

# Contextualism, Relativism, and the ‘Faultless Disagreement’\* †

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This paper defends contextualism against relativists' 'faultless disagreement' objection, while focusing on the debate about the semantics of predicates of personal taste. Relativists argue that there exists the phenomenon of faultless disagreement, and that relativism is the only framework where we can provide an explanation of this phenomenon. Against this argument, I first suggest three categories of disagreement which are not a faultless disagreement, and I argue that all apparent cases of faultless disagreement belong to one of these three categories. In particular, I argue that the illusion of the existence of faultless disagreement arises when we have not specified the context of conversation in a sufficient way or when we have failed to notice that there is simply a conceptual disagreement.

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## 1. Contextualism and Relativism on Predicates of Personal Taste

In our language, there seem to be predicates which relate to properties that depend on personal taste. The paradigmatic examples of this so-called *predicates of personal taste* are ‘fun’ and ‘tasty’. Contextualism and Relativism are two prominent theories which provide explanations for how these predicates behave in a way that the truth-value of sentences containing them depends on an individual person’s taste.<sup>1)</sup>

To explain these two theories, I need to introduce briefly the widely-accepted Kaplanian semantic framework (Kaplan 1989). According to this framework, a sentence type expresses a proposition in a context, and a proposition takes a truth-value relative to an index (or a circumstance of evaluation). Under this framework, contextualists contend that a sentence containing predicates of personal taste can express different propositions relative to different contexts of *use* (Glanzberg 2007; Schaffer 2011; Stojanovic 2007). By contrast, claiming that a sentence containing predicates of personal taste expresses the same proposition across contexts, relativists introduce a new concept, *judge coordinate*, in addition to world and time coordinate. Therefore, according to relativists, an index consists of  $\langle w, t, j \rangle$  triples, and the same proposition can take different truth-values relative to different judge coordinates. Here the important idea of relativism is that a judge coordinate is determined by a context of *assessment*, not a context of use (Lasersohn 2005; MacFarlane 2007 and forthcoming; Stephenson 2007).<sup>2)</sup>

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1) Other possible alternatives for explaining predicates of personal taste are absolutism and expressivism. Although I believe that they are worth considering, I will not consider them simply for convenience in this paper.

2) Note that there are two kinds of context, a context of use and a context of assessment. From this fact, we can infer that there are two more positions I did

To make a clear distinction between contextualism and relativism, let us consider the following utterances.

- (1) Yuna: Live octopuses are tasty.
- (2) Smith: Live octopuses are not tasty.

Here we might have the intuition that both Yuna and Smith's utterances are true, even though surface structures of their utterances seem contradictory to each other. Contextualists explain that this is because, in each context, the proposition expressed by the sentence in (2) is different from the proposition expressed by the negation of the sentence in (1). For example, according to contextualists, Yuna's utterance "Live octopuses are tasty" expresses the proposition *live octopuses are tasty to Yuna*, while Smith's utterance "Live octopuses are not tasty" expresses the proposition *live octopuses are not tasty to Smith*. Therefore, since the sentence can express different propositions relative to the contexts of use, we can easily understand that both utterances can be true without contradicting each other.

By contrast, relativists contend that, regardless of the context, the utterances in (1) and (2) simply express the proposition *live octopuses are tasty* and the proposition *live octopuses are not tasty* respectively. But both utterances in (1) and (2) are still true, because a judge varies in each context of assessment. That is, the utterance in (1) is true relative to the

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not mention. First, we can consider that the *proposition* itself can vary relative to a context of assessment (Cappelen 2008). It is generally called 'Content Relativism'. Also, we can consider the position which maintains that introducing a concept of judge coordinate, a judge is determined by a context of use (Kölbel 2004a). It is generally called 'Non-Indexical Contextualism'. I do not consider these two positions for convenience. In addition, in this paper, what I call 'relativism' is truth relativism which contends that a context of assessment affects a *truth-value* which a sentence takes.

judge coordinate Yuna, and the utterance in (2) is true relative to the judge coordinate Smith. This explanation is formally the same as the explanation that, for example, the proposition *Mt. Everest is the highest mountain in the world* is true relative to possible worlds. According to relativists, just as a truth-value of the same proposition may vary relative to possible worlds, it may also vary relative to judges.

The aim of this paper is to defend contextualism against relativists' 'faultless disagreement' objection. In order to do that, I begin by explaining what 'faultless disagreement' objection is (section 2). I continue to explain three categories of disagreement which are not a faultless disagreement (section 3), and then argue that all apparent cases of faultless disagreement belong to one of these three categories. In particular, I argue that the illusion of the existence of faultless disagreement arises when we have not specified the context of conversation in a sufficient way or when we have failed to notice that there is simply a conceptual disagreement (section 4). Finally, I consider a possible criticism and make a reply (section 5).

## 2. The 'Faultless Disagreement' Objection to Contextualism

So far, there seems to be no problem for both theories. However, relativists point out that contextualists cannot explain the phenomenon of 'faultless disagreement', which is a distinctive phenomenon of predicates of personal taste (Kölbel 2004a; Lasersohn 2005; MacFrlane 2007 and forthcoming).<sup>3)</sup>

The paradigmatic example of faultless disagreement is as follows.

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3) Actually, MacFarlane does not use the term, 'faultless disagreement'. Nevertheless, I believe that the critical point is the same for all relativists.

- (3) Yuna: Live octopuses are tasty  
Smith: No, live octopuses are not tasty.

According to relativists, we have two intuitions in this conversation. (a) Yuna really disagrees with Smith. (b) Nevertheless, it seems that both of them are not at fault. In other words, it seems that both utterances are true in some sense.

Relativists argue that although contextualists can explain the intuition of (b), they cannot provide an explanation of the intuition of (a). For example, consider the simple contextualist position that a sentence containing 'tasty' has a hidden variable whose value is supplied by the speaker. In this position, we obviously cannot explain the disagreement between the two speakers. Yuna's utterance and Smith's utterance express the proposition *live octopuses are tasty to Yuna* and the proposition *live octopuses are not tasty to Smith* respectively, and there is no conflict or contradiction. According to this simple theory, (3) should be regarded in the same way as the quarrel such as "I am a doctor" and "No, I am not a doctor." But it seems that whereas we have the intuition that the two speakers make an obvious mistake in the latter case, we have the opposite intuition that Yuna and Smith genuinely disagree (Laserson 2005: 647-650; MacFarlane 2007: 18-19).

Against this criticism, contextualists may reply that the value of a hidden variable of a sentence containing 'tasty' is supplied by the relevant group, not by the speaker. If so, contextualists can insist that Yuna's utterance expresses a proposition such as *live octopuses are tasty to both Yuna and Smith (or a bigger group including Yuna and Smith)*, and thus can show how Yuna and Smith can disagree about the same proposition. But according to relativists, it entails the absurd conclusion that in (3),

Yuna cannot assert “Live octopuses are tasty” in a confident way if she does not know Smith’s taste. However, it seems clear that Yuna *can* legitimately say “Live octopuses are tasty” on the basis of her own reflection regardless of Smith’s taste. Moreover, on this approach, Yuna would have to retract her assertion right after getting to know that Smith does not like live octopuses. However, it seems that we simply do not feel any pressure of retraction in such a case (MacFarlane forthcoming: 16-17).

Lastly, contextualists may insist that the value of a hidden variable is supplied by *most* of the members of the relevant group, not by all members. According to this position, Yuna and Smith disagree about the proposition *live octopuses are tasty to most of the members of Yuna and Smith’s relevant group*. However, relativists contend that this account also has a problem, because it seems intuitively implausible that Yuna and Smith disagree about the majority’s taste, not about their own taste. For example, it seems that their disagreement might not be resolved by means of showing them the result of a survey about the majority’s taste. Intuitively, it seems that Yuna and Smith disagree simply about their own conflicting view (Lasersohn 2005: 652).<sup>4)</sup>

While contextualists are facing difficulties to explain the phenomenon of faultless disagreement, it seems that relativists provide a plausible explanation of it. First, the intuition that Yuna and Smith genuinely disagree is explained by the fact that they are considering the same proposition, namely, the proposition *live octopuses are tasty*. Second, the intuition that they are uttering something true can be explained, because

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4) An anonymous referee suggested that relativists also can point out that the contextualist’s reply fails to save the intuition (b), if they contend that Yuna and Smith disagree about the same proposition. I agree with his suggestion.

the proposition *live octopuses are tasty* is true relative to the judge coordinate Yuna, whereas the proposition *live octopuses are not tasty* is true relative to the judge coordinate Smith. But there is no one  $\langle w, t, j \rangle$  triple at which both propositions are either true or false. That is, it is a genuine disagreement because both utterances cannot be true at the same time relative to each judge coordinate Yuna or Smith. Relativists surely think that this explanation effectively shows how the phenomenon of faultless disagreement may arise in the case of predicates of personal taste (Lasersohn 2005, MacFarlane 2007 and forthcoming).

As I announced in the first section, the aim of this paper is to defend contextualism against the faultless disagreement objection. But before settling down to a defense, I briefly discuss the plausible form of contextualism on predicates of personal taste. First, I suggest that the sentence such as "A is tasty" might have the following three logical forms.

A is tasty to x.

A is tasty according to x's standard of taste.

A satisfies x's standard of taste at x's palate.

I do not prefer any particular one among these three forms. The variety is merely for ease of explanation. Dealing with the linguistic data, I will simply take the most useful form to provide an explanation.<sup>5)</sup>

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5) At this point, I need to disambiguate some terminologies. At first, there is a debate between the hidden indexical theory (e.g. Stanley 2007) and what we might call 'pragmatic contextualism' (e.g. Recanati 2004). For predicates of personal tastes, hidden indexical theorists might contend that a sentence containing a predicate of personal taste has a hidden free variable in the logical form of this sentence, and that the proposition is determined when a value is supplied by a bottom-up linguistically controlled process. On the contrary, pragmatic contextualists might contend that a sentence containing a predicate of personal taste expresses

As a contextualist, I believe that in the case of a conversation like (3), we simply do not know its context sufficiently to suppose that faultless disagreement really arises.<sup>6)</sup> In order to decide what category of disagreement arises in each conversation, we first have to specify why a certain conversation arises and how it develops. Given the context of (3) is not clear to us, I believe that relativists (perhaps unintentionally) unjustifiably change the context of the conversation in (3) for their convenience according to circumstances. And I also believe that once we make clear the context of a conversation, we can confirm cases in which the value of a hidden variable is supplied by the speaker or the relevant group. I suggest that one reason why the illusion of faultless disagreement arises consists in this failure of specifying the context of conversation. I will also suggest that another reason consists in the failure of noticing that there is simply a conceptual disagreement. In order to demonstrate these, we first need to examine some categories of disagreement.

### 3. Three Categories of Disagreement

In this section, I suggest three categories of disagreement. These are

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the proposition by modulation, a top-down pragmatically controlled process. In this paper, I am neutral on this debate. In fact, relativism is the common enemy of both positions in the sense that they both maintain that the proposition expressed by the sentence is different relative to a context of use, while relativists maintain that the proposition is the same across contexts, although the truth-value may be different. Independently of the problem of what type of process we need in order to get a complete proposition, I will focus on defeating the common enemy, relativism. So with regard to the debate in this paper, the terminology 'contextualism' contains both positions: the hidden indexical theory and pragmatic contextualism. My mention of 'hidden variable' in this paper is simply for convenience of explanation.

6) Schaffer (2011: 209-216) and Stojanovic (2007: 693-696) also make a similar point.



the categories of objective factual disagreement, apparent disagreement, and conceptual disagreement.

An *objective factual disagreement* is the category of disagreement we are most familiar with. When this disagreement arises, speakers disagree about the truth-value of the same proposition, which has the form *a is F*, at the same index, and the problem is whether a certain object *a* is included in the concept *F* or has the properties expressed by 'F' on the presupposition that the concept *F* is fixed. One characteristic of this disagreement is that whenever it arises, there always exists ideal evidence which can provide an unexceptional identification of the person who is at fault.<sup>7)</sup> Consider the following example. Yuna and Smith see Juan carrying something from a distance.

(4) Yuna: I think that Juan is carrying books.

Smith: No, it is a laptop.

Yuna: Let us go near and confirm. [...] Oh, it is a laptop, you are right.

In this case, Yuna and Smith have an objective factual disagreement about whether what Juan is carrying is a book. In order to identify who is right, they approach Juan, confirm the issue, and conclude that Yuna is at fault.

The second category of disagreement I introduce is that of *apparent disagreement*. This disagreement arises when two speakers are mistakenly thinking that they are contradicting each other about the same proposition, whereas each of them is in fact considering different propositions such as *a is F* and *a is G* respectively. In such cases, they do not really disagree

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7) To be sure, the ideal evidence mentioned here does not need to be actually accessible for speakers in a conversation. It is sufficient that the evidence is accessible in a logically ideal condition.

about anything at all, and we can in principle dissolve this disagreement by showing that they actually consider different propositions. Consider the following example.

(5) Yuna: Juan is ready.

Smith: No, Juan is not ready.

Yuna: You are wrong. He is ready. I know.

Jin: Wait! I think that you guys seem to say different things. Yuna probably wants to say that Juan is ready for taking the GRE test, and Smith wants to say that Juan is not ready for applying to graduate schools. Is that right?

Yuna and Smith: Oh. You are right. It was just a misunderstanding.

In this case, Jin dissolves the disagreement by showing that Yuna and Smith have actually considered different propositions. That is, he shows that while Yuna considers the proposition *Juan is ready for taking the GRE test*, Smith considers the proposition *Juan is ready for applying to graduate schools*, and therefore, he can conclude that it is merely an apparent disagreement caused by their misunderstanding. One explanation of how this disagreement may arise comes from the fact that the variable in the sentence “Juan is ready” is hidden. Although each speaker takes a different value for the variable, the surface structure of the sentence does not expose this fact so that they are likely to make a mistake such as thinking that they take the same value and consider the same proposition.<sup>8)9)</sup>

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8) To be sure, it is not the case that apparent disagreement is only caused by misunderstanding of the value of a hidden variable. It may also arise, for example, when A uses a term and B mentions it, but A thinks that both use it, while B thinks that both mention it. For my purpose in this paper, however, it is sufficient to show apparent disagreement caused by misunderstanding of the value of a hidden variable.

The last category of disagreement I introduce is that of *conceptual disagreement*. This disagreement arises when two speakers' relevant concepts (usually slightly) vary and this fact becomes a problem in a conversation. When this type of disagreement arises, speakers ultimately disagree about a proposition, which has the form *the concept F has certain criteria*, and consequently disagree about whether the concept *F* applies to the object *a* on the presupposition that the relevant properties of *a* are already fixed. Consider the following situation. Yuna and Smith discovered a new animal. They examined most of its properties and shared all information they have gathered.

(6) Yuna: I think this animal is a dog.

Smith: No, it is not a dog. Look at its head form. It is rather similar to a cat.

Yuna: Not really, the sound of its bark is perfectly the one of a dog.

Smith: But, it has a cat's claws!

Yuna: That is not important. It attaches to persons, like a dog!

I believe that their disagreement is caused by the fact that they possess different concepts *dog*, and that each of them at least implicitly contends that his or her own concept *dog* is correct by indicating criteria for their own concept *dog*,<sup>10</sup> not by searching additional empirical evidence for the animal. That is, following the criteria (and properties related to these criteria) of their own concept *dog*, they dispute whether the concept *dog* applies to that animal on the presupposition that the relevant properties

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9) Pragmatic contextualists might provide the same explanation except that in the context of conversation such as (5), two sentences express propositions that do not contradict each other by modulation.

10) More precisely speaking, they indicate different significance of each criterion of their own concept *dog*.

of the animal are fixed. So it is the reverse of the objective factual disagreement where two speakers dispute whether a certain object is included in the concept  $F$  or has the properties expressed by 'F' on the presupposition that the concept  $F$  is fixed. I believe that this analysis shows that we can fairly conclude that (6) is a case of conceptual disagreement.

I would also like to point out an important corollary of the conceptual disagreement based on the close link between concepts and language; conceptual disagreement results in *meta-linguistic* disagreement about speakers' *idiolect*. For example, from the disagreement about the concept *dog* between Yuna and Smith in (6), we can conclude that both of them have slightly different extensions of the word 'dog' in mind. To be specific, while the extension of 'dog' includes the examined animal in Yuna's idiolect, it does not in Smith's idiolect. And each one's claim that their own concept *dog* is correct entails the claim that their own use of the word 'dog' is correct. Consequently, in the case of conceptual disagreement, we can easily conclude that it is not a disagreement about the same proposition, which has the form  $a \text{ is } F$ , on the presupposition that the concept  $F$  and the meaning of 'F' are fixed, since the speakers have slightly different concepts  $F$  and slightly different meanings of 'F' in mind. Rather, they disagree about the concept  $F$ , and consequently, the meaning of 'F' too.<sup>11)</sup>

Here it is important to note that conceptual disagreement is not the same as apparent disagreement, although they have in common that the

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11) I surely admit that two speakers can mistakenly think that they disagree about the same proposition, which has the form  $a \text{ is } F$ , because their uses may have so far coincided. But a philosophical analysis shows that this naïve thought is false.

speakers do not disagree about the same proposition, which has the form *a is F*. This is because while the speakers do not in fact disagree about anything at all in the apparent disagreement, they do disagree about concepts in the conceptual disagreement.

In the case of conceptual disagreement such as (6), one might have the impression that it constitutes a faultless disagreement. If we assume that Yuna and Smith have found out all relevant empirical information of the examined animal, it seems that no one is at fault. I suggest that there are two possible ways to explain the origins of this intuition of faultlessness. First, it might be the case that the correctly specified concept in fact objectively exists. So, for example, in the case of (6), either Yuna or Smith is actually right, even though it is *epistemically* difficult to find out the correctly specified concept. In this case, the intuition of faultlessness simply originates from epistemic difficulty to find out the correctly specified concept which objectively exists. Of course, this intuition is actually false, and in the conversation, one of them in fact is at fault.

Second, it might be the case that the correctly specified concept does not objectively exist, but depends on the members' conventional use in the linguistic community. In this case, we can interpret a conversation like (6) as the process in which the two speakers try to establish a *new conventional use* of the specified concept by suggesting their own criteria. They can be evaluated as 'faultless' because there has yet been no specifically established concept *dog*, which can determine whether the examined animal is included or not. But it is at the same time a disagreement because the speakers disagree about how the concept should be specifically established. Once they agree with how, it will become an establishment of a new conventional use of the concept.

I will stay neutral on what possible explanation is correct. However, I

believe that neither of the two possibilities motivates the alleged form of relativism on the word ‘dog’. Indeed, it is intuitively implausible to say that “This animal is a dog” is true for Yuna, but false for Smith. Moreover, the relativist framework requires that the two speakers disagree about the same proposition expressed by “This animal is a dog” and its truth-value is relative to judge coordinate. However, the speakers actually do not disagree about the same proposition, which has the form *a is F*, which relativists require, since it is the conversation where their slight difference of concepts causes a problem and this fact entails meta-linguistic disagreement.<sup>12)</sup> It seems that a conceptual disagreement itself does not force any particular semantic theory.

Now, before analyzing cases of a disagreement on predicates of personal taste, I should make one more point. In our actual conversations, it is certainly possible that a conceptual disagreement is mixed with an objective factual one. For example, we can assume that in (6), Yuna and Smith find more information about the animal. I suggest two possible conversations after (6). First,

(7) Yuna: I found out that this animal can be crossed with a dog to produce  
a procreative offspring.

Smith: Really? Then it must be a dog!

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12) To be sure, even though two speakers have slightly different concepts, if it does not cause a problem to their conversation, we may be able to *regard* their disagreement as one about the *same* proposition without any problem. For example, Yuna and Smith in (6) might have had many conversations such as “This dog is Tom’s”, “I disagree, it is not Tom’s”, considering the *same* proposition. However, in a conversation where the slight difference of concepts causes a problem such as (6), we should focus on this difference which makes the case where they cannot consider the completely same proposition, which has the form *a is F*.

Here the evidence is so forceful that their slightly different concepts *dog* come to lose their importance in the conversation. Both acknowledge that this animal is included in their own concept *dog* anyway despite their slight differences. Finally, we can deem that it becomes an objective factual disagreement.<sup>13)</sup> Second,

- (8) Yuna: I found out that this animal is keen of scent, like a dog. It is a dog!  
Smith: All right, but I also found out that this animal is active at night,  
like a cat. Therefore, it must be a cat!

Contrary to (7), each one's new information is not forceful in this case, their slightly different concepts *dog* still have an influence in the conversation, and they continue to disagree about the concept *dog*. Although I admit the categories of disagreement can be mixed, from now I shall exclude the mixed case for convenience.

In this section, I have suggested three categories of disagreement. I surely do not say that these categories are exhaustive. But I believe that they are sufficient to explain cases of a disagreement about predicates of personal taste.

#### 4. Categories of Disagreement on Predicates of Personal Taste

In this section, I show that each type of disagreement regarding personal taste belong to one of the three categories of disagreement I suggested in the last section. I will also analyze why the illusion of faultless

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13) To be sure, it is not impossible that (7) becomes a conceptual disagreement again, if we assume that they find out that the animal can also be crossed with a cat to produce a procreative offspring.

disagreement arises. But first, it should be pointed out that there are many cases which do not constitute disagreements even though two speakers utter seemingly opposite sentences (Cappelen and Hawthorne 2008: Chapter 4; Schaffer 2011: 212; Stojanovic 2007: 693).

Consider the following conversation.

(9) *No Disagreement*

Smith: Kimchi is not tasty.

Yuna: Really? I think kimchi is tasty. Why do you think so?

Smith: Because I do not like spicy food.

Yuna: I see. You may have a different taste with me. But I like taste of kimchi.

I believe that in many cases where we come to know that others have a different taste than us, we do not have a feeling of disagreement. Hearing Smith's utterance in (9), many people who think that kimchi is tasty might not tend to disagree with him. Usually, we only want to identify what kind of taste the other has in order to know the reason of his utterance. It reveals that in many cases, the value of a hidden variable in a sentence containing 'tasty' is supplied by the speaker. That is, by the sentence "Kimchi is (not) tasty", we usually express the same proposition as the proposition expressed by "Kimchi is (not) tasty to me"<sup>14</sup>

To be sure, as Lasersohn and MacFarlane point out, relativists need not maintain that there is no evidence in favor of contextualism. It is sufficient for relativists just to show that there is a type of disagreement

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14) Schaffer's soliloquy example is another case of no disagreement. He says that compared to a dialogue with a negative reply "No", there is far less of a feeling of disagreement when two speakers soliloquize seemingly opposite sentences (Schaffer 2011: 212).



for which contextualists cannot provide an explanation (Lasersohn 2010: 436, MacFarlane forthcoming: 15). Therefore, in order to defend contextualism, I will thoroughly examine the type of possible disagreement on predicates of personal taste and show that there is no real faultless disagreement. One important thing about examining conversations is that in order to know what category of disagreement arises, we have to specify a definite context, that is, why a certain conversation arises and how it develops. I believe that the context of (3) is not clear to us so that one cannot really establish what category of disagreement arises, and this is one of the reasons why we falsely believe that it is a case of faultless disagreement.

Now let us consider candidates of disagreement in conversations one by one, and analyze what category each belongs to. Let me first consider the following conversation.

(10) *Apparent Disagreement*

Yuna: Live octopuses are tasty.

Smith: No, live octopuses are not tasty.

Yuna: I mean, live octopuses are tasty to me.<sup>15)</sup>

If we do not consider Yuna's last utterance, it might seem that they have a disagreement. However, the last utterance shows that Smith has misunderstood Yuna. Smith may think that the value of the hidden variable in the sentence is supplied by both of them, (most of) the members of the relevant group, the ideal person, or whoever except the speaker. But Yuna dissolves this misunderstanding by showing that her first utterance expressed the proposition *live octopuses are tasty to Yuna*.<sup>16)</sup>

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15) Schaffer (2011: 27-28) and Stojanovic (2007: 693) also present a similar conversational situation.

16) To be sure, the type of misunderstanding of the value of the hidden variable may

So we can conclude that it is just an apparent disagreement. To be sure, this conversational type does not motivate relativism.

Let us consider another type of disagreement. Suppose that Smith has never eaten a live octopus. Yuna is persuading him to try to eat one.

(11) *Objective Factual Disagreement 1*

Yuna: Come on! Live octopuses are tasty!

Smith: No, they are not tasty.

Yuna: Don't be afraid. Please try before you say so!

[After Smith has eaten a live octopus]

Smith: Oh! It is tasty! You are right!

In this case, we can easily realize that Smith was at fault. He contended that live octopuses are not tasty even before eating one. But after he ate one, that is, after proper evidence is provided, he realizes that he was at fault. Therefore, without difficulty, we can sort this type of disagreement into the category of objective factual disagreement. In (11), the two speakers might consider the same proposition *live octopuses are tasty to Smith (or both of them)*, and their disagreement is resolved by concluding that Smith was at fault.<sup>17)</sup>

I suggest another type of objective factual disagreement as follows. Suppose that the four speakers eat the same food.

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vary. For example, while the value of the hidden variable in the sentence is supplied by another person other than the speaker, the hearer may not notice this fact, and mistakenly think that it is supplied by the speaker.

17) A similar conversational situation of objective factual disagreement may arise when we eat something with abnormal palate. Think about the situation where we judge the taste of something right after brushing our teeth. We are likely to be at fault in this situation.

(12) *Objective Factual Disagreement 2*

Yuna: This food is tasty.

Smith: No, it is not tasty.

Yuna: Let's ask Juan and Jin about it.

Smith: Sure. Do you guys think that this food is tasty?

Juan and Jin: Yes, it is tasty.

Yuna: See. I am right.

I believe that in this case, the value of the hidden variable in sentences is supplied by most of the members of Yuna and Smith's relevant group, so that Yuna and Smith consider the same proposition *A is tasty to most of the members of Yuna and Smith's relevant group*. (I will continue to suppose that 'A' is the name of the relevant food in each conversation for convenience) *Pace Lasersohn* (2005: 652), Yuna and Smith really do a simple survey on Juan and Jin's taste, and from the fact that three of them think that the food is tasty, they may properly induce that the food is tasty to most of the members of the relevant group and conclude that Smith is at fault. To be sure, if Smith thinks that the induction in this context is not sufficiently justified, he can legitimately raise a doubt and say, "Well, I think that Juan and Jin's tastes are also strange, most people would think that it is not tasty." Or he can rather acknowledge this induction and also legitimately say, "Well, it might be tasty (to most people), but at least it is not tasty to me." It seems that we really have this type of conversation in everyday life. Therefore, we can conclude that contrary to relativists' objection we have seen, there do in fact exist contexts where the value of the hidden variable is supplied by most of the members of the relevant group.

At this point, I suggest one possible source of the illusion of faultless disagreement. We have examined contexts of conversations where no

disagreement, apparent disagreement, and objective factual disagreement arise. The illusion of faultless disagreement might arise when we have not specified the context of conversation in a sufficient way. To be specific, when we consider the conversation in (3), we might on the one hand have a feeling of faultlessness, supposing that (3) is in no disagreement context, but on the other hand might have a feeling of disagreement, supposing that (3) is in objective factual disagreement context. When we have these two impressions at the same time due to the failure of the sufficient specification of what the context of conversation really is, this might result in the illusion of faultless disagreement. However, a sufficient specification of the context of the conversation shows that there is no faultless disagreement at least in the conversations so far discussed.

Nevertheless, it seems that there still remains one candidate of faultless disagreement. This is the case where two speakers *argue* that their own taste is right regardless of majority's taste in the relevant group. In this situation, they may even contend that majority's taste is wrong.<sup>18)</sup> For example, consider the following conversation.

(13) *Conceptual Disagreement 1*

Yuna: This food is tasty.

Smith: No, it is not tasty. It is not up to scratch.

Yuna: What? Focus on the tart flavor of the cranberries which adds piquancy.

Smith: But it is too sweet to keep on eating.

Yuna: But texture is wonderful!

Smith: Besides, it is a little greasy.

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18) In fact, this is the third intuition regarding faultless disagreement Lasersohn suggests (Lasersohn 2010: 435).

I suggest that in this case, the value of the hidden variable is supplied by the ideal standard or the ideal person.<sup>19)</sup> This suggestion provides a reason why each speaker may argue that he or she is right regardless of majority's taste. So each one tries to consider the proposition expressed by the sentence such as "A is tasty according to the ideal standard (or to the ideal person)." But I believe that they fail to consider the same proposition, which has the form *a is F*, because here they disagree about the concept *being tasty according to the ideal standard* and it results in meta-linguistic disagreement. Each of them contends that his or her own concept *being tasty according to the ideal standard* is correct by indicating the criteria of their different concepts, not by searching additional empirical evidence of A by eating it again since they already know the taste of A. That is, following the criteria (and properties related to these criteria) of their own concept *being tasty according to the ideal standard*, they dispute whether the concept *being tasty according to the ideal standard* applies to A on the presupposition that the relevant properties of A are fixed, and it results in the corollary that they also disagree about the meaning (or the extension) of 'being tasty according to the ideal standard'.<sup>20)</sup>

In a conversation such as (13) one might have the intuition of faultless disagreement. Two possible ways to the origins of this intuition are the same as I mentioned in section 3. First, it might be the case that the

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19) Although the point is different from mine, Egan indicates a plausible situation where a topic is about the ideal standard (Egan 2010).

20) To be sure, as I explained in section 3, it is also possible that a conceptual disagreement on predicates of personal taste is mixed with an objective factual one. But I do not consider this case for convenience, because although it probably needs a complex explanation, such an explanation will not exceed the means offered in this paper.

correct concept *being tasty according to the ideal standard* objectively exists. In this case, it results in accommodating the part of absolutism on predicates of personal taste, and consequently, either Yuna or Smith is in fact right although it is *epistemically* difficult to find out the correct concept. The intuition of faultlessness simply originates from this epistemic difficulty, and it is actually false. Second, it might be the case that the correct concept *being tasty according to the ideal standard* does not objectively exist, but depends on the members' conventional use in the linguistic community. In this case, we can interpret (13) as the process in which the two speakers try to establish a new conventional use of the specified concept *being tasty according to the ideal standard* by suggesting their own criteria. They can be evaluated as faultless because there has yet been no specifically established concept *being tasty according to the ideal standard*, which can determine whether it includes A or not. But at the same time it is a disagreement because they disagree about how the concept *being tasty according to the ideal standard* should be specifically established. Once they agree with how, it will become an establishment of a new conventional use about the concept *being tasty according to the ideal standard*.<sup>21)</sup>

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21) Although Recanati does not mention conceptual disagreement, I think that his position is more or less similar with mine. He suggests that the value of the hidden variable is supplied by the community's standards, and it is the same proposition *A is tasty according to the community's standards* two speakers disagree about. Then he says, "The disagreement ultimately bears upon what the community standards are, or should be. If the disagreement bears upon what the community standards are, it is not faultless. If, as in the last case we considered, it bears upon what standards should be, then it is, arguably, faultless, but even in that case the disagreement is over the complete content" (Recanati 2007: 93-94). The first type of disagreement Recanati suggests is similar with (12) in my paper. The second one is similar with the second explanation of (13). But I believe that his second analysis eventually comes to depend on a conceptual

We have seen two possible ways to explain the intuition of faultless disagreement in (13), but neither of these two explanations motivates relativism on predicates of personal taste as I discussed conceptual disagreement in section 3. The speakers in (13) did not disagree about the same proposition expressed by "A is tasty according to the ideal standard (or to the ideal person)", but such alleged disagreement is the necessary requirement of motivating relativism. They rather argue about the concept *being tasty according to the ideal standard* and the meaning (or the extension) of 'being tasty according to the ideal standard'. It seems that this conceptual disagreement does not force any particular semantic theory.

Before finishing this section, I suggest a different type of conceptual disagreement. Consider the following conversation between a novice and an expert.

(14) *Conceptual Disagreement 2*

Yuna: Chef Smith, I think this food is tasty. It is very sweet.

Smith: Never! It is not tasty. It is rather terrible! There is no balance of taste in this food, and texture is hard to bite. It only has a junky sweet taste.

Yuna: I see. I still have lots of things to learn.<sup>22)</sup>

In this case, we can easily find out that Yuna is at fault, since she does not yet sufficiently master the concept *being tasty according to the ideal standard*. She is in the process of mastering this concept by learning it from Chef Smith. This situation is the same as the case that a child is

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disagreement. Then due to the close link between concepts and language, the difference of the concepts brings about a difference of meaning in idiolects. So I believe that we cannot say that they consider the same proposition in a context where their slightly different concepts cause a problem.

22) Schaffer (2011 :215) suggests a similar conversational situation

mastering basic concepts by learning them from its parents. Of course, it also does not motivate any form of relativism.<sup>23)</sup>

## 5. The Problem of Disagreement Report

In the last section, I have shown that every possible type of conversations belongs to one of three categories of disagreement I introduced in section 3. Before I finish the paper, I will reply to a possible objection due to Lasersohn (2005: 660-661). Actually, it is an objection against the existence of meta-linguistic disagreement on predicates of personal taste. Since I claimed that a conceptual disagreement entails meta-linguistic disagreement, it would cause a problem to my explanation of conceptual disagreement if there were no meta-linguistic disagreement at all.

Lasersohn contends that admitting meta-linguistic disagreement on predicates of personal taste seems incompatible with Kaplanian framework. The reason is that we can report the disagreement in (13) by embedding the seemingly contradictory sentences under verbs of propositional attitude, that is, by saying “Yuna thinks that A is tasty, but Smith thinks that A is not tasty.”<sup>24)</sup> According to Lasersohn, it is successful reporting of the disagreement in (13), and (13) would have to be a disagreement about the

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23) Some relativists point out that contextualists cannot explain the case of retraction (Kölbel 2004a: 64; MacFarlane forthcoming: 12-14). But there is no essential difference to a disagreement between two persons, if we regard the two persons to be me in the present and me in the past. Anyway, I believe that even in the cases of retraction, each case would belong to one of three categories of disagreement I introduced in section 3. (Since it seems that when we retract, we generally have the intuition that I myself was at fault in the past, it seems strange that relativists prefer this ‘faulty disagreement’ example.)

24) Here I actually changed the example as follows: Yuna says, “A is tasty” instead of “This food is tasty” in (13). The same is true for Smith.



same proposition, since verbs of propositional attitude relate individuals to the proposition of their complement clauses.

However, it seems that in order to report a disagreement about the same proposition, it has to be presupposed that the speakers use the same word to mean same things. If we deem that we can report a disagreement about the same proposition without this presupposition, it yields the absurd conclusion that even the clear cases of a meta-linguistic disagreement would also have to be regarded as a disagreement about the same proposition. Suppose that Yuna falsely use 'bachelor' to mean *a man*, while Smith correctly use 'bachelor' to mean *an unmarried man*. Suppose further that both already know that Juan is a married man and also know that the other knows this fact. In this case, Yuna may say "Juan is a bachelor" and Smith may reply "No, Juan is married, so he is not a bachelor." Yuna may reply "No, he is a bachelor, because he is a man." After overhearing their utterances, we may report "Yuna thinks that Juan is a bachelor, but Smith thinks that Juan is not a bachelor." But it is clearly absurd to conclude that they disagree about the same proposition on the basis of this report, since their disagreement is clearly meta-linguistic, and it shows that we can report a disagreement about the same proposition as long as two speakers use the same word to mean same things. So it seems that Lasersohn simply begs the question.

There is another problem for reporting a disagreement simply by embedding the seemingly contradictory sentences under verbs of propositional attitude. Call the following reporting from (5) 'R': "Yuna thinks that Juan is ready, but Smith thinks that Juan is not ready." Even if we report R after hearing the conversation in (5), it cannot be a report of a disagreement about the same proposition. At most we may report R to mislead an audience to believe that they have a disagreement about the

same proposition, and the reason why the report R can mislead an audience is that when we report R, we miss the values of the hidden variables which are supplied in the original context. Even MacFarlane acknowledges that the words such as ‘ready’, ‘tall’, and ‘local’ can be explained by contextualism, and that reports such as R do not demonstrate a disagreement about the same proposition (MacFarlane forthcoming: 8-9). Moreover, if the report “Yuna thinks that A is tasty, but Smith thinks that A is not tasty” from (13) were regarded as a successful reporting of a disagreement about the same proposition simply due to embedding the seemingly contradictory sentences under verbs of propositional attitude, no disagreement cases such as (9) where the value of the hidden variable is supplied by the speaker should be regarded as a disagreement about the same proposition simply because we can make the report, “Yuna thinks that kimchi is tasty, but Smith thinks that kimchi is not tasty”, from (9) which is similar with the report from (13). This is clearly an absurd conclusion, since they actually consider different propositions such as *kimchi is tasty to Yuna* and *kimchi is not tasty to Smith* and do not disagree at all.

## 6. Conclusion

I have so far argued that there is no faultless disagreement which motivates relativism, and it seems that every possible disagreement in conversations belongs to out of three categories of disagreement I introduced in section 3. It seems to me impossible to show any fully specified conversation in which two speakers disagree about the same proposition but at the same time no one is at fault. It is relativists’ burden to show this type of developed conversation. By contrast, contextualist

framework provides an explanation of every type of disagreement on predicates of personal taste. And this fact is sufficient to defend contextualism without any additional positive objection to relativism, since contextualists' explanation of predicates of personal taste works in the same way as their explanations of predicates such as 'ready', 'tall', and 'local', while relativists introduce a new concept, judge coordinate, to solve the problem. In short, contextualism is preferable than relativism because it has the virtue of theoretical simplicity and elegance.<sup>25)</sup>

I further believe that a similar analysis can be applied to predicates in the domains of aesthetics and even ethics. But that is the topic for another paper.

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25) Moreover, relativism has lots of problems itself. See Cappelen and Hawthorne 2005; Schafer 2011; Stojanovic 2007.

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## 맥락주의, 상대주의 그리고 ‘과오 없는 불일치’

이 정 규

본 논문은, 취향 술어의 의미론에 초점을 맞추어, 상대주의의 ‘과오 없는 불일치’ 반대에 대응하여 맥락주의를 옹호한다. 상대주의는 과오 없는 불일치라는 현상이 존재하며, 상대주의만이 이 현상에 대한 설명을 제공할 수 있다고 논변한다. 이에 대응하여, 나는 우선 과오 없는 불일치와는 다른 세 가지 범주의 불일치를 소개한 후, 일견 과오 없는 불일치로 보이는 경우들이 사실은 이 세 가지 범주 중에 하나에 속하는 것임을 보인다. 특히, 나는 과오 없는 불일치가 존재한다는 환상이, 우리가 대화 맥락을 충분히 상세화하지 않거나, 단지 개념적 불일치만 존재한다는 것을 파악하지 못했을 때 생기는 것임을 논증한다.

[주제] 언어 철학, 의미론

[주요어] 맥락주의, 상대주의, 불일치, 취향