

teorema

Vol. XXXV/1, 2016, pp. 67-87

ISSN: 0210-1602

[BIBLID 0210-1602 (2016) 35:1; pp. 67-87]

Evaluative Disagreements

Justina Díaz Legaspe

RESUMEN

Una reciente disputa acerca de los desacuerdos sin falta supone que los desacuerdos sobre oraciones evaluativas deben ser entendidos en la misma línea que los desacuerdos regulares, fácticos. En lugar de ello, propongo considerar a los desacuerdos evaluativos en líneas lewisianas. El uso de lenguaje asemeja un juego gobernado por reglas. En él, la aserción de una oración evaluativa es un intento por pasar cierto valor de un parámetro evaluativo como el valor por defecto en la conversación; su rechazo, a su vez, es en la mayoría de los casos un rechazo a aceptar dicho valor por defecto.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *desacuerdos, predicados de gusto, Lewis, expresiones evaluativas.*

ABSTRACT

A recent quarrel over *faultless disagreements* assumes that disputes over evaluative sentences should be understood as regular, factual disagreements. Instead, I propose that evaluative disagreements should be understood in Lewisian terms. Language use works like a rule-governed game. In it, the assertion of an evaluative sentence is an attempt to establish one value as default in the conversation; its rejection, in turn, is in most cases the refusal to accept this move.

KEYWORDS: *Disagreements; Taste Predicates; Lewis; Evaluative Expressions.*

Consider a dispute over the height of the Eiffel Tower: Anne claims it measures 1,000 feet and Bob replies that it does not. Bob is right, which means his utterance is true in the actual world and, more importantly, that Anne's is false (in the same world). Such a dispute is regular and factual: in it, one of the speakers is mistaken, hence speaking falsely, while the other is right. Both utterances show contradictory truth-values. Does a different kind of dispute – let us call it an evaluative, “faultless” dispute – look also like this? In the midst of the debate around *faultless disagreements*, advocates of assessment relativism (truth-relativism¹ MacFarlane style) [MacFarlane (2005), (2007), (2014) and Lasersohn (2005)] assume it mostly does: such a dispute is characterized by faultlessness but

also by an understanding of disagreement as the utterance of sentences with contradictory truth-values. I claim that, unlike regular disputes and contrary to what relativists argue, these disagreements are to be explained at a pragmatic level.

Assuming that disagreements over evaluative sentences (sentences containing evaluative expressions, like taste predicates among others) should be explained in the same way as regular disagreements over factual sentences implies that the rejection involved targets the content of the previous utterance because it is taken as false. Disagreements are understood as truth-value contradictions. I will propose instead that certain disagreements do not target the expressed content and do not involve utterances with contradictory truth-values. (Most) disagreements involving evaluative expressions are *evaluative* disagreements, which do not target the expressed content. Evaluative disagreements are intended as a certain kind of pragmatic movement in conversational dynamics that is better understood within a framework of language as a rule-governed game.

I. OBJECTIVE AND EVALUATIVE JUDGMENTS

Even though it is widely accepted, the distinction between *objective* and *evaluative* is controversial. For starters, what counts as objective depends on a previous metaphysical view: an ontology accepting values as part of the furniture of the (objective) world makes evaluative sentences objective. However, from an antirealist perspective – one that rejects values as worldly entities – evaluative sentences are not objective. Even so, there is no ironclad divide between fact and value. Most evaluative judgments rely on facts, and most statements of facts are influenced by valuations, making the distinction a matter of degree at most. This being said, within an antirealist perspective there is a semantic difference between objective and evaluative sentences: while objective sentences can be context-sensitive (or not), evaluative sentences are necessarily sensitive to the way the speaker (or assessor) values the world. Take the following:

1. The average diameter of planet Earth is 7,926 miles.
2. Roller coasters are fun.

The truth-value of (1) depends on the usual parameters of context and index canonically featuring values for world and time, plus other parame-

ters (speaker, location, addressee, *demonstratum*) when they feature context-sensitive expressions. They fit perfectly in standard double-index semantics [see Kaplan (1977), Lewis (1980)]. In turn, (2) is *valuation-sensitive*:² its truth-value will be different for utterances made by speakers holding different evaluative standards. A common way to deal with this sensitivity is to throw a *sui generis* parameter into the mixture. Let f be the parameter for the standard of fun:

[[Roller coasters are fun.]]^c, < w_c , f_c > = 1 iff roller coasters are fun in w_c and according to the standard of fun in c .³

I will use the umbrella expression “evaluative sentences” for sentences that, like (2), are sensitive to valuations of the world, and can be treated under double-index semantics by including a *sui generis* parameter either in the context or in the circumstances of evaluation. Although for the sake of simplicity I will focus on sentences containing taste predicates, these are not the only nor the most relevant cases of evaluative sentences. Expressions with similar valuation-sensitivity involve deontic modals, deontic predicates and more generally, normative expressions.

An utterance of any kind of sentence can lead to *disagreement*: i.e. a dispute in which two or more parties entertain opposite attitudes or incompatible practical intentions towards the same object. Paradigmatic disagreements happen in face-to-face conversations in which one of the parties rejects what the other party expresses by means of a felicitous contentious answer. The difference between evaluative and objective sentences amounts to a difference in kinds of disagreement:

- 3. John: The average diameter of planet Earth is 7,925 miles.
Mary: No, it's not! It's actually 7,926 miles.
- 4. Jack: Roller coasters are fun.
Jill: No, they are not! They are very unpleasant.

Disagreements can be intuitively sorted into *weak* and *strong*: we expect *weak* disagreements to be resolved easily by resorting to available data, while in strong disagreements the agreement on a description of the relevant facts is, in most cases, not enough reason to make the parties converge. Blackburn (1981) associates *weak* disagreement to objective topics and *strong* disagreements to aesthetic, moral or personal taste topics. Consider also Rott's (2014) distinction between *substantive* disputes (where re-

traction happens) and *merely verbal* (faultless) disputes, corresponding to weak and strong disagreements respectively. This natural sorting squares nicely with the distinction between disagreements over objective and evaluative sentences: intuitively, if John were presented with accurate astronomical information, he would retract his utterance. However, seldom can information about roller coasters force Jack to stop enjoying them.⁴ From now on, I will call disagreements over objective sentences “objective disagreements”. Disagreements over evaluative sentences can also be objective (more on this below), but are in most cases “evaluative disagreements”. I will claim that, unlike objective disagreements, they are best understood as refusals to accept a certain value for an evaluative parameter as default in a conversation.

II EVALUATIVE DISPUTES AS REGULAR DISAGREEMENTS

In disagreements, rejection targets *something*: in most cases, it targets contents either semantically expressed or otherwise conveyed. I will call *regular* those disagreements in which the target of the rejection is the semantically (or pragmatically) expressed content. In them, the second utterance expresses the proposition that no p whenever the first utterance expresses that p (or *vice versa*).⁵ No matter how this rejection is stated, it is based on truth-value contradiction: the rejection is felicitous due to these contradictory truth-values, while the main motivation for it is a need to correct.

Clearly, objective disagreements fit perfectly into this model. In them, both utterances are assigned contradictory truth-values and one speaker is at fault. Underlying this is that, when it comes to statement of facts, the same input of data and the same inferential processing should result in the same (true) content: considering the same evidence and arriving at a false content evinces a fault either in data gathering or in its processing. The main motivation to disagree is consequently to correct these mistakes.

In a recent debate over *faultless disagreements* – disagreements involving sentences with taste predicates and other evaluative expressions – advocates of assessment relativism have proposed an argument against contextualism that assumes that evaluative disagreements share most of the traits of regular disagreements. Disagreements over the taste of an ice-cream flavor, for example, are intuitively faultless, for none of the parties seems to be at fault in their valuation of flavors, and at the same

time, they are, intuitively, disagreements. In the debate, assessment relativism claims to be the only theory capable of accounting for this phenomenon. The general structure of the argument can be found in MacFarlane's (2007) and Lasersohn's (2005) arguments against contextualism for taste predicates, MacFarlane's argument against Kratzer's contextualist semantics for epistemic modals and Egan's (2012) argument against contextualist treatments of value terms, amongst others. According to contextualism, an evaluative sentence ϕ is sensitive to an evaluative parameter within, or initialized in, the context of utterance. Hence, $[[\phi]]^{c_1} = 1$ iff ϕ as uttered in c is true in i_c . According to the relativist argument, this cannot explain rejection in cases of disagreement.⁶ *Non-indexical* contextualism (which locates evaluative parameters in the circumstances of evaluation) assigns *true* to each utterance in its corresponding circumstance of evaluation. Therefore, disagreement cannot be explained: the circumstance at the context of use is the one needed for the evaluation of an utterance (even from a different context), and according to non-indexical contextualism, the utterance of ϕ is true relative to circumstance of evaluation c_1 and $\neg\phi$ is true relative to circumstance of evaluation c_2 . Therefore, non-indexical contextualism cannot explain the disagreement involving ϕ and $\neg\phi$.

In turn, *indexical* contextualism (according to which parameters occupy an argument-place in the proposition expressed) claims that each utterance expresses a different proposition; not ϕ and $\neg\phi$, but something more like ϕ and ψ . Hence, the parties would be technically talking past each other. The dialogue cannot be considered a case of disagreement. For this reason, indexical contextualism is also accused of being unable to account for our intuitions regarding these exchanges.

All of these theories assume that rejection only makes sense if there is a contradiction in truth-values. Assessment relativists argue that the truth-values of utterances are sensitive to an assessor a . $[[\phi]]^{c, \langle w_c, i_c \rangle}$ is construed now as $[[\phi]]^{c, \langle w_c, i_c \rangle, a}$.⁷ Thus, ϕ gets its truth-value from the assessment of the semantic content expressed in context c in the context of assessment a . Therefore, the first party's utterance will come out as false according to the second party's (the assessor's) evaluative parameter, explaining the exchange as a case of regular disagreement.

There is, of course, a number of responses to this pro-relativist argument. Among them, some advocates of contextualism presuppose the same conception of disagreements as objective [(López de Sa (2007), (2008), Sundell (2011), Stojanovic (2007), Egan (2010) and Parsons (2013)].

According to one of these rebuttals due to López de Sa, evaluative predicates trigger a *presupposition of commonality of evaluative parameters* that leads the rejecting party to assume that everyone in the conversation shares her own parameter. The rejected utterance comes out as false under the presupposition and it is then a proper object of rejection.⁸ Thus, the structure of content-disagreement is mimicked at the presuppositional level: there is no contradiction in the truth-values ascribed to the utterances, so the contradiction is built into the presupposition.

Assessment relativism and some of its contextualist rivals alike assume that evaluative disagreements should be treated as a special kind of regular disagreement. However, this assumption leaves some cases of disagreement unexplained. The presuppositionalist strategy leaves in the dark cases in which both parties are fully aware from the beginning of their different standards and this does not prevent them from engaging in a discussion, and also cases where the conversation does not cease when they learn that their standards are different.⁹ Once the presupposition of commonality is out of the picture, so is the motivation to correct. Advocates of presuppositionalism should not discard these disputes as irrelevant without independent justification. The relativist strategy, in turn, assumes that a dispute is a relevant disagreement when the content expressed by one of the utterances is rejected. According to presuppositionalism, disagreements involve a contradiction in truth-values, which explains rejection.¹⁰ According to assessment relativism, a speaker rejects her interlocutor's claim because it is false under the standards in her context of assessment. However, as competent speakers and users of evaluative expressions, interlocutors should be aware that the rejected claim is only false under their own standards, but not under the speaker's original standards. If so, the rejection seems somewhat limited. Most likely, Jill is well aware of the fact that Jack's claim is true for him, and that it could have been stated by saying "Roller coasters are fun for me".¹¹ Add to this the fact that a competent speaker also knows intuitively that, according to the norms of assessment, one should only assert what one thinks is true. Hence, anyone would know that what a conversational party says is true according to their standards as much as what one says is true according to one's own. Why would we argue in these cases? The motivation to correct does not seem to be at stake here. The fact that our interlocutor is not right under our lights does not mean that he is mistaken (think in cases in which someone expresses his preference for an ice-cream flavor we find repulsive).¹² The point can be reinforced by what real speakers do in disagreements involving evaluative terms: if

questioned whether an utterance of (2) is true, a competent speaker would answer affirmatively – provided she is informed of the attitudes of the speaker towards roller coasters – and negatively if forced to accept it – provided she does not like them.¹³

In order to explain the motivation to reject, relativizing truth-values to contexts of assessment is not enough. On this regard, MacFarlane (2007), p. 30, adds that the motive underlying these discussions is the need to *coordinate contexts*. The bigger the interest in context coordination, the stronger the disposition to engage in a discussion. Nevertheless, the expression “context coordination” is vague enough to allow at least two readings. A *concessive* reading assumes that context coordination is achieved only when both parties abandon their own perspectives in order to build together a different one; a *stubborn* reading assumes that context coordination happens when one of the parties manages to convince the other of abandoning her original perspective and adopt theirs instead. I think that MacFarlane is assuming the concessive reading in his claim. If this is so, I disagree: this understanding of context coordination does not reflect accurately the motivation to engage in a discussion in cases in which we are not willing to abandon our initial position or perspective. Coordination-motivated discussions would be impossible without a previous disposition to relinquish our evaluative standard in favor of a new, common one.¹⁴ In most cases of evaluative disagreement, this disposition is not present. However, in what follows I will accept that the motivation to engage in a discussion corresponds to the stubborn reading of context coordination, where the speakers intend to correct or convince their interlocutors into adopting their own initial perspectives. None of the attitudes I will mention below are closed to the relativist, if he decides to adopt this stubborn reading of context coordination.¹⁵

III. EVALUATIVE DISAGREEMENTS

Understanding disputes over evaluative sentences as *evaluative disagreements* will hopefully explain what is left a mystery when they are construed as regular disagreements. Regular disagreements target contents. Evaluative disagreements, in turn, target the commitment of the speaker to a particular evaluative standard. Recall that evaluative sentences are valuation-sensitive: truth-values of their utterances are determined by a *sui generis* evaluative parameter (say, *t* for the standard of taste):

$[[\textit{Beets are disgusting.}]]^c, \langle w_c, t_c \rangle = 1$ iff beets are disgusting in w_c and according to the standard of taste in c .¹⁶

Now consider this disagreement:

5. Kid: Beets are disgusting.
 Mother: No, they are not. Eat them.

There are two ways of understanding (5). Either it could be a case of *regular* disagreement, where Mother and Kid disagree over the content of the sentence (semantically or pragmatically expressed), or it could be an *evaluative* disagreement, where something else happens. If the former is the case, Mother is correcting Kid (meaning that Kid *does like* beets). In this case, (5) counts as a regular disagreement where Kid misapplies *his own taste standards*. That is, the conversation features one value for the salient taste parameter in the context (Kid's standard), and the content expressed by Kid's utterance is false under it. Another possible reading in this line takes a pragmatically conveyed content as the target of the rejection. In this case, what Mother wants is to block the implicature that Kid will not eat the beets, but she does it by denying the content of Kid's utterance. So, it is the semantic content that is targeted, but with an assertion. Thus, this reading also construes the case as an instance of a regular disagreement.

The dialogue can be interpreted also as a case of an evaluative disagreement: in this reading, the target of Mother's rejection is not the content of her son's utterance, which is true from his perspective. What she is denying is the possibility of finding beets disgusting in that conversational context. In other words, she is not rejecting the content expressed by Kid's utterance but the taste standard that would make it true, or, more precisely, the conversational commitment to the taste standard that would make it true. What she wants is to make it clear to her son that the conversational context in which they are both involved does not admit a standard of taste that values beets as disgusting. Hence, cases of apparent regular disagreement can be understood as something else; even if there are cases that can be read in both ways, as this one, most cases of disagreements over evaluative sentences are best understood as evaluative disagreements.

An evaluative disagreement, thus, is a disagreement whose target is not the content of the assertion but a value for some parameter imposed by the assertion of the questioned sentence. In turn, the felicitousness of

the rejection is not to be explained appealing to contradictory truth-values (for both utterances might be true and/or be acknowledged as true relative to the speaker) but to certain traits of the pragmatic dynamics of the conversation. The semantics of the evaluative terms provide us with a clue for understanding these disputes as evaluative disagreements. But how should we understand the latter?

Evaluative standards, closely linked to the figure of the speaker, are part of the conversational context. Context can be construed in several ways. In double-index semantics, what is loosely called “context” is understood in terms of a list of contextual parameters that fix (or help fixing) semantic content and that is articulated in “context” and “circumstances” [Kaplan (1977)] or “context” and “index” [Lewis (1980)], accounting respectively for the content expressed by the sentence and for the truth-value of utterances of sentences containing intensional operators. Other perspectives on context see it as the common ground in a conversation. According to Stalnaker (1978), (1999), (2014), the common ground is depicted in terms of iterated propositional attitudes. For Lewis (1979), in turn, context equals to the scoreboard of a norm-governed game (language use), registering every change in it; the common ground is just one component of this score.

From each notion of context, a different treatment of context-sensitivity ensues. According to the former, sensitivity is treated by means of positing variables within the logical form of the sentence that take their values from contextual parameters (for traditional context-sensitive expressions), or by positing new parameters in the index. According to the common ground perspective, sensitivity can be understood either in terms of presuppositions or in terms of different components of the score. Of these three options, I will frame my proposal within the third, Lewisian perspective. The first notion of context is useful for the analysis of isolated sentences, but it is not as good to explain the dynamics of a conversation. In contrast, any of the two common ground perspectives would do the trick, but I will prefer the Lewisian perspective to avoid talking about possible worlds. The Stalnakerian framework imposes a propositional form on presuppositions – i.e. they have to be objects of belief and acceptance. Propositions, in turn, are understood here as sets of possible worlds. A valuation-sensitive sentence divides the set of possible worlds into those in which the proposition is true (where the referred to object, event, etc. is valuated positively) and those where it is false (where it is valuated negatively). (Very) roughly, asserting the sentence attempts to eliminate the last

worlds from the context set; whereas rejecting the assertion restores these worlds to the context set. Despite its clarity, this framework requires us to go through possible worlds to pay due attention to what happens to the value of the evaluative parameter. The Lewisian score, on the other hand, accepts different kinds of components, some of which are not propositional like permissibility boundaries, salience rankings, standards of precision, etc. Within this framework, valuation-sensitivity is to be explained as the dependence of the truth-values of the utterance of evaluative sentences on the value given to a certain parameter in the score.¹⁷ In what follows, I choose this approach over the rest.

The Lewisian framework assimilates language use to a rule-governed game in which every use of language¹⁸ is considered a move in the game. As in some rule-governed games, there is a board carrying the score of all the moves made by the speakers and the way they affect the game. This score includes not only a set of contents accepted as true by all the participants, but also a number of parameters that get particular values. For every time t , the score involves different values for these different parameters. The value given to each parameter helps determine the truth-value of the utterance, but also plays a role in their acceptance. Assertions, paradigmatic moves in the language game, update the common ground by adding the content they express to it every time the audience accepts them as true. For some assertions, in order for them to be accepted as true and consequently update the common ground, both speaker and audience must implicitly assume that a particular parameter of the score has a determinate value. An utterance of, say, “The queen is dancing” is true only if the value given to a time parameter corresponds to the time of utterance, say t – and if there is only a queen salient in the context that is dancing at t . The acceptance of the assertion as true by the audience carries with it the implicit acceptance of t as the value for the time parameter (that is, t is implicitly accepted as the proper value to assess the truth-value of the utterance). Only if t is the value for the time parameter of the score relevant in that conversation, the sentence asserted can be accepted as true. For each time and each utterance, the values given to the relevant parameters change according to *constitutive* rules and rules of *accommodation*. According to the rule of accommodation, the audience can accept an assertion even when the relevant parameter does not exhibit the adequate value, insofar they are willing to change the current value for the value that would make the utterance true. If the assertion of “The queen is dancing” requires the value given to the time parameter to be t , but was t' before the assertion, the audience can ac-

commodate in such a way as to make t instead of t' the value for it at the moment of assertion.

In this layout, the assertion of a valuation-sensitive sentence is also a move within the language game that imposes a certain value for an evaluative parameter in order both to make the utterance true and be accepted as true. As with other sentences, this value can be accommodated. To see more clearly how this works, consider an utterance of (6) from a contextualist framework:

6. Juan is tall.

Assume that in order for (6) to be true, a parameter for tallness must be given certain value – i.e. a comparison class – in the score. It is the case that $[[\text{Juan is tall}]]^{c, \langle w, p_c \rangle} = 1$ iff Juan's height is significantly greater than, say, what is typical for an average Spanish teenager, where p_c stands for the comparison class to determine what counts as tall within context c ; the value of p_c that makes (6) true being AVERAGE SPANISH TEENAGER, say. The aim of the assertion of (6) is to update the common ground with its content. This only happens if the audience accepts the utterance as true. And in order for (6) to be accepted as true, AVERAGE SPANISH TEENAGER must be the value of the parameter (p_c) determining what counts as tall in the score at the moment of acceptance.¹⁹ If the classification of Juan as tall were false according to the value of (p_c) at the moment of utterance (that is, if the value of p_c were BASKETBALL PLAYER instead), this value should change to make (6) true (going from BASKETBALL PLAYER to AVERAGE SPANISH TEENAGER as the value accepted for p_c in the conversation). This would be a case of accommodation in a Lewisian sense:

If an assertion A made at time t requires any component s of the conversational score to have value v for A to be true or otherwise acceptable, and if s does not have v as a value before t , then at t s takes v .

Hence, the assertion of context sensitive sentences could aim either to update the common ground with the content it expresses, or to change a given value of a component of the score via accommodation.

This particular kind of context-sensitivity does not differ from the valuation-sensitivity of evaluative sentences. In this case, the *sui generis* evaluative parameter is also a component of the conversational score. Each assertion of an evaluative sentence is a pragmatic move potentially

altering the score. Given a certain value for the standard of fun in the score at t , an utterance of (2) is true for both conversational parties. If not, the value can be accommodated as to make it true at t .

This affects the way in which rejection of evaluative sentences should be understood. Rejecting the assertion of an objective sentence is refusing to accept its content as part of the common ground. In turn, rejecting the assertion of an evaluative sentence could amount either to rejecting its content or to refusing to accept the value it tries to impose on a certain component of the score, a refusal to conduct the accommodation. In (4) Jill's rejection does not target the expressed content but the standard of fun that Jack's utterance is forcing as the value of the parameter of fun in the score. In other words, Jill refuses to trace a boundary that classifies roller coasters as fun. Whenever the sentence involves the special kind of context sensitivity we are considering, its content can only be accepted if the value of the parameter is fixed (not in question) and it is the value accepted by the speaker. In evaluative disagreements, the value of the relevant parameter is not settled, and therefore there is a negotiation going on over the value of the parameter.

The rejection of a particular value for an evaluative parameter is motivated by our attitudes towards it. People holding different values value things in different ways. Moreover, everybody can entertain *valuations over other people's valuations*: I can judge that your notion of what is funny, different from mine, is lousy or silly. According to Richard (2008), pp. 129-130, we can find four commonsensical attitudes towards another person's valuations: *agreeing* with them (e.g. on what is funny), *accepting* them (e.g. if I find your sense of humor good enough), finding them *deficient* (e.g. if I take it that your sense of humor is worse than mine) or finding them *unacceptable* (e.g. if I find it reprehensible). Only the two last lead to voice disagreement. The difference between them is subtle, mainly because they both aim to convince the speaker to abandon his/her commitment to one value for the parameter for another. But they are different enough when they are considered from an individual/universal perspective: if *deficient*, a valuation held by other is worse than one's own but universally acceptable; if *unacceptable*, nobody should accept it, not even oneself. Note that the aim is different (albeit only slightly) from the concessive reading of context coordination. Motivations to reject in evaluative disagreement differ in *the reason why* the speaker should jettison his/her own standard. *Evaluative mistakes* happen when we find our contender's evaluative parameter *unacceptable*, and embracing it, a mistake that we will want to correct by reasoning the speaker into adopting a new

standard. In turn, whenever we think the speaker has not committed any kind of mistake but we still feel that our standard is preferable, we feel the urge to *convince* her of changing it. Note that considering the standard *deficient* does not mean or implies that it is mistaken (nor that we think it is so); we acknowledge her standard but we still think there is a better way of valuing. Thus, *correcting* and *convincing* are the main motivations behind the rejection of an evaluative utterance: the former is linked to attitudes of unacceptability towards other people's valuation and the latter, to attitudes of finding that valuation deficient.

Consider the possible attitudes I could have towards an utterance of "The Simpsons is funny" by Mary:

- (a) *Deficiency*: According to my standards, the show is not funny but I do not see any harm if others find it funny. Even so, I feel motivated to convince Mary that it is not funny.
- (b) *Unacceptability*: I not only find the show not funny, I find it insulting for some reason (and consequently I think that no one should find it funny). I feel motivated to correct Mary.

This layout applies to sentences with taste predicates. With minor adjustments, it could extend to sentences with deontic and normative expressions. Consider Barbara's utterance of "Smoking pot is perfectly right":

- (a) *Deficiency*: I do not use drugs, but I accept that, among all kinds of drugs, pot has the mildest effects and is the most socially acceptable. Therefore, I do not see any harm in Barbara's attitude towards pot. However, I feel motivated to convince her not to use drugs at all.
- (b) *Unacceptability*: I do not use drugs, and I think that any kind of drug distorts perception and damages brain cells, even those that do it in a small degree. Therefore I think that no one should use drugs, not even pot. I feel motivate to correct Barbara out of her opinion.

Of course, *unacceptability* does not seem to be very common in disputes involving taste disagreements,²⁰ but it could be in disputes involving, say, normative expressions or deontic modals. *Deficiency* will be more common in disputes about taste and maybe aesthetics.

IV. WHY TAKE THIS PATH?

Under the lights of the Lewisian framework, evaluative disagreements are no more than attempts to reject the imposition of some value of a component of the score via accommodation. The rejection is not aimed at the content, but at the speaker's move of passing as default a certain value for a score component. Framing evaluative disagreements in this way allows us to understand them better. Recall Jill's explanation of her rejection of Jack's claim by appealing to relativized sentences: "He said that roller coasters are fun *for him* and they are unpleasant *for me*". The rejection cannot be explained in terms of truth-value contradiction, for in this case Jack's utterance is perfectly true (from his perspective). Within the Lewisian account, the rejection is due to the refusal to let a certain value pass as default in the common context. If this is the case, Jill's relativized explanation is adequate: she refuses to take Jack's standards of fun to rule over roller coasters.

Compare this to a similar case involving gradable adjectives like "tall". Mother and Father talk about their son. Mother claims that he is tall (with son's classmates in mind) while Father says that he is not tall at all (with basketball players in mind). In this scenario, this conversation is perfectly plausible:

Mother: Max is tall.

Father: No, he is not tall. / He is tall, but he is not really *tall*.

Mother: What do you mean? Max is tall compared to the rest of his classmates.

Father: That is true. But he is short for a basketball player.

Father can reject Mother's opinion by claiming that Max "is tall, but he is not really *tall*". Although the sentence may sound contradictory if interpreted literally, the focus makes it clear that Father is not rejecting the content of Mother's utterance (he may actually agree with it), but her choice of the relevant comparison class. Both uses of "tall" are semantically compatible (Max can be tall in both senses), but only one of the comparison classes should be at work in the common background.²¹ This kind of conversation is implausible when it involves non-evaluative sentences, where truth-value contradiction prevents one speaker from ad-

mitting the truth of the other assertion. The same kind of conversation makes perfect sense in discussions involving evaluative sentences, though:

Jack: Roller coasters are fun.

Jill: No, they are not fun at all.

Jack: Well, they are fun for me.

Jill: That is true. But they are not fun *for me*.

In this case, Jill is not rejecting Jack's utterance's content, but the fact that he chooses his own evaluative standard as relevant in the context. Note that this explanation is perfectly fine for cases in which the speaker is aware from the beginning of the divergence of standards.

It can be objected that all the theories on the topic, including mine, find it difficult to explain why people who are aware of their difference in standards disagree or continue to disagree, without deeming such speakers as irrational. This is certainly true, but even so, I find a difference between assessment relativism and my proposal here. Relativists have two tools at their disposal to account for this phenomenon: the fact that the utterance in dispute is false according to the assessor's standards, and his intention to coordinate contexts. The first, I have argued, is insufficient for explaining the phenomenon; the explanation only ensues from its combination with the second. However, there are two ways to understand the coordinative intention, and I suspect that MacFarlane's is not completely adequate for this task for it requires the assessor's willingness to relinquish his standard. My proposal, instead, understands the assertion of evaluative sentences as an attempt to impose the value given to an evaluative parameter (when it's not common), and disagreement as a way to avoid this imposition. Here, too, the work is only done by combining both tools, but in this case what is rejected is the fact that the value is presented as *common*: with her assertion, the first speaker poses a commonality (by default, it is assumed that both interlocutors subscribe to the value). The second speaker rejects this commonality, refusing to be treated as someone who subscribes to it.

Now, one might wonder why people keep behaving as if they were objecting to the content expressed by the evaluative assertion. That is, why do they say "No, licorice is not tasty" or "That's not true" instead of talking directly about standards? Here too these assertions are to be understood as moves imposing a certain value for the evaluative parameter, and therefore rejecting indirectly the parameter assumed by the other

speaker's utterance. But why do speakers choose to do this *indirectly* instead of saying things such as "I don't agree with your taste standard"? Here is a thought: this is probably as direct a way of speaking about our standards as is possible. Let us figure how evaluative standards work. A taste standard could be construed as a function from objects to valuations,²² ideally assigning a valuation for any given object in the domain. From a third-person perspective, we only have partial epistemic access to them via the explicit valuation others assign to the object mentioned in the evaluative sentence ("Licorice is tasty" is true from a taste standard assigning a positive valuation to licorice). This is enough though to detect a divergence with our own standard (which, say, assigns a negative valuation to licorice). Asserting that licorice is not tasty amounts to expressing that our standards are different.

A Lewisian understanding of evaluative disagreements, not based in truth-values or semantically expressed content, explains the linguistic behavior of speakers: if the dialogue involves an evaluative disagreement, both utterances can be true and the rejection will be felicitous even so. The content of the speaker's utterance is not denied; it is only the value it implicitly imposes to a certain contextual component that is found questionable. From the Lewisian perspective, the rejection of the value imposed by the assertion comes before its evaluation; the only thing needed to explain the rejection is this anti-accommodation rule:

Anti-Accommodation Rule: If an assertion A made at time t requires any component s of the conversational score to have a value v for A to be true or otherwise acceptable, and if s does not have v as its value before t, and if the audience is not willing to accept v as a value for s; then v is rejected at t' as an adequate value for s.

If such a rule finds its place in the Lewisian framework, evaluative disagreements will be best understood, in most cases, as guided by it. Considering evaluative disputes as cases of evaluative disagreement and not as cases of regular disagreement gestures towards a better understanding of the expressions involved.

*Sociedad Argentina de Análisis Filosófico (SADAF)
Bulnes 642,
Buenos Aires, Argentina
E-mail: jdiazlegaspe@gmail.com*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank several people for their help at the different stages of development of this work: the Philosophy of Language and Linguistics group at the Argentinean Society of Philosophical Analysis, specially Eleonora Orlando, Nicolás Lo Guercio, Alfonso Losada, Ramiro Caso and Andrés Saab, and the anonymous referees that improved this final version with their remarks, objections and comments. I want to thank specially Ángel García Rodríguez for his remarks and his patience during the editing process.

NOTES

¹ There are two canonical ways of distinguishing between relativism and contextualism. According to Egan (2012), relativism locates the evaluative parameter outside the context, either in the circumstances of evaluation or in the context of assessment; in both cases, the content of ϕ remains parameter-neutral. Contextualists, instead, place it in the context, so that it enters into the content of ϕ (in the same way as the semantic values of indexicals). According to MacFarlane (2014), contextualism initiates the evaluative parameter in the context, and consequently there are two kinds of contextualism: indexical – placing it inside the context – and non-indexical contextualism – placing it in the circumstances of evaluation. Relativism, instead, initiates it in the context of assessment. Here I will follow MacFarlane’s classification.

² This kind of sensitivity should not be confused with the traditional context-sensitivity of indexicals, that (a) get their values from the usual parameters in the context (agent, time, location), and (b) cannot be located in any place other than the context of utterance. Cappelen & Hawthorne (2009), p. 54, propose the following test for traditional context-sensitivity: let u be a sincere utterance of (a sentence) S by (a subject) A in (a context) C and u' a sincere utterance of not- S by (a second subject) B in (a second context) C' . If from a third context C'' they cannot be correctly reported by saying ‘ A and B disagree whether S ’, then S is semantically context-sensitive. According to this test, evaluative sentences like (2) are not context sensitive. But an utterance of (2) by different speakers may get different truth-values, depending on their evaluation standards. For this reason, I will refer to them as *valuation-sensitive*.

³ This articulation corresponds to what is called “non indexical contextualism” [see López de Sa (2007)]. Another possible articulation corresponds to indexical contextualism: $[[\text{Roller coasters are fun.}]^{<w, t>, i} = 1 \text{ iff roller coasters are fun in } w_e \text{ and according to the standard of fun in } c]$. Note that in this case the standard of taste is located within the context of utterance; “fun” behaves here pretty much as an indexical, and the value of the standard enters into the content.

⁴ This is not to say that no factual information can alter evaluative judgments. On occasion, adding information can alter a previous evaluative judgment due to *non-evaluative* reasons: a morally induced vegan can suddenly reject her previously favorite cookies once she learns that they contain animal fat. She

will still find them tasty, but she will reject them for the same reasons she rejects meat. This means that the new information leads to a change in attitude but not to a change in evaluative judgment (the vegan will still find the cookie delicious, she will just choose not to eat it). My claim above should be understood in this sense. It is possible to alter an evaluative judgment for *evaluative* reasons: I might find the use of some derogatory terms funny until I learn about the harm that using them might cause to some people, and start finding them not so funny from that point on. My point is not to deny this second kind of influence of facts over evaluative judgments, but to point out that it is not as straightforward as with objective sentences. This influence (or the lack of it) should not be understood as a criterion for the objective versus evaluative nature of sentences. The divide between objective and subjective sentences is not categorical, and I can only hope the reader will acknowledge a difference of *degree* between (1) and (2). I thank one of the anonymous referees of this journal for this point.

⁵ Although this is the more widespread case, “regular” disagreement can also be expressed by uttering sentences that are not contradictory, but *contrary* – for example, when an utterance expresses a content whose negation is entailed by the content of the other utterance, as in “Around here only doughnuts are tasty. / No, marshmallows are tasty too.” In order to simplify, I will leave the latter aside, but the same ideas presented here can apply to them with minor adjustments: all you need to do is understand the second assertion as a way of imposing a value t_2 to the evaluative parameter in the score different from the t_1 value imposed by the first assertion.

⁶ At least not cases of *relevant* evaluative disagreement: according to MacFarlane (2014), only those presenting a *preclusion of joint accuracy* are of interest, since they oppose contextualist and relativist theories. Contextualism can only explain, at most, disagreements with *non-cotenable* beliefs or attitudes.

⁷ This is a rough, general approximation: a correct articulation of assessment relativism would be different for sentences with taste predicates and for sentences with deontic modals. The details are not significant here.

⁸ A similar strategy, but appealing to communitarian evaluative parameters has been offered by Huvenes (2012) and Recanati (2007), among others.

⁹ See Marques and García-Carpintero (2014).

¹⁰ An anonymous referee points out that the relativist challenge can be launched even if believing/asserting contradictory proposition is a sufficient, and not a necessary, condition for disagreement. True, disagreement as contradiction is not the only notion of disagreement in the literature. Relativists should (and in most cases do) accept disagreements in attitudes. However, disagreement as contradiction will be of interest here because it is presented by relativists as what contextualism cannot account for. See MacFarlane (2014), ch. 6.

¹¹ This is not to say that the content of Jack’s utterance is the relativized sentence: it is so for indexical, but not for non-indexical contextualism. However, both should accept the paraphrase as correct.

¹² It could be argued that mistakes that are not objective are still mistakes, even though they are mistakes from one's point of view. I will follow this line below (following Richard in considering an evaluative standard *deficient*). However, at this point I am referring to *objective* mistakes, that is, mistakes from any point of view.

¹³ According to the experimental results attained by Knobe and Yalcin (2014), speakers reject these assertions even if they find their content true. Their results concerned sentences containing epistemic modals, though. To my knowledge, there is no similar experiment regarding the usage of evaluative sentences.

¹⁴ An anonymous referee wonders what a *commonly built* standard could be, if it is not my standard or yours, now shared by both of us. I share this qualm but direct it towards MacFarlane's idea of a need to "coordinate contexts" because of an evaluative disagreement. I take it that in such a case, according to MacFarlane, both speakers end up agreeing on a new way of valuating a certain item, but this is confusing to say the least. For this reason, my proposal does not appeal to new standards but to the adoption of mine or yours.

¹⁵ An anonymous referee (to whom I am grateful for remarks about this passage) questions whether convincing an interlocutor of adopting your own standard can be done (or better done) by simply insisting that what they say is false, or indeed whether an attempt to change their standards is needed. Even though the second option seems better, the referee points out that this does not mean that there is no disagreement, in the sense of contradictory propositions. On the face of it, the referee argues, both disagreement in content and disagreement in setting the values of elements in the conversational score go hand in hand: both projects are compatible (relativists could use a Stalnakerian or Lewisian model, see Egan (2012)). I agree with part of this remark: there are indeed disagreements over the content expressed by an evaluative sentence. And insisting on the falsity of what is said by someone may motivate him to make adjustments. But, the way I see it, this is restricted to a particular kind of mistake: misapplication. A content is false relative to a perspective; what is said by the speaker is false if he is misapplying his own standard or, in a relativistic framework, his assessor's standard. More likely, the misapplication will be corrected by adjusting the valuation to what the standard dictates, but seldom will it motivate the abandonment of the standard held by the speaker.

¹⁶ Or its indexical version: $[[\textit{Beets are disgusting.}]]^{<w, i>, i} = 1$ iff beets are disgusting in w_c and according to the standard of taste in c .

¹⁷ These observations do not aim to criticize the Stalnakerian or Kaplanian notions of concepts; both are equally useful for different purposes. They merely explain the motivation for preferring the Lewisian framework for these cases.

¹⁸ Not every use: in soliloquy, scoreboards seem of less utility for sure. But we can always think of this kind of language use as derivative relative to dialogue.

¹⁹ See Von Stechow (2008) and Stalnaker (2014) for the timing of accommodation.

²⁰ It could be argued that disagreement on whether dolphins or dogs are tasty exemplify exactly that. I am not denying that disputes based on unacceptability don't happen in taste discourse. But, as we shall see, most of them are morally based and are not really taste disagreements: what seems unacceptable is not the fact that dogs or dolphins taste good (they probably do!) but the fact that we have to kill them to taste them.

²¹ A referee points out that in many cases, two speakers can be said to have agreed, disagreed, or even said the same thing, even though the standards that their utterances concerned were different, and the reporter was well aware of this. I am assuming that different standards mostly give rise to evaluative disagreements such as the ones depicted above; examples of utterances of evaluative sentences saying the same thing even though their parameters are different escape my mind, but I suggest that such cases should be considered apart, as a different kind of case from the one under discussion.

²² Better, as a function from individuals, times and objects to valuations.

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