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Faultless Disagreement, Predicates of Personal Taste and Vagueness

1. Faultless disagreement, predicates of personal taste and vague predicates

1.1. Faultless disagreement and predicates of personal taste

Most researchers who mention faultless disagreement link it with discourses involving personal taste predicates such as "fun" or "tasty". The idea is that when Eleni and Kostats taste souvlaki and Eleni says: "This is tasty", while Kostats utters: "This is not tasty", we are inclined to say that Eleni and Kostats disagree. At the same time we have the feeling that Eleni and Kostas may both say something true. One way of viewing this exchange is to say that Eleni and Kostats do not disagree at all: While Eleni says that souvlaki is tasty *to her*, Kostats says that souvlaki is not tasty *to him*[1]. This interpretation captures our feeling that they both may be right, but it leaves unexplained our inclination to view their exchange as a dispute. This inclination would be even stronger if the exchange looked as follows:

Eleni: This is tasty.
Kostas: That is not true. This is not tasty at all.

Here Kostas straightforwardly contradicts what Eleni has said. Such an exchange is perfectly natural and does not strike us as odd. Whereas, if Eleni meant "tasty to me" and Kostas "not tasty to me", his utterance would be at best infelicitous. The conviction that people who

[1] One version of this view is individualized indexical contextualism, which postulates the existence of a hidden indexical parameter, which picks out the speaker's standard (relative to which the given predicate is ascribed). See e.g. Baker (2012: 109). Baker notices that a proponent of this view might argue that even if "*a* is tasty" means in fact "*a* is tasty to *x*", where *x* is the speaker or the speaker's standard, "*a* is tasty" and "*a* is not tasty" exemplify disagreement, provided that one insists that speakers suffer from semantic blindness: "tasty" is in fact indexical, but speakers do not notice this and use it as if it were context-invariant. See Baker (2012: 113). For objections to this solution see Baker (2012: 114n), and for a possible reply see Marques and García-Carpintero (2014).

engage in disputes of this kind want to communicate something more than their idiosyncratic tastes has lead philosophers to postulate a special type of disagreement: faultless disagreement. Someone who postulates faultless disagreement says in fact that you can have your cake and eat it: two people may disagree even if both their utterances are true. Isidora Stojanovic considers a situation in which Tarek and Inma are tasting soybean ice-cream and saying:

(1) Tarek: This is delicious.
(2) Inma: That's not true. This isn't delicious at all.

She argues that usage of predicates of personal taste leads to a puzzle. For on the one hand

> "a: For any two utterances u_1 and u_2, the utterer of u_1 disagrees with the utterer of u_2 only if: if u_1 is true, then u_2 is false, and if u_1 is false, then u_2 is true."

While on the other we are also inclined to agree that

> "b: The utterer of (1) (Tarek) disagrees with the utterer of (2) (Inma).
> c: On the assumption that Tarek finds the soybean ice-cream delicious, and that Inma does not, (1) is a true utterance, and so is (2)." (Stojanovic 2007: 2)

Philosophers who wish to make room for faultless disagreement have to reject (a). Those, who – like Stojanovic – do not want to allow for such disagreement have to reject (b) or (c). Stojanovic herself advises rejecting either (b) or (c), on a case to case basis[2] (Stojanovic 2007: 2).

Christopher Kennedy writes that faultless disagreement (which for him exemplifies diagnostic for subjectivity) is present "if a sentence and its negation can be used by competent speakers to contradict each other, but in a way that (from external point of view) appears to be consistent with both speakers saying something true" (Kennedy 2013: 2).

For Tamina Stephenson faultless[3] disagreement is characterised by the following features (Pearson 2013: 104; see also Stephenson 2007):

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[2] Stojanovic argues that disagreement may either be genuine or spurious. In genuine disagreement one's party being right entails that the other party is wrong, whereas in spurious (weak) disagreement the two parties take each other to be saying false things, but this is due to misunderstanding of some kind. See Stojanovic (2007).
[3] She calls it "subjective disagreement". It is worth noticing that for her disagreement is present where linguistic denial is justified (Stepenson 2007:493). (Cf. Sundell 2011).

> "I. Intuitively, the interlocutors disagree with one another.
> II. There is a sense in which both speakers have said something true, so long as each was sincere in her expression of her opinion.
> III. For this reason, the disagreement does not seem to be one that can be resolved."

As we can see what all three propositions have in common is the assumption that the speakers are in conflict – hence disagreement and yet both say something true (as long as they are sincere) – hence faultlessness.

1.2. Faultless disagreement and vague predicates

As I have already mentioned, faultless disagreement is usually associated with disputes involving predicates of personal taste. However, some theorists have noticed that it may also appear in connection with discourses involving all vague predicates[4] (not necessarily those that are predicates of personal taste)[5]. Most notably, Crispin Wright takes faultless disagreement to be a defining feature of vague predicates. He writes:

> "It's tempting to say, indeed, that a statement's possessing (one kind of) vagueness just *consists* in the fact that, under certain circumstances, cognitively lucid, fully informed and properly functioning subjects may faultlessly differ about it" (Wright 1992: 144),

and

> "It is crucial to recognize that this phenomenon of permissible disagreement at the margins is of the very essence of vagueness, and that to leave it out of account is merely to miss the subject matter" (Wright 1995: 138).

All predicates of personal taste are vague, but they are not your paradigm vague predicates. If you look at philosophical literature dealing with vagueness you will notice that the most

[4] See e.g. Richard (2004), Kennedy (2013), Barker (2013).
[5] Kennedy (2013: 12) notices that evaluative predicates give rise to faultless disagreement even in comparative forms (such as "tastier", "the most fun", etc.), while comparative forms of dimensional predicates (such as "taller", "colder") do not licence faultless disagreement. Thus, vagueness is a sufficient condition for faultless disagreement, but not a necessary one (because non-vague comparative forms of evaluative predicates give rise to faultless disagreement). See Kennedy (2013: 17).

popular examples of vague predicates are “bald”, “tall”, “red”, “rich” etc. This is due to the fact that the main reason why philosophers are intrigued by vagueness is that it leads to sorites paradoxes. For any predicates such as “bald”, “tall”, “rich” you can easily construct a paradox of the form:

Fa_1

$\forall n(Fa_n \rightarrow Fa_{n+1})$

$Fa_{1000000}$

So, if “*F*” stands for “bald”, starting from the premise that a man with no hair on his head is bald, you arrive at the conclusion that e.g. a man with 150000 hairs on his head is bald.

It is characteristic of such predicates that they are underdetermined as far as their reference (i.e. extension) is concerned: since they are seemingly tolerant, i.e. insensitive to marginal changes, they have clear cases as well as borderline cases of application. What is important is that most of them are unidimensional, i.e. such that only one criterion is used to order objects according to the property it denotes (see e.g. McNally and Stojanovic 2015). That is why it is so easy to construct a sorites series of objects that differ only minutely in a certain respect (for “tall” the relevant dimension is height, for “bald” the number of hair[6], and so on).

McNally and Stojanovic (2015: 4) write:

> “While speakers may disagree about the threshold for unidimensional adjectives (...) their judgments about orderings between individuals with respect to that property should never vary”.

On the other hand, personal taste predicates are usually multidimensional. For predicates such as “fun” and “tasty” there is no one dimension along which one could order objects that one considers tasty or fun. When we judge whether something is tasty or not we take into account many factors (such as ingredients, texture, smell, colour, etc.), and similarly for fun. Moreover multidimensional predicates of personal taste – contrary to unidimensional vague

[6] Actually “bald” is not a good example because it is questionable whether it is really unidimensional. When we assess whether someone is bald or not we take into account not only the number of hair, but also their colour, texture, distribution, etc. It seems that it is mainly for historical reasons that “bald” is considered together with “rich” and “tall”. (The paradox of the bald man is one of the oldest paradoxes and is attributed to Eubulides).

predicates – are nonmeasurable[7]. As a result for multidimensional predicates it is much harder to build a sorites series.

Unidimensional vague predicates have clear cases. Most such predicates are sensitive to comparison classes or paradigms, but once the relevant comparison is fixed, there will be cases on which all competent speakers agree that they fall (or do not fall) in the extension of a given vague predicate. Thus, for instance, if we talk about tall Polish six graders, all competent speakers will agree that Johnny who is 180 cm tall is tall for a Polish six grader. Similarly, competent speakers will agree that Paul who is 140 cm tall is not tall for a Polish six grader. So, John is a clear case of a tall six grader, whereas Paul is a clear case of a non-tall six grader. A speaker who would argue that John is not tall for a six grader would be deemed incompetent. Some personal taste predicates are unidimensional and for them it is relatively easy to agree on clear cases (take "salty", "spicy" or "sweet"[8]), but it is arguable that multidimensional personal taste predicates do not have clear cases. There is no such object or event that all competent speakers have to agree that it is fun (on pain of being deemed incompetent). Even if 99% competent speakers would argue that rollercoasters are fun, one could disagree and still be considered a competent speaker of English. Similarly if you claimed that my cheesecake (which I consider a clear case of tastiness) is not tasty, I would be puzzled (and slightly offended), but I would not question your linguistic competence. The reason for this is that multidimensional predicates of personal taste seem subjective across the board, while unidimensional measurable predicates are more objective. As Stojanovic and McNally write: measurability "allows in principle for the objective use of an adjective" (2015:5). This is why not every disagreement concerning the ascription of a unidimensional vague adjective is faultless. If two people disagree whether Johnny, who is 180 cm tall, is tall for a Polish six grader, their disagreement is not faultless: one of them is right and one of them is wrong.

If Anne says: "Philip is tall" and Betty says "Philip is not tall", their exchange looks like a disagreement, but it may be explained in three ways (I'm assuming here that they are talking about the same Philip and both know how tall Philip is). Firstly, it may happen that Anne and Betty are thinking about different comparison classes. Anne may mean "Philip is tall for a football player" and Betty "Philip is tall for a basketball player". In such a case there is no disagreement, Anne and Betty are merely talking past each other. If Anne and Betty

[7] They are nonmeasurable because the properties they express either entail an experiencer (predicates of personal taste) or imply a positive or negative evaluation on the part of the speaker (aesthetic predicates). See McNally and Stojanovic (2015: 5).
[8] But compare here McNally and Stojanovic (2015).

assume the same comparison class, then their exchange does constitute a disagreement. If Philip is a clear case of tallness (relative to the assumed comparison class), then their disagreement is genuine and one of them must be wrong. However, if Philip is a borderline case of tallness (relative to the assumed comparison class), their disagreement is faultless and both may be right.

The definition of faultless disagreement that is most congenial to the case of vague predicates in general is the one formulated by Kölbel (2003: 54):

> "A faultless disagreement is a situation where there is a thinker *A*, a thinker *B*, and a proposition (content of judgement) *p*, such that:
> (a) *A* believes (judges) that *p* and *B* believes (judges) that not-*p*
> (b) Neither *A* nor *B* has made a mistake (is at fault)"[9].

Previous definitions that I quoted assumed that both seemingly contradicting utterances are true. With statements concerning borderline cases it is different, however. We do not assume that both "Philip is tall" and "Philip is not tall" are true, but rather that neither speaker has made a mistake in calling Philip "tall" or "not tall". In the case of predicates of personal taste if the speaker says "This is tasty" and is sincere, we have a strong inclination to regard his utterance as true. There is no such inclination in the case of vague predicates. It is in fact often argued that neither of the contradicting utterances is true. If Philip is a borderline case, both ascriptions may be considered devoid of truth-value.

As we have seen, Wright thinks of the possibility of there arising a faultless disagreement concerning borderline cases as a characteristic trait of vagueness. Other theories of vagueness characterize vague predicates by appealing to their apparent tolerance and to the (possible) existence of borderline cases. In supervaluationism it is assumed that vague predicates can be precisified in many ways. Some of these ways are admissible. In a given precisification all sentences are either true or false. Sentences that are true in all admissible precisifications are supertrue, sentences that are false in all admissible precisifications are superfalse and sentences that are true in some admissible precisifications and false in some admissible precisifications are neither supertrue nor superfalse. Supertruth is identified with

[9] It has to be added that Kölbel himself does not claim that there are cases of faultless disagreements. In this paper he says only that "most people think there can be faultless disagreements at least on some topics, for example on matters of taste" (2003: 53) and after formulating his definition of faultless disagreement he adds: "I believe that most people have a healthy pre-theoretical intuition that there can be and are faultless disagreements in this sense" (2003: 54). Since he calls that intuition "healthy" we might think that he is not averse to postulating such disagreements but in his later paper he argues that at best we encounter cases of *apparent* faultless disagreement. See Kölbel (2009: 389).

truth, and superfalsity with falsity. Hence, borderline statements, which are true in some and false in some precisifications are devoid of truth-value. If we assume that people should aim at uttering true sentences then supervaluationism leaves no place for faultless disagreement. Borderline statements are neither true nor false so a speaker who utters such sentences is at fault. Subvaluationism, which is dual of supervaluationism, also assumes that vague predicates admit of precisifications, but identifies truth with truth in a precisification and falsity with falsity in a precisification. Hence, all borderline statements, which come out as true in some precifications and false in some precisifications, are both true and false. Thus two speakers who say respectively "Philip is tall" and "Philip is not tall" both say something true and their disagreement may be regarded as faultless. The best known epistemic conception of vagueness, namely the one proposed by Timothy Williamson, does not allow for faultless disagreement because it assumes that borderline statements are either true or false, only we do not (and cannot) know which is the case. As a result, if two speakers disagree over a borderline case, only one of them says something true and only one of them can be right. As might be expected, Wright's conception, agnosticism, has no trouble accommodating faultless disagreement concerning borderline cases. He assumes that "a verdict about the borderline case is always permissible; it is always *all right* to have a (suitably qualified) opinion" (Wright 2003: 94).

2. Faultless disagreement in contextual conceptions of vagueness

In my 2013 paper I have tried to argue that contextual conceptions of vagueness are able to account for faultless disagreement. In general, contextual theories can be divided into indexical and nonindexical contextualisms. Roughly speaking according to an indexical conception expressions like "every", "ready", "tall", "knows that" in different contexts have different contents. Since "tall" means different things in different contexts, in some context c_1 the sentence "Philip is tall" might mean that Philip is tall for a football player (and might be true), whereas in a different context c_2 the sentence "Philip is tall" might mean that Philip is tall for a basketball player (and might be false).

According to nonindexical contextualism many natural language expressions are context-dependent, but this context-dependence does not consist in their having different contents in different contexts. Expressions like "tall", "red", "ready" in different contexts

have the same content but different extensions. "Philip is tall" in c_1 and c_2 has the same content, but different truth-values. This is possible because the circumstances of evaluations have been enriched and consist of a pair <world, count-as parameter>:

> "The "count-as" parameter is so-called because it fixes what things have to be like in order to count as having the property of tallness (or any other property) at a circumstance of evaluation" (MacFarlane 2007: 246).

MacFarlane adds that the count-as parameter is "determined in complex ways by other features of the context, including the topic of conversation and the speaker's intentions" (ibid.) Thus, the reference of a vague predicate is fixed based on a contextually salient standard of comparison.

According to contextual conceptions of vagueness what is special about vague predicates such as 'bald' is that what counts as being bald varies not only with the external context but also with the *internal* context of a conversation[10]. Such conceptions usually make the following assumptions:

1. Borderline cases depend on external and internal contexts. Thus, vague predicates are sensitive to comparison classes as well as to what has already been said and accepted in a given conversation.

2. What is said is part of the context and at the same time changes the context. If A and B are borderline cases but B is marginally shorter than A, and one of the speakers says "A is tall" and the other speaker accepts this, then they cannot say that B is not tall. Uttering and accepting "A is tall" changes the context of the conversation and makes certain future utterances inadmissible.

3. Speakers enjoy a certain degree of a semantic licence: they are – within certain limits – free to do with borderline cases as they like. There are no linguistic rules that dictate how borderline cases should be assessed. Speakers are, however, constrained by what has already been said in a conversation (see the previous point)[11].

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[10] Internal context consists in what has already been assumed and accepted in a conversation regarding the application of a given vague predicate. See e.g. Shapiro (2003, 2006). Mark Richard writes that adjectives like "rich" and "tall" "enjoy two sorts of context sensitivity" (2004: 229). With such adjectives there is associated a measure (for "tall" a measure of height, for "rich" a measure of wealth) and when we use such adjectives in context "we can adjust to *what* we apply the measure, as well as adjusting *how* the measure will apply. That is to say: for such adjectives, there are shifts across contexts as to what is the relevance class (shifts in what), and there are shifts across contexts as to the point on the adjective's scale which is the cut off point for the adjective's application (shifts in *how*)" (2004: 229). 'Shifts in how' depend on the internal context.

[11] Richard (2004) argues that vague predicates within their borderline region are subject to accommodation and negotiation. Accommodation in this sense in a notion introduced by Lewis, who noticed that speakers often

4. Most contextual conceptions accept a weak version of a principle of tolerance, which is relativised to the context. For instance, Åkerman and Greenough propose the following version:

> (WT) It is not the case that: there is a context of utterance *C* and there is an *x* such that *x* and *x*+1 are *considered together as a pair by a single subject in C* and 'is *F*' (as used in *C*) is true of *x* and 'is *F*' (as used in *C*) is false of *x*+1. (Åkerman and Greenough 2010)

One of the common objections to indexical contextualism is that it is not able to account for genuine disagreement. In particular, it might be objected that indexical contextualism concerning vagueness is not able to account for genuine disagreement in clear cases. If "tall" changes content between contexts, then even if John is a clear case of tallness, "John is tall" and "John is not tall" are not really contradictories: "tall" in the latter utterance might mean something different than in the former utterance, so "is not tall" is not a negation of "is tall".[12] On the contrary, nonindexical contextualism, which does not postulate the change of content between contexts, is able to accommodate genuine disagreement: "John is tall" and "John is not tall" are contradictory on this account. Someone who asserts "John is tall" says that John is tall (relative to a given comparison class *C*) *whatever the context*. Another person who in reply says "John is not tall" asserts that John is not tall (relative to *C*) *whatever the context*. Hence, their disagreement is genuine and only one of them can be right.[13] Nonindexical

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adjust extensions of predicates in such a way that the sentences in which they occur come out as true, as long as no speaker objects to such an adjustment. Thus in different contexts speakers may use such predicates with different extensions. In addition, two speakers might engage in negotiations concerning a given predicate in order to establish whether a given object or person falls into the extension or not. (Richard stresses that such negotiations need not be metalinguistic: the debate is not about the extension of e.g. "rich" but about whether so-and-so is rich or not, cf. Richard (2004: 227)) The 'what-sort' of context sensitivity is not subject to accommodation and negotiation, but the 'how-sort' is (see footnote 10).

[12] A growing number of people tries to argue that disagreement might be present even in cases in which there is no semantic conflict between utterances, i.e. in cases in which both utterances might be true together. E.g. Sundell argues that such disputes may be analysed as disputes over the selection of a contextually salient aesthetic standard, i.e. as metalinguistic negotiations (Sundell 2011; see also Barker 2013). Sundell defines disagreement very broadly as "the relation between speakers that licenses linguistic denial" (2011: 274). This allows him to regard as disagreement debates over presuppositions, implicatures, manner, character and context. In all these cases speakers disagree even though the propositions they express are mutually consistent. Buekens argues that "both the sense of conflict and faultlessness derive from the expressive dimension of the speech act involved in subjective discourse" (Buekens 2011: 637). Similarly MacFarlane and Huvenes argue that disagreements are often matters of conflicting non-doxastic attitudes. See MacFarlane (2014); Huvenes (2012). See also Marques and García-Carpintero (2014).

[13] One might object (as the anonymous referee has pointed out) that such disagreement does not count as genuine since the contents postulated by nonindexical contextualism are contradictory but non-truth-evaluable. Indeed, nonindexical contextualism argues that contents (propositions) do not have intensions (understood as functions form possible worlds to truth values). (See MacFarlane 2007: 246). However, propositions can be evaluated as true or false in circumstances of evaluation consisting of a world and a count-as parameter. The count-as

contextualism, however, has problems accounting for faultless disagreement concerning borderline cases. Patrick Greenough (2005) observes that the speech act which consists in uttering *S* when John is clearly tall and the speech act which consists in uttering *S* when John is borderline tall are the same speech act and in both cases the same seems to be said. In clear cases as well as in borderline cases "where *S* says that *p*, what is said in asserting *S*, is that *p is true relative to C whatever the context*" (Greenough 2005: 173). Thus, in borderline and clear cases alike, when I assert "John is not tall" I say that John is not tall (relative to *C*) *whatever the context*. When my opponent asserts "John is tall" she says that John is tall (relative to *C*) *whatever the context*. Hence, there cannot be faultless disagreement at the margins. Only one of the above assertions can be correct. Greenough notices that one might argue that what is asserted in borderline cases is that *p* is true (relative to *C*) *in the context of utterance* whereas that what is said in non-borderline cases is that *p* is true (relative to *C*) whatever the context. If this is so, then permissible disagreement in borderline region is possible. However, such a reply seems to lead to full-blooded indexical contextualism: after all the same utterance has different *contents* depending on whether the case it concerns is borderline or non-borderline. Thus, it seems that either we agree that content is stable, embrace nonindexical contextualism and agree that permissible disagreement concerning borderline cases is not possible, or else we accept indexical contextualism and acknowledge that all disagreement is spurious: no genuine disagreement is possible. Needless to say, neither of these options is appealing.

There is a way out, however. There is a way to insist that disagreement about clear cases is genuine and disagreement about borderline cases is faultless. The solution is to bite the bullet and accept the reply suggested by Greenough. We have to claim that the content of speech acts concerning borderline cases and the content of speech acts concerning clear cases

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parameter may assign different intensions to properties such as being tall or being rich depending on the context of the conversation. So, if the conversation is about the height of football players the count-as function will assign to the property of being tall the same intension it assigns to the property of being tall-for-a-football-player, whereas in a conversation concerning the height of basketball players it will assign to the property of being tall the same intension it assigns to the property of being-tall-for-a-basketball-player. (See MacFarlane 2007: 246-247). Thus, if A asserts "John is tall" and B asserts "John is not tall" their disagreement will be genuine if the context in which their exchange takes place determines both the world and the count-as parameter. But this is as it should be. We want to say that their disagreement is genuine only if they are having the same comparison class in mind. On the other hand, if A and B take themselves to be in different contexts and are talking about different comparison classes, then A's utterance is evaluated in different circumstances of evaluation than B's and – contrary to appearances – they are not disagreeing but are merely talking past each other. If the value of the count-as parameter is not determined, then A's and B's utterances are not truth-evaluable.

Admittedly nonindexical contextualism has problems explaining inter-contextual disagreements (i.e. situations where we want to say that two people disagree even though they are in different contexts). However, in the case under discussion we may claim that inter-contextual disagreement is genuine provided in both contexts the intension which the count-as function assigns to the property in question is the same.

are indeed different.[14] This move does not have to lead to indexical contextualism, if we argue that the content of speech acts concerning all clear cases (as well as the content concerning all borderline cases) is the same. Such a view assumes that there are only two changes of content along the sorites series: the first when the clear positive cases fade into borderline cases and the second when borderline cases give place to clear negative cases. Since there is no sharp boundary between the clear and borderline cases, the exact place where the content changes cannot be determined and will be different for different conversations. The claim that such changes of content occur might be motivated by an example of a vague unidimensional predicate of personal taste, such as "salty". When we predicate "salty" of a clear case of saltiness (e.g. a glass of water with 3 spoonfuls of salt added to it), what we mean in asserting that it is salty is that it is salty whatever the context (salty *simpliciter*, 'universally', 'absolutely'); not just salty for us. When we say that the clear case is salty we expect everybody who tastes it to agree with us. If someone tasted the mixture and said that it is not salty we would be thoroughly puzzled. Whereas when we are asked to ascribe "salty" to a borderline case, our assertion would be much more hesitant and would not mean that the water is salty whatever the context, but rather that it is salty-according-to-us, relative to the context at hand; not salty *simpliciter*. I suggest that this observation concerning the usage of unidimensonal personal taste predicates be extended to all vague predicates. That is for every vague predicate *F*, when someone says "*a* is *F*", where *a* is a clear case of *F*[15], his utterance says that *a* is *F simpliciter* (whatever the context), whereas when someone says "*a* is *F*", where *a* is a borderline case[16], his assertion says that *a* is *F*-according-to-him. As a result assertions concerning clear cases have the same content. If *a* is a clear case of tallness and *A* says that *a* is tall and *B* says that *a* is not tall, they contradict each other and their disagreement is genuine (and can be resolved). If on the other hand *a* is a borderline case of tallness and *A* says that *a* is tall, while B says that *a* is not tall, their disagreement is permissible (and cannot be resolved).[17] This view is a mixture of indexical and nonindexical contextualism: it is partly indexical contextualism because it does not deny that the content changes, but it postulates the change of content only between ascriptions concerning clear and borderline cases. It is partly nonindexical contextualism because it postulates the enrichment of circumstances of evaluation in such a way that in clear cases they consist of a pair: <world,

[14] My solution is presented in a greater detail in Odrowąż-Sypniewska (2013b).
[15] More precisely, *a* is a case that the utterer *takes* to be a clear case.
[16] More precisely, *a* is a case that the utterer *takes* to be a borderline case.
[17] If A takes *a* to be a clear case, while B takes it to be a borderline case, their disagreement is not genuine: they are talking past each other.

count-as parameter>, whereas in borderline cases they comprise a triple: <world, count-as parameter, speaker>.

In what follows I would like to deal with two possible objections that might be levelled against the view that I've just sketched. The first is the charge that permissible disagreement at the margins I propose is not a disagreement at all. The second is the charge that postulating such a change of content is *ad hoc*.

3. Objections and replies

3.1. Permissible disagreement in borderline cases is merely apparent

If we say that in borderline cases assertion "Philip is tall" really means "Philip is tall according to me", then it might be objected that in such cases there is no disagreement. If Anne says "Philip is tall" and means by it that Philip is tall according to her, and Betty says that Philip is not tall and means that Philip is not tall according to her, then the appearance of disagreement is spurious. Betty does not in fact contradict Anne and both their utterances might be true together. I agree that strictly speaking there is no disagreement in such cases. However, we have the tendency to regard them as cases of disagreement due to the expectation that others are like us and should judge similarly. Dan López de Sa trying to defend his version of moral relativism argues that we operate on the presupposition that the addressee is like the speaker:

> "utterances of (say) '*a* is good' and '*a* is not good' could in effect not contradict each other, in virtue of their speakers being relevantly dissimilar (…), but in ordinary, non-defective conversations participants would presuppose that they are all relevantly similar (…), and hence it will indeed be common ground in the conversation that utterances of (say) '*a* is good' and '*a* is not good' would contradict each other". (López de Sa 2007: 276)

In a different paper López de Sa calls this assumption "presupposition of commonality" and assumes that it is a pragmatic presupposition in Stalnaker's sense (López de Sa 2008). He claims that evaluative predicates trigger the presupposition that the participants in the conversation are similar in the relevant respects (2008: 304). A pragmatic presupposition is a

speaker's assumption about what is accepted common ground in a given conversation[18]. Stalnaker writes that "it is part of the concept of presupposition that a speaker assumes that the members of his audience presuppose everything that he presupposes" (Stalnaker 1999: 85). Thus, López de Sa assumes that speakers engaging in exchanges concerning e.g. good or beauty presuppose that their interlocutors are like them with respect to standards of good or beauty that they accept. If the common ground does not include the presupposition, the utterance carrying it will not be felicitous, unless the participants in the conversation decide to accommodate it[19].

However, it has been argued that such a presupposition is not a pragmatic presupposition after all, because it fails linguistic tests for presuppositions. So, for instance, Baker (2012) mentions three tests that detect the presence of presuppositions. The first is "Hey, wait a minute test": "[i]f π is presupposed by S, then it makes sense for an audience previously unaware of π to respond to an utterance of S by saying "Hey, wait a minute, I didn't know that π". The second test is "…and what is more…" test, and says that "if S generates a presupposition that π, then it is infelicitous to follow S with "….and what's more, π". The third test says that "cancellation of presuppositions often sounds awkward and infelicitous". (Baker 2012: 117n) Baker gives the following examples to illustrate that the tests work in cases in which it is uncontroversial that presuppositions are present:

1. A: The mathematician who proved Goldbach's Conjecture is a woman.
   B: Hey, wait a minute. I had no idea that someone proved Goldbach's Conjecture.
2. *Sarah regrets smoking last night. And what's more, she smoked last night.
3. *John has stopped leaving towels on the floor, although he never left towels on the floor.

[18] It should be remembered that according to Stalnaker presuppositions are not really common *knowledge*: "the speaker need not even believe in them. He may presuppose any proposition that he finds it convenient to assume for the purpose of the conversation, provided he is prepared to assume that his audience will assume it along with him". Stalnaker (1999: 84).

[19] It's been noticed that on López de Sa's account all felicitous uses of aesthetic or moral predicates must carry a presupposition of commonality. Thus, if there is no such a presupposition in place, the use of such predicates is infelicitous or conversationally inappropriate. See e.g. Baker (2012: 116). It seems that it is too strong, however. López de Sa concentrates on such exchanges that might lead to faultless disagreement, but there is no reason to think that he excludes other felicitous uses of such predicates (e.g. "didactic" use, when a mother tries to convince her child that some meal is tasty or certain picture is beautiful; or "transcultural" usages where speakers from different cultures (not sharing common standards) try to explain what in their respective culture is considered tasty or beautiful, etc.).

According to him the tests demonstrate that the presupposition of commonality is absent in aesthetic judgements. The result of applying the first test to the utterance "Dubrovnik is beautiful" is infelicitous:

1. A: Dubrovnik is beautiful.
   B: *Hey, wait a minute. I had no idea that we were alike with respect to beauty-judgments.

Whereas, the results of applying the second and the third tests to this utterance are not as infelicitous as in the previous cases involving Sarah and John:

2. A (to B): Dubrovnik is beautiful. And what's more, we are alike with respect to beauty-judgments.
3. A (to B): Dubrovnik is beautiful, though we are not alike with respect to beauty-judgments (Baker 2012: 119-120)

In my view it is not clear whether the tests work for pragmatic presuppositions of the kind we are discussing here. Pragmatic presuppositions are borne primarily by the speakers not by the sentences (as Baker himself rightly observes (Baker 2012: 116)). Moreover, it might be argued that presupposition of commonality is more like a general presupposition that is always in the background and is not attached to any particular utterances, so the tests which attempt to pair utterances with their presuppositions and appeal to the feeling of awkwardness may not be reliable[20].

Having said that, I agree that "presupposition" might not be the best choice of name here. In my paper I suggested that instead of presupposition we should talk about an *expectation* that one's interlocutors will judge similarly as one (see Odrowąż-Sypniewska 2013b). This expectation has no bearing on the truth-value of one's utterances, but it results in the inclination to regard such exchanges as disagreements. Hazel Pearson proposes that it might be better to regard presumption of commonality not as a presupposition but as a

[20] Marques and García-Carpintero provide an example of a presupposition which has a purely pragmatic source and argue that the test work for it. See Marques and García-Carpintero (2014: 710-711). However, the presupposition they consider is a particular presupposition carried by a given sentence, not a general presupposition carried by all sentences of a given type (as it is the case with utterances concerning taste). It seems to me that presupposition of commonality is like a presupposition that gravity operates on Earth. It is often said that there is such a presupposition and yet it might be argued that the following exchange is not felicitous:

A: I dropped a vase and it broke.
B: #Hey, wait a minute, I didn't know that gravity operates here.

"pragmatic imperative to adopt the working assumption that interlocutors are alike in tastes" (Pearson 2013: 137).[21]

Bueken notices that there is also a recommending dimension to the judgements of taste: an invitation to adopt the same viewpoint (2011: 652).[22] In a similar vein Pearson argues that when I utter "This cake is tasty" I commit myself to finding the cake tasty but "I also generalize beyond my own experience to the likely experience of anyone with whom I empathize who might eat the cake and claim that they would find it tasty too" (2013: 121). Thus utterances involving predicates of personal taste are both first-person oriented and involve genericity: "To say that the cake is tasty is to say that the cake is tasty to every (contextually restricted) individual with whom I identify" (i.e. with whom I empathise) (Pearson 2013: 123).

This recommending dimension is more easily detectable in the case of predicates of personal taste but it seems to me that it is also present when we formulate judgements concerning borderline cases. Since there are no linguistic rules that would dictate how to treat a given borderline case, we have to make a decision on our own and once we make it, we expect others – whom we take to be sufficiently similar to us – to follow suit.

3.2. *Ad hoc*

It might be objected that my solution is entirely *ad hoc*, as there is no reason to postulate different contents for assertions concerning borderline and clear cases. In reply I'd like to refer to a recent paper by Christopher Kennedy. In this paper he distinguishes two types of subjectivity: subjectivity$_1$ associated with evaluativity and subjectivity$_2$, which is subjectivity related to the assessment whether or not an object meets a standard of satisfaction of a predicate (see Kennedy 2013). The first type is characteristic of evaluative predicates such as predicates of personal taste, whereas the second is characteristic of "dimensional" vague predicates such as "rich", "heavy" and "tall". Both kinds licence faultless disagreement, but only predicates interpreted in the evaluative way are acceptable under "find":

[21] She also remarks that this assumption involves a degree of pretence, because people often persist in arguing, even when they realized that they are not alike. See Pearson (2013: 137). Marques and García-Carpintero take the fact that even semantically enlightened speakers have the impression of disagreement to demonstrate that the appeal to the presupposition of commonality does not tell the whole story. See Marques and García-Carpintero (2014).

[22] Bueken appeals here to Kant who in his *Critique of the Power of Judgment* argued that when expressing an attitude one speaks with "a universal voice, and lays claim to the consent of everyone" (see Bueken 2011: 638).

I find this tasty.

?I find him tall.

The constructions like "I find him tall" are acceptable (Kennedy 2013: 9):

> "only to the extent that they can take on a subjective/evaluative understanding. When they are understood in a purely dimensional way, they are not acceptable, indicating that although vagueness can licence faultless disagreement, it is not sufficient by itself to licence acceptability under find"[23].

Kennedy (2013: 19) argues that

> "all gradable adjectives have some core meaning – say, a specification of a dimension of ordering or measurement (…) – which can be converted into right meaning (…) in one of two ways: either as a quantitative measure of an object relative to the appropriate dimension, or as a qualitative assessment of an object relative to the appropriate dimension".

The qualitative meaning adds a judge parameter to the circumstances of evaluation. According to Kennedy there are adjectives that are polysemous and have both interpretations ("heavy", "long", "salty", "sugary", "watery"), adjectives that are only qualitative (predicates of personal taste) and adjectives that are primary quantitative ("tall", "rich").

I would like to argue that the meaning of vague predicates (especially those that are unidimensional and measurable) is such that it is quantitative where clear cases are concerned, but becomes qualitative where borderline cases are involved. When Kennedy writes that predicates of personal taste are only qualitative he seems to have in mind predicates that are non-measurable and multidimensional and indeed most personal taste predicates are like that. It might be argued, however, that for those that are measurable and unidimensional there is also a quantitative interpretation if the cases under discussion are clear ones. Similarly predicates like "tall" and "rich" are primarily quantitative, but when their borderline cases are concerned the qualitative assessment comes into play. It is obvious that the distinction between tall and not tall, rich and not rich etc. is not purely objective and involves a

[23] Thus, "I find him too tall" is usually more acceptable than "I find him tall". See Kennedy (2013: 8-9). Kennedy also remarks that it is „a bit odd (though maybe not impossible) to talk about the subjective experience of the height manifested by a particular individual" (Kennedy 2013: 20). It is crucial for my account that such experience is not impossible.

subjective assessment of significance of the similarity/dissimilarity of the object under discussion to the paradigmatic cases[24].

Thus, I propose the following modification of Kennedy's hypothesis: all (unidimensional[25]) vague adjectives have some core meaning (specification of a dimension of ordering or measurement), which can be converted into right meaning in the following way: quantitative measure of an object relative to the appropriate dimension when clear cases of this adjective are involved, or qualitative assessment of an object relative to the appropriate dimension when borderline cases of this adjective are involved.

The content of assertions concerning clear cases and of those concerning borderline cases are different in a sense that the utterances containing relevant vague predicates must be evaluated at pairs <world, count-as> in the case of clear cases and at triples <world, count-as, judge/speaker> in the case of borderline cases.

4. Conclusion

My view combines indexical contextualism and nonindexical contextualism and postulates genuine and permissible disagreements just where we intuitively want them. The view proposed is partly indexical contextualism because it argues that the content of a given vague predicate changes with the cases in the sense that it is different for clear and borderline cases (more precisely, it is different for cases we take to be clear and cases we take to be borderline). I do not postulate indexical contextualism across the board, because the content does not change with each change of context. The change occurs only when we move from the clear cases to the borderline region. Nonindexical contextualism allows to avoid postulating precise and fixed once-and-for-all boundaries of the extensions of "*F*" and "*F*-to-me". Since circumstances of evaluation are ordered pairs consisting of a world and a count-as parameter, we might say that the place where the change occurs differs from context to context.[26]

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[24] Thus, for instance, Lasersohn writes: "Assessment of Bill is tall involves decision where to draw a line between tall and non-tall; it is not purely a matter of objective fact" (Lasersohn 2009: 366).

[25] And those multidimensional predicates that have clear and borderline cases.

[26] It is perhaps worth stressing that my account does not assume that we could not apply a vague predicate in its 'absolute' sense to a borderline case. We could, but if we do this, what we say is that the given borderline case is *F simpliciter*, i.e. *F* whatever the context, and hence no faultless disagreement is possible. The existence of faultless disagreements over borderline cases is evidence that speakers usually do not apply to them vague predicates in their 'absolute' senses. (Odrowąż-Sypniewska 2013b: 34).

The 'mixture' of indexical and nonindexical contextualism is better than each of the 'ingredients' because it makes it possible to postulate genuine disagreement concerning borderline cases and faultless disagreement concerning borderline cases. Admittedly, theorist who accepts indexical contextualism across the board might try to appeal to the presumption of commonality to explain the feeling of disagreement, but she will have to admit that no disagreement (no matter whether it concerns clear or borderline cases) is genuine. On the other hand, theorist who accepts nonindexical contextualism across the board will have to claim that all disagreements whether they concern clear or borderline cases are of the same kind. If he assumes that circumstances of evaluation are pairs <world, count-as>, then all disagreements are genuine, whereas if he assumes that circumstances of evaluation are triples <world, count-as, speaker>, then all resulting 'disagreements' are faultless.

On my view for clear cases "*F*" means "*F simpliciter*", so "*a* is *F*" and "*a* is not *F*" are contradictory and there is no faultless disagreement in those cases. If John is a clear case of a tall footballer and A says "John is tall" and B says "John is not tall", they genuinely disagree. In this context the count-as function assigns to the property of being tall the same intension it assigns to the property of being tall-for-a-footballer. Their disagreement can be resolved, since only one of them is right. For borderline cases "*F*" means "*F*-according-to-me", hence when A says "John is tall" and B says "John is not tall" their disagreement is *faultless* and they both might be right. The circumstances of evaluation consist of a triple <world, count-as, speaker> and only the first two elements of these circumstances have the same value. Their exchange counts as disagreement as long as the presumption of commonality (e.g. the expectation that one's interlocutors will judge similarly as one) is in place. Thus, I have to admit that disagreement in borderline cases is a disagreement only in a very weak sense. But I take it to be an advantage of my account. The task was to explain how "cognitively lucid, fully informed and properly functioning subjects may faultlessly differ about [borderline cases – J.O-S.]' (Wright 1992: 144[27]) and my view does just that[28].[29]

[27] See above.

[28] I have tried to motivate my account with an illustration of a unidimensional predicate of personal taste, namely "salty". It seems to me that the account I propose works well for both vague predicates which are not predicates of personal taste and unidimensional predicates of personal taste, because they have clear and borderline cases. As I have mentioned earlier, multidimensional vague predicates are subjective across the board and it might be argued that they have no clear cases. If this is so, then for such predicates all disagreement will be faultless.

[29] I presented earlier versions of this paper at APA Pacific Division 2013, CUNY colloquium, Yale seminar and Philang2015. I am grateful to the audiences and in particular to prof. Kirk Ludwig who commented on my paper at APA and to the anonymous referee for their comments and questions.

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