associated with *slut* - a woman who is inappropriately disposed towards sexual relations (Ashwell, 2016, 234). The alleged neutral counterpart is disapproving within a social context and thus is “evaluatively nonneutral” (Ashwell, 2016, 238). Note that this is different to racial slurs for there is no negative evaluative judgment built into terms like *white*.

Ashwell also argues that the second criteria is not met as it is not clear that the neutral counterpart of *slut* is purely descriptive since it contains a covert normative claim by encoding social norms for the behaviour of the gender (Ashwell, 2016, 239). Being inappropriately disposed towards sexual relations will depend on what counts as the appropriate sexual behaviour for a woman. The appropriateness will be fixed by the social context in which the term occurs, rather than by the mere meanings of the words. This is different to neutral counterparts such as *white*, where the descriptive content is known by knowing the word.

If we’re convinced by Ashwell’s arguments that there is no neutral counterpart to gendered slurs, then perhaps we cannot use the same reasoning for dismissing Expressive-Relativism as a candidate account for (at least) gendered slurs. In what follows, I will briefly assess Ashwell’s claim that gendered slurs do not have a neutral counterpart. I hope to show that them being evaluative does not prevent them from being neutral in the appropriate sense. Furthermore, I show, that even if one is not convinced by my claim that gendered slurs have a neutral counterpart gendered slurs will still pick out non-neutral objective properties. This will be enough to differentiate them from individual pejoratives like *fuckhead*.

### 5.3.1 *Slut* and the Neutral Counterpart

Ashwell (2016) argues that since the proposed neutral definition for *slut* carries an evaluative component and is not wholly descriptive due to the normative component

it cannot be classed as neutral. I first show that there's no reason to think that just because a description contains an evaluative component, it must be deemed as non-neutral in the appropriate sense. I then turn to the descriptive status of the slur.

As noted, for a neutral counterpart to count as a neutral counterpart it must not express the negative attitude of the speaker. In the terminology of this thesis, for a term to be expressive it produces an expressive index, thus for the counterpart to be neutral it must lack an expressive index. In other words, it must lack that component that makes a slur a *slur*. Now consider the following utterances:

- (126) a. Billie: Matty is a woman who is inappropriately disposed towards sexual relations.
- b. Billie: Matty is a slut.

Billie in (126a) is not communicating the same information as she does in (126b). By using the slur Billie would further be adding the information that they hold a derogatory attitude towards Matty because she belong to a certain group, which seems to be missing from the neutral counterpart. Only (126b) would produce a highly negative expressive index. Because of the presence of the derogatory content, I disagree with the idea that the neutral counterparts only *seem* to be less offensive because they take longer to utter (as is claimed by Ashwell). The reason why the slurs are as powerful as they are is because they have a potent expressive effect, the negative attitude communicated goes beyond the mere value judgement of inappropriateness.

To illustrate this point further consider the following example. Billie is a school teacher who is considering a suitable candidate to come and give a talk to her students for the upcoming careers day. Matty is a female sex worker in a society where sex work is still very much stigmatised. Whilst considering Matty as a candidate for the careers day, the school teacher may very well think that Matty is not a suitable candidate because *Matty is a woman who is inappropriately disposed towards sexual relations*. So Billie endorses the negative value judgement carried by (126a).

This does not mean, however, that Billie would also endorse (126b), where there's a derogatory attitude expressed by the use of the slur *slut*. Billie can hold the negative value judgment present in (126a) and yet think it is wrong to call Matty (or anyone else, for that matter) a *slut*.

Because of these considerations the claim that just because a description is evaluative does not mean that it cannot be neutral in the appropriate sense. Now to turn to the question of whether because the description contains a normative component it fails to be a candidate for a neutral counterpart. For a term or a phrase to be a candidate for a neutral counterpart it has to lack the component that makes a slur a slur, i.e. the contempt that it expresses. The descriptive part then is what is left after we take all the derogatory content away, something that has truth-conditional content. This is not to say that the description *a woman who is inappropriately disposed towards sexual relations* will actually pick anyone out, but it has a clear descriptive content.

This is not to say that there is no difference between gendered slur and the slurs considered at the beginning of this section. This is something a theory of slurs will need to consider and account for. My point is simply that we can hold gendered slurs to have a neutral counterpart and thus refer to some (actual or supposed) objective property, as such, even for gendered slurs Expressive-Relativism is not a suitable semantic account.

### 5.3.2 No Neutral Counterpart

Now, one might not be persuaded by my brief argument of gendered slurs having neutral counterparts. If so, one may think that either the descriptive content of a gendered slur is not neutral or that slurs do not have a descriptive content (they do not pick anyone out). I consider the latter option first.

Say slurs functioned in the same way as Potts' expressives, in that there was no descriptive content at all merely the negative attitude. This would not be very probable

for it would fail to explain why groups of people get offended by the use of a slur. For example, if I heard Matty call Billie a *slut* I can be offended because the slur extends beyond Billie (although of course I can be offended on Billie's behalf as well). That is I recognise that the slur is used to criticise women's behaviour purely on the basis of their gender. This is unlike with the typical expressives. When Mark calls Jeremy a *fuckhead*, I can be offended on Jeremy's behalf, but there is no wider consequence for the use of the epithet. Furthermore, all the issues outlined in Chapter 3 concerning expressives in predicative positions will also apply to slurs, if we claim that they do not have any descriptive content.

The former option namely that they can have a descriptive paraphrase but this paraphrase is not neutral precisely because it contains an evaluative element also does not render slurs amenable to an Expressive-Relativist treatment. Say behaviour *P* is some inappropriate behaviour which renders some woman a *slut*. The crucial point here is that the *P* behaviour is some actual or perceived objective property that exists in the world. It will either be the case that woman *P* behaves or not. This is not the case with individual epithets like *fuckhead*, there is no 'fuckheadedness' out there in the world.

The considerations above lead me to conclude that slurs (including gendered slurs) should not be given an Expressive-Relativist treatment. This is, of course, a welcoming consequence for we would not want our theory to render racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic or just generally bigoted views as true.

## 5.4 Register

I would like to finish this section by considering register. Register is the phenomenon of the appropriateness of using a certain word in a context. Diaz-Legaspe et al., for example explain it in the following terms: "To locate a word in a register category is to specify the contexts for which it is socio-culturally appropriate" (2020, 163). I will talk about this phenomenon in terms of words having register, thus the word itself

is only appropriate if the word's register matches that of the context's. Recall in §5.2, we considered the Lithuanian formal pronoun *jūs*, the context must be formal for the word carries a formal register. If I, for example, referred to my brother as *jūs* he would find the choice of my words strange and inappropriate<sup>10</sup>. A good example where the register fails to match the context can be seen from an episode of *The Young Ones*, where Neil, with the help of his housemates, is writing a letter to the bank manager to ask for more money:

(127) Neil: Darling fascist bully boy, give me some more money, you bastard.

(The Young Ones, 1984, Season 2, *Cash*)<sup>11</sup>

Here the appropriate context is one in which the language towards a bank manager should be formal and respectful. Our culture is one in which those in roles such as bank managers should not be addressed as *darling* (for this is too familiar) or *fascist bully boy* and *bastard* for such terms are overly informal and very disrespectful. Thus the register of the words does not match the kind of context that we are in.

One point of discussion I would like to highlight is that register is somewhat of a different phenomenon to use-conditions as I have presented them in this thesis. Although register does appear to give some guidance of when to use the word appropriately, it is of a different kind to what we have been considering. Take for example our favourite expressive *fuckhead*, we said that the use-conditions of *fuckhead* should be that the judge of the context of use has a negative attitude towards some entity.

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<sup>10</sup>Provided he took what I was saying seriously, for example if I was making a joke about him being older than me then this would be a non literal use perhaps and he could go along with the joke. See for an example of flouting the Spanish formal pronoun *usted* in Diaz-Legaspe et al. (2020, 164).

<sup>11</sup>The full letter that Neil writes ends up being the following:

Dear fascist bully boy,

Give me some more money, you bastard. May the seed of your loins be fruitful in the belly of your woman.

Neil.

(The Young Ones, 1984, Season 2, *Cash*)

I took the former part of this letter as my example, but note that it would also be inappropriate in this context to talk about the bank manager's seed.

If this is not the case then the use of *fuckhead* is infelicitous. Now to analyse the register of the word *fuckhead* I will borrow from Predelli's (2013, 82) work<sup>12</sup>:

(127)  $cu \in \text{CU}(\text{fuckhead})$  only if  $cu_j$  is a participant in register *coarse* in  $cu$ .

We can rephrase (127) in the following manner: we are in an appropriate context of use only if the judge of the CU is in a context where the register is coarse, otherwise they are not in an appropriate context. Thus, if the register is violated we can say that the speaker/judge has used a word inappropriately (just like when the use conditions are violated, the speaker/judge is guilty of infelicity).

Here it seems that register places some constraints on the context of use as it specifies when it's appropriate to use a certain word. It seems, then, that something like use-conditions are involved. That's one way we can think about this and in fact it seems like Predelli sees register as a species of use-conditions<sup>13</sup>. However, the use-conditions I have considered are different from register. This clear from the fact that use-conditions as used in this thesis (we can call them *expressive* use-conditions) and register can come apart, it can be the case that one has used a term felicitously, but where the register of the word does not match the appropriateness of the context of use. For example, if I was to speak to the head my department about one of my colleagues I might utter *X is a fuckhead*, and if I have a negative attitude towards *X*, then I have used the expressive felicitously. However, since the context is not one where the register is *coarse*, but rather formal my use of the expressive would be inappropriate. Thus, even though we can see register as a species of use-conditions this should not be confused with our expressive use-conditions considered thus far.

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<sup>12</sup>Note that Predelli's original example concerned the word *fuck* not *fuckhead*, I have also adopted the notation I use throughout this thesis. The original example is:

$c \in \text{CU}(\text{fuck})$  only if  $c_a$  is a participant in register *coarse* in  $c$ .

(Predelli, 2013, 82, original emphasis)

<sup>13</sup>Note that Predelli calls this *bias*: "I refer to the non truth-conditional meaning of an expression  $e$ , understood as a set of constraints on  $\text{CU}(e)$ , as the *bias* for  $e$ " (Predelli, 2013, 66). Similarly to my account (and Gutzmann's), the full meaning of an expression is captured by both the truth-conditional and the bias content of the expression, e.g. "*meaning*(hurray) =  $\langle \text{char}(\text{hurray}), \text{bias}(\text{hurray}) \rangle$ " (Predelli, 2013, 66). However, note that Predelli is not a Relativist as explicated here.



# Conclusion

The starting point of this project was to try and find a semantic theory that could give a sufficient explanation of faultless disagreement that predicates of personal taste appear to give rise to. In doing so, I hoped we could find the correct theory to account for the meanings of PPTs. In my search of this theory, I found myself at another interesting problem, one concerning expressive terms in predicative positions. The whole thesis can be seen as us providing a mirrored account of both Relativism regarding PPTs and Expressivism regarding expressives in predicative positions. What Relativism lacks is an account of disagreement which does not rely on a contradiction. After surveying different options the one with most promise is an Expressive approach, accounting for disagreement on an expressive level. What Expressivism lacks is the descriptive component to be able to explain expressives contributing to the truth-conditional content. The correct descriptive account, it seems, is one that can fully account for the subjective nature of the expressives. This seemed to be the right job for the Relativist. Thus, by trying to find a solution for the Relativist's problems we employed Expressivism and by trying to find a solution for the Expressivist's problems we employed the Relativist's tools, this gave us a novel hybrid account which I call Expressive-Relativism. I will now briefly recap the importance of each Chapter.

In Chapter 1, we looked at PPTs and the apparent cases of faultless disagreements that they give rise to. I argued that non-hybrid versions of Indexical Contextualism cannot give a sufficient account of faultless disagreement, for whilst they can capture the faultlessness aspect, they cannot capture disagreement. We saw that if the

Indexical Contextualist wants to disregard disagreement they would have to explain why the intuition is present in the first place. That ordinary speakers accept faultless disagreement was supported by empirical data. The more promising accounts of Indexical Contextualism were those that attempted to explain disagreement by including some extra element. The two views considered were the presupposition of commonality approach and the Metasemantic approach. Whilst both views fared better than their non-hybrid counterpart, as they took faultless disagreement seriously, they still faced some internal worries rendering the accounts insufficient. A general argument against the Indexical Contextualist strategy was presented. This argument did not rely on questioning the Indexical Contextualist's ability in dealing with disagreement, but rather questioned the presence of an indexical element in PPTs. If the reader agrees with the argument and is as convinced by it as I am, then I hope the importance of the general argument is clear. What it shows is that no version (hybrid or non-hybrid) can give a suitable account of the meanings of PPTs. I ended Chapter 1 by briefly considering Non-Indexical Contextualism and showing how it will struggle in accounting for the faultlessness part of faultless disagreement. This Chapter was important not only to introduce PPTs and faultless disagreement, but also to show that the unsatisfactory nature of Contextualisms in accounting for PPTs gives us enough reason to look for an alternative account. This is the focus of Chapter 2.

The goal of Chapter 2 was to establish that various versions of Assessment-Sensitive Relativism in one sense or another rely on a contradiction to account for the disagreement aspect of faultless disagreement. I argued that the Relativist should employ a relativistic notion of a contradiction - RELCON - and if they do there will be no contradiction in cases like CARLING. As such, Assessment-Sensitive Relativism faced the same issue as Indexical Contextualisms, they were left without an account of disagreement. I ended this Chapter by considering an unusual view called Indexical Relativism. As I noted, there is no one (to my knowledge) who champions this view in respect to PPTs, but it was an interesting bit of logical space to explore. Indexical

Relativism was not satisfactory on the basis that it could not account for disagreement. The purpose of this Chapter was to argue that even an account that appears to be the best explanation of faultless disagreement falls prey to the same objection as we see with Contextualism. Relativism cannot account for disagreement. However, I did not think we should abandon Relativism all together, its highly subjective semantics seemed like a good candidate in at least partly giving an account of PPTs. It just seems that some extra component is needed to account for the disagreement aspect.

Chapter 3 is where we took an exciting turn. I wanted to explore whether some hybrid version of Relativism would work. I was inspired by Gutzmann's (2015; 2016) Expressive-Contextualism to see if the Expressivist semantics could work with Relativism. In order to do this I had to consider Potts' (2005; 2007b; 2007a) Expressive semantics, wherein we saw a big problem of how to account for expressive terms occurring in predicative positions. The problem here was that Expressivist semantics does not have a descriptive theory which can (at the same time) work with the expressive content. We ditched Potts' requirement for the independence between the descriptive and expressive dimensions. In doing so, we explored Gutzmann's hybrid account, where he combines Expressive semantics with Indexical Contextualism. I argued that Gutzmann's account faces the same general criticism as Indexical Contextualism, as well as some internal worries with his use-conditions. There are several reasons this Chapter was instrumental to this thesis. Firstly, it broadened the project where the focus shifted from merely accounting for faultless disagreements concerning paradigm PPTs to finding solutions to expressive terms in predicative positions. Secondly, it provided us with a strategy of combining an Expressivist semantics with a descriptive account. Lastly, it showed that the possible solution to the problems brought about by PPTs and expressives will be a mirrored one. We need an expressive account to explain disagreement (and thus give the full meaning of PPTs), whilst we need a descriptive account to explain the truth-values of sentences with expressive predicates (thus giving us the full meaning of expressives).

This Chapter gave us the tools to tie the whole thesis together.

Chapter 4 is where the positive proposal is finally presented. I combine the Expressivist and Relativist semantics and put forth a view that I call Expressive-Relativism. The rough idea of this view is that when we use expressives (here I'm including PPTs in the set of expressives) that contribute to the truth-conditional content we commit ourselves to a set of CAs in which the judge has the corresponding attitude regarding that expressive. For example, when Mark utters *Jeremy is a fuckhead* he has a negative attitude towards Jeremy which commits only to those CAs where the judge has a negative attitude towards Jeremy. The disagreement is explained on the basis of rejecting the idea that one belongs to a set of CAs in which they do not have the appropriate attitude. The important aspect to note here is that the disagreement does not rely on contradictory (or something like contradictory) propositions, rather it relies on our attitudes. In CARLING, Billie does not have a positive attitude towards Carling, she would want to make it clear that she does not belong to a set of CAs in which the judge has a positive attitude towards Carling and this is why she is compelled to disagree with Matty. I ended this Chapter by considering some potential objections to Expressive-Relativism. These objections included some internal issues with the view, the differences between PPTs and expressives, as well as the nature of the disagreement that's involved. I hope that answering these issues allowed the reader to accept Expressive-Relativism as a serious contender for explaining disagreement and giving the semantics of PPTs and other expressives.

Lastly, in Chapter 5, I considered extending Expressive-Relativism to other linguistic phenomena which often get either an expressive or a relativistic treatment. I presented reasons for why I would not want to extend Expressive-Relativism to epistemic modals, slurs and thick aesthetic predicates. For thin aesthetic predicates, however, we saw that Expressive-Relativism seems very plausible. I ended this Chapter by considering matters concerning register and I pointed out how register and use-conditions (as employed by the Expressive-Relativist) can come apart. The purpose

of this Chapter was to clarify exactly what kind of linguistic phenomena Expressive-Relativism aims towards - this phenomena *has* to be purely subjective.

In this thesis I tried to show that bringing in a hybrid account can help to answer problems that the non-hybrid versions face concerning subjective linguistic phenomena. Expressive-Relativism fills a very interesting part of logical space thus far not explored. I hope the reader is convinced, as I am, of the many benefits that Expressive-Relativism can bring in explaining the meanings of predicates of personal taste and other expressives.

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