Tesis Doctoral

WAYS OF LIVING

The Semantics of the Relativist Stance

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A mi abuela Pepa

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Publications

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Summary

Relativism seems to be one of the main public enemies in modern democratic societies. From the intellectual sphere, philosophers and theologians alike alert against the rise of relativism as a danger that may put civilization into serious threat (see, for instance, Blackburn 2005; Ratzinger 2005). At the same time, the last fifteen years have seen the development, through lengthy technical discussions, of a family of theories in the philosophy of language that their own authors have happily deemed relativist (see, for instance, Kölbel 2002, 2004a; MacFarlane 2003, 2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2008, 2011b, 2014; Lasersohn 2005, 2009; Recanati 2007). Of course, these authors have strived to deny this accusation, mostly by distancing themselves from what has traditionally been called "relativism". This dissertation defends relativism in a different way.

I sympathize with these authors' insight that relativism is better understood as a semantic theory, and that it can be rendered by using tools not too far apart from those of standard semantics. The key intuition behind this idea, I think, is that accepting relativism does not necessarily mean having to renounce intellectual rigor. But one does not automatically renounce intellectual rigor when, for instance, one acknowledges that there is more to talk about the objectivity of science than appears to be at first sight. In the dissertation, I use the theoretical scaffolding contributed by authors such as MacFarlane and Lasersohn to defend some of the ideas from which the former, for one, wants to distance himself. Where MacFarlane, at least in principle, seems to aim at getting relativism rid of ideology, my purpose is in fact to make what is in part an ideological defense of a brand of relativism that can be put in his terms.

The task that I carry out in this dissertation is twofold. First, I intend to establish what it means to be a relativist. Second, once we know what being a relativist amounts to, I argue for becoming one. The first aim is achieved by first surveying a number of positions that have been called "relativist" and then trying to find out what they have in common. However, I suggest to keep the label "relativism" only for a subset of these theories. The second aim is pursued by following two different strategies. Relativism, as I said above, has been usually defended as a mere technical device that allows us to account for certain phenomena. I do this too, and showing how relativism can be applied to opaque belief ascriptions is my first strategy. But I think that relativism cannot be completely dissociated from the spirit that lies behind it, so my second strategy is to carry out an ideological defense of relativism.

Relativism in the philosophy of language, as I use the term in this dissertation, is the thesis that sentential truth is not a function of contexts of utterance: there is some information missing if we want to know whether the sentence "Black pudding is tasty", as uttered at context c, is true or false. What is missing, in particular, is a personal taste standard that cannot necessarily be retrieved from c. What gives us this personal taste standard is our context, the context that we who want to know the sentence's truth-value inhabit. This is what MacFarlane (2014) calls the *context of assessment*. Since an utterance is characterized by what sentence is uttered and at what context, another way of putting the relativist thesis is to say that utterance truth is relative.

We can distinguish two broad groups of arguments for relativism. The first group of arguments defends relativism as the most plausible explanation as to how language actually works. However, this dissertation's main focus is on arguments belonging to the second group. Once we are convinced that language behaves in a certain way, we might want to consider other possible ways in which it could work. This second family of arguments speaks against reforming our linguistic practices in these directions. In particular, among the variety of dimensions along which language should or should not work, this dissertation argues that it is right that language works in a certain way because, by doing so, certain values are promoted.

The argument, roughly sketched, is the following. Relativism implements a certain stance, which I call "the relativist stance". This is the kind of stance that one should adopt if one wants to act in accordance with values that democratic societies take to be worth pursuing, such as tolerance and progress. Hence, it is right that language works as depicted by relativism if we want to act in accordance with such values. Note, however, that I do not propose an error theory. I do not suggest to change the way we speak, because I think that, besides being the best theory about how language should work, relativism is also the best theory about how language actually works.

This argument presupposes that, if a theory implements the relativist stance, only that theory will do so. If two theories can be said to implement the relativist stance, they should be considered equivalent for the purposes of the argument. Throughout this dissertation, I consider two main alternatives to relativism: contextualism and expressivism. The conclusion is that contextualism does not implement the relativist stance, but some versions of expressivism do. This does not mean that the argument in this dissertation works any less, inasmuch as these versions of expressivism can be proven to be equivalent to relativism with respect to the aspects that interest us here.

The outline of this dissertation is carried out throughout six chapters. The one devoted to introducing the different varieties of relativism is chapter 2, in which I use three different phenomena to motivate three different families of relativist theories. The first phenomenon is the faultlessness of faultless disagreement (Kölbel 2002, 2004a; Wright 2006), which might lead us to embrace what is called "indexical contextualism" (see, for instance, Glanzberg 2007; Schaffer 2011). However, this form of relativism, even if able to accommodate the intuition of faultlessness that goes with faultless disagreement, fails to make justice to the second phenomenon—the fact that speakers characterize their exchange as a disagreement. The tools for achieving both things (characterizing the disagreement as faultless, and as a disagreement) at once can be found in the debate between *temporalism* and *eternalism*. Temporalism (see Prior 1957, 1967, 1969) is the view that some of our propositions are true or false only with respect to time, and eternalism (see Richard 1981) is the view that none is. Temporalism can

be extended to obtain a form of relativism without the shortcomings of indexical contextualism—nonindexical contextualism (Kölbel 2002, 2004a; Recanati 2007), according to which at least some of our propositions are true or false only with respect to parameters belonging to the *circumstances of evaluation* that are determined by the context of utterance. However, nonindexical contextualism seems to have problems when trying to account for the third phenomenon—retraction. The third form of relativism, MacFarlane's (2014) assessor relativism, is designed to overcome the problems of its predecessors. Some debate has been raised, though, as to which are the facts concerning retraction for which a theory should account (von Fintel & Gillies 2008; Ross & Schroeder 2013; Knobe & Yalcin 2014; Marques 2018). Finally, I introduce the two theories that complete the theoretical landscape of this dissertation: invariantism (Fantl & McGrath 2002; Hawthorne 2004; Stanley 2005) and expressivism (Gibbard 1990, 2003, 2012; Chrisman 2007, 2008, 2018; Yalcin 2007, 2011, 2012, 2018; Schroeder 2008a, 2008b; Bar-On & Chrisman 2009; Price 2011; Bar-On & Sias 2013; Price et al. 2013; Bar-On et al. 2014; Ridge 2014; Charlow 2015; MacFarlane 2016; Starr 2016; Willer 2017).

The names given in chapter 2 to indexical and nonindexical contextualism are in line with the second of the two characterizations that I offer in chapter 3, which also provides us with a nomenclature. This is a *strict* characterization, while the other is a *catch-it-all* one. The catch-it-all characterization takes all the reviewed forms of relativism to stem from challenging what I call "the Fregean picture" (see Frege 1979a: 135; 1967: 338-339; 1979b: 370); the strict one, for its part, would require us to keep the label for theories that challenge such picture in a particular way, i.e., by relativizing utterance truth. In this chapter, I introduce the Fregean picture and review the ways in which it can be challenged, which I link to different varieties of relativism. After this, I propose the strict characterization and introduce the nomenclature with which it provides us—a nomenclature that keeps the labels "indexical contextualism" and "nonindexical contextualism", and rebrands assessor relativism as "nonindexical relativism". This could suggest a theoretical space for a position called "indexical relativism", which I nonetheless discard as leading to implausible readings of certain sentences. For this reason, from this point on I use the label "relativism" to refer exclusively to nonindexical relativism.

I also argue for the strict characterization and prove its power in two different ways. First, I use it to answer to Stojanovic's (2007, 2012) claim that relativism and contextualism are notational variants of each other. During the discussion, I distinguish between relativism's semantic component, which can be indexical or nonindexical depending on whether the parameter is part of the proposition or part of the circumstances of evaluation, and its postsemantic component, which requires such parameter to be determined by the context of assessment. Second, I apply both the catch-it-all and the strict characterizations to three theories that were deemed relativist back in their days: Harman's (2013), Williams's (2006), and Perry's (1993). My task is to establish whether any of these theories is a variety of relativism according to the two characterizations. Since all of them are so only according to the catch-it-all one, I discuss how to classify them.

Once what is understood by "relativism" in this dissertation has been made clear, I offer an example of the way in which it has traditionally been argued for it. In particular, I propose to embrace relativism for a field to which it has not been applied before—opaque belief ascriptions. This is what I do in chapter 4. My treatment of opaque belief ascriptions, as should be expected from a nonindexical relativism, features both a semantic and a postsemantic component. On the one hand, the semantic component is responsible for the nonindexical part of the theory, i.e., it makes the truth-value of propositions expressed by opaque belief ascriptions depend on something that is not part of the proposition itself, but of its circumstances of evaluation. Seeing opaque belief ascriptions in this way can help us account for their most striking feature, i.e., opacity. Opacity has given rise to Frege's puzzle (see Jaszczolt 2009; Recanati 2009): if names refer to their bearers, substituting coreferential names in a sentence should not affect its truth-value, but this is precisely what seems to happen with opaque belief ascriptions. If in trying to account for opacity we introduce modes of presentation into the proposition expressed (Crimmins & Perry 1989; Recanati 2010), we will obtain undesirable results regarding semantic innocence, at least with respect to cross-attitudinal anaphora (see Bach 1997, 2000; Nelson 2014: 135) at the sentential level and iterated attitude ascriptions (see Barwise & Perry 1983; Salmon 1986; Saul 1998). One way to account for the difference in truth-value while keeping

semantic innocence, I suggest, is by becoming a nonindexicalist about opaque belief ascriptions. On the other hand, the postsemantic component in my treatment of opaque belief ascriptions is relativist in the sense favored in chapter 3: the context that is responsible for providing us with the relevant circumstances of evaluation is the context of assessment, as suggested by some cases of retraction that I discuss.

If the conclusion of chapter 3 is that relativism, in the sense preferred in this dissertation, is relevantly different from contextualism, the conclusion of chapter 5 is that the aspects that make us distinguish relativism from contextualism do not allow us to distinguish relativism from all versions of expressivism. However, relativism and expressivism have usually been taken to be contending theories. In particular, MacFarlane (2014: 172-175), on the one hand, and Frápolli & Villanueva (2015), on the other, have pointed out what they take to be insurmountable differences between the two theories. My point in this chapter is that what MacFarlane takes to be differences between relativism and expressivism are only so if we understand expressivism in a certain way, and what Frápolli and Villanueva take to be differences between relativism and expressivism are only so if we understand relativism in a certain way. In particular, MacFarlane claims that relativism and expressivism are different for two reasons. First, he says, expressivism cannot distinguish between thinking that licorice is tasty, on the one hand, and knowing licorice's taste first-hand and liking it, on the other (MacFarlane 2014: 173-174). Relativism, by contrast, can do this. Second, expressivism cannot make sense of retraction, while relativism can (MacFarlane 2014: 175). In the chapter, I argue that the claims that expressivism cannot distinguish the two mental states above and that it cannot account for retraction depend on an *internalist* interpretation of expressivism, but do not survive a *noninternalist* interpretation, which is the one that I recommend. Frápolli and Villanueva, for their part, claim that relativism and expressivism are different because the former features a bottom-up model for the individuation of content, while the latter features a top-down model. Against this, I argue that, although MacFarlane is indeed committed to a bottom-up model for the individuation of content, this is not an essential component of relativism. Thus, we can have a relativism that is not different from expressivism in this sense.

In the chapter, in fact, I sketch what a theory that combined both relativism's and expressivism's key insights would look like. This theory would, on the one hand, understand meaning as expressivism does, and on the other, make use of the context of assessment.

The characterization of relativism proposed in chapter 3 makes any theory that relativizes utterance truth a variety of relativism, and this is compatible with noninternalist expressivism, but not with contextualism. However, the fact that a theory relativizes utterance truth does not in itself constitute an argument for that theory. In chapter 6, I provide the reader with what is left in order to have such an argument. In particular, I say, any theory that relativizes utterance truth will be able to do a certain thing. This thing is implementing the relativist stance, the kind of stance that we ought to adopt if we want to act in accordance with values that democratic societies consider worth pursuing. The values with which the chapter deals are in particular tolerance and progress. This is an argument for any relativist theory, including theories that relativize utterance truth but also incorporate expressivism's key insights. According to the relativist stance (see Kusch 2019a,d), there is no privileged point of view, so nothing can be deemed true or false once and forever. The opposite attitude would be the *absolutist stance*. In the chapter, I argue that adopting the relativist stance, unlike adopting the absolutist one, allows us to embrace tolerance without relaxing our convictions (see Prinz 2007: 208), and answer to the accusation that the relativist stance is incompatible with progress by showing that, in fact, it is the only one that allows us to account for it without committing to a counterintuitive conception of truth. By giving too much weight to the speaker, both contextualism and noninternalist expressivism are incompatible with the relativization of utterance truth, which makes them unable to implement the relativist stance. The opposite thing happens with relativism and noninternalist expressivism.

Chapter 7 is presented as a conclusion that at the same time aims at tying up some loose ends. On the one hand, I revisit the approach to opaque belief ascriptions offered in chapter 4. This account seems to depict belief as a robust relation between an agent and a proposition, something that looks at odds with the claim in chapter 5 that the uses of language that are of interest for the relativist

do not serve to describe the world. Although the relational approach to belief makes it easier to introduce relativism about opaque belief ascriptions, in chapter 7 I show that a semantics more in the spirit of expressivism, such as Hintikka's (1962), can be enriched with assessment-sensitivity too. On the other hand, one might wonder of what use is truth if it can be relative. I address this question too, and show that relativism fits smoothly with a prosentential conception of truth such as the one defended by Frápolli (2013).

Resumen

El relativismo parece ser uno de los principales enemigos públicos en las sociedades democráticas modernas. Desde la esfera intelectual, tanto filósofos como teólogos alertan del surgimiento del relativismo como un peligro que amenaza seriamente la civilización (véanse, por ejemplo, Blackburn 2005; Ratzinger 2005). Al mismo tiempo, los últimos quince años han sido testigos del desarrollo, a través de largas discusiones técnicas, de una familia de teorías de filosofía del lenguaje que sus propios autores no han tenido problema en llamar relativistas (véanse, por ejemplo, Kölbel 2002, 2004a; MacFarlane 2003, 2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2008, 2011b, 2014; Lasersohn 2005, 2009; Recanati 2007). Por supuesto, estos autores han luchado por negar la acusación de suponer un peligro para la civilización, principalmente distanciándose de lo que tradicionalmente se ha llamado "relativismo". La defensa del relativismo llevada a cabo en esta tesis es diferente.

Simpatizo con la idea de estos autores de que el relativismo debe entenderse como una teoría semántica, y que se le puede dar forma usando herramientas que no distan mucho de las de la semántica estándar. La principal intuición detrás de esta idea, pienso, es que aceptar el relativismo no significa necesariamente tener que renunciar al rigor intelectual. Pero no renunciamos automáticamente al rigor intelectual cuando, por ejemplo, reconocemos que hay más que hablar sobre la objetividad de la ciencia de lo que parece a primera vista. En la tesis, uso el andamiaje teórico aportado por autores como MacFarlane y Lasersohn para defender algunas de las ideas de las que el primero, por poner un caso, quiere distanciarse. Allá donde MacFarlane, al menos en principio, parece pretender despojar el relativismo de ideología, mi propósito es de hecho llevar a cabo lo que es en parte

una defensa ideológica de una variedad de relativismo que puede ponerse en sus términos.

La tarea emprendida en esta tesis es doble. En primer lugar, determino qué significa ser relativista. En segundo lugar, una vez que sabemos en qué consiste, argumento a favor de hacerse relativista. El primer propósito se consigue revisando varias posiciones que se han llamado relativistas y tratando de encontrar qué tienen en común. Sin embargo, sugiero reservar la etiqueta para un subconjunto de estas teorías. El segundo propósito se persigue a través de dos estrategias diferentes. El relativismo, como dije arriba, se ha defendido a menudo como un mero instrumento técnico que nos permite dar cuenta de ciertos fenómenos. Yo también hago esto, y es mi primera estrategia mostrar cómo el relativismo puede aplicarse a las atribuciones opacas de creencia. Pero creo que el relativismo no puede ser completamente disociado del espíritu que lo anima; por tanto, mi segunda estrategia es llevar a cabo una defensa ideológica del relativismo.

El relativismo en filosofía del lenguaje, según uso el término en esta tesis, sostiene que la verdad no es una función de oraciones y contextos de proferencia: no tenemos toda la información si queremos saber si la oración "La morcilla está buena", proferida en un contexto *c*, es verdadera o falsa. Falta, en particular, un estándar de gusto personal que no necesariamente podemos extraer de *c*. Lo que nos proporciona ese estándar es nuestro contexto, el contexto de quienes queremos saber el valor de verdad de la oración. Esto es lo que MacFarlane (2014) llama *contexto de valoración*[1]. Puesto que una proferencia se caracteriza por qué oración se profiere y en qué contexto, otra forma de expresar la tesis relativista es decir que la verdad de las proferencias es relativa.

Podemos distinguir dos tipos de argumentos a favor del relativismo. El primer tipo de argumento defiende el relativismo como la explicación más plausible de cómo funciona de hecho el lenguaje. Sin embargo, el foco principal de esta tesis son argumentos que pertenecen al segundo grupo. Una vez en el convencimiento de que el lenguaje se comporta de cierta manera, podríamos querer considerar

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[1]Traduzco *assessment* como "valoración" y no como "evaluación" para mantener el contraste entre el contexto de valoración (*context of assessment*) y las circunstancias de evaluación (*circumstances of evaluation*).

otras formas en que podría funcionar. La segunda familia de argumentos se opone a reformar nuestras prácticas lingüísticas en cualquiera de estas direcciones. En concreto, de entre la variedad de dimensiones con respecto a las cuales podemos decir que el lenguaje debería funcionar o no, esta tesis defiende que es apropiado que el lenguaje funcione de cierta manera porque, al hacerlo, se promueven ciertos valores.

El argumento es esquemáticamente el siguiente. El relativismo implementa una cierta actitud, que llamo *actitud relativista*. Este es el tipo de actitud que debemos adoptar si queremos actuar de acuerdo con valores que las sociedades democráticas consideran dignos de perseguir, como la tolerancia y el progreso. Por tanto, es apropiado que el lenguaje funcione como predice el relativismo si queremos actuar de acuerdo con estos valores. Téngase en cuenta, sin embargo, que no propongo una teoría del error. No sugiero que cambiemos el modo en que hablamos, porque creo que, además de ser la mejor teoría acerca de cómo debería funcionar el lenguaje, el relativismo es también la mejor teoría sobre cómo de hecho funciona el lenguaje.

Este argumento presupone que, si una teoría implementa la actitud relativista, solo esa teoría lo hará. Si se puede decir que dos teorías implementan la actitud relativista, deberían considerarse equivalentes para los propósitos del argumento. A lo largo de esta tesis, considero principalmente dos alternativas al relativismo: el contextualismo y el expresivismo. La conclusión es que el contextualismo no implementa la actitud relativista, pero algunas versiones del expresivismo, a favor de las cuales argumento, sí. Esto solo significará que el argumento de esta tesis sea inválido en la medida en que no pueda demostrarse que estas versiones del expresivismo son equivalentes al relativismo con respecto a los aspectos que nos interesan aquí.

Esta tesis se estructura en seis capítulos. El dedicado a presentar las diferentes variedades de relativismo es el capítulo 2, en el que uso tres fenómenos diferentes para motivar tres familias de relativismo. El primer fenómeno es el desacuerdo sin falta (Kölbel 2002, 2004a; Wright 2006), que puede llevarnos a abrazar el llamado "contextualismo deíctico" (véanse, por ejemplo, Glanzberg 2007; Schaffer 2011). Sin embargo, esta forma de relativismo, aunque capaz de acomodar la intuición de

que no hay falta en el desacuerdo sin falta, no hace justicia al segundo fenómeno: el hecho de que ambas partes caracterizan su intercambio como un desacuerdo. Las herramientas que permiten conseguir ambas cosas (caracterizar el desacuerdo como sin falta y como un desacuerdo) al mismo tiempo pueden encontrarse en el debate entre el *temporalismo* y el *eternismo*. El temporalismo (véase Prior 1957, 1967, 1969) es la idea de que algunas de nuestras proposiciones son verdaderas o falsas solo con respecto a un tiempo, y el eternismo (véase Richard 1981) es la idea de que ninguna lo es. El temporalismo puede extenderse para obtener una forma de relativismo que carece de las desventajas del contextualismo deíctico: el contextualismo no deíctico (Kölbel 2002, 2004a; Recanati 2007), según el cual al menos algunas de nuestras proposiciones son verdaderas o falsas solo con respecto a parámetros pertenecientes a las *circunstancias de evaluación* que están determinados por el contexto de proferencia. No obstante, el contextualismo no deíctico parece tener problemas al tratar de dar cuenta del tercer fenómeno: el de la retractación. La tercera forma de relativismo, el relativismo del valorador de MacFarlane (2014), está diseñada para superar los problemas de sus predecesores. Ha habido algo de debate, no obstante, en torno a cuáles son los hechos con respecto a la retractación de los que una teoría debería dar cuenta (von Fintel & Gillies 2008; Ross & Schroeder 2013; Knobe & Yalcin 2014; Marques 2018). Finalmente, introduzco las dos teorías que completan el mapa de posiciones de esta tesis: el invariantismo (Fantl & McGrath 2002; Hawthorne 2004; Stanley 2005) y el expresivismo (Gibbard 1990, 2003, 2012; Chrisman 2007, 2008, 2018; Yalcin 2007, 2011, 2012, 2018; Schroeder 2008a, 2008b; Bar-On & Chrisman 2009; Price 2011; Bar-On & Sias 2013; Price et al. 2013; Bar-On et al. 2014; Ridge 2014; Charlow 2015; MacFarlane 2016; Starr 2016; Willer 2017).

Los nombres dados en el capítulo 2 al contextualismo deíctico y al no deíctico están en línea con la segunda de las dos caracterizaciones del relativismo que ofrezco en el capítulo 3, que también nos provee de una nomenclatura. Esta caracterización es *estricta*, mientras que la otra es *general*. La caracterización general entiende todas las formas de relativismo consideradas como resultado de desafiar lo que llamo *imagen fregeana* (véase Frege 1979a: 135; 1967: 338-339; 1979b: 370); la estricta, por su parte, requiere reservar la etiqueta para aquellas teorías que

desafían dicha imagen de una manera particular, a saber, relativizando la verdad de las proferencias. En este capítulo, presento la imagen fregeana y repaso las maneras en las que se ha desafiado, que conecto con diferentes variedades de relativismo. A continuación, propongo la caracterización estricta e introduzco la nomenclatura que la acompaña, una nomenclatura que mantiene las etiquetas "contextualismo deíctico" y "contextualismo no deíctico" y renombra el relativismo del valorador como "relativismo no deíctico". Esto podría sugerir la existencia de un hueco teórico para lo que llamo "relativismo deíctico", que, sin embargo, descarto por dar lugar a lecturas implausibles de ciertas oraciones. Por ello, a partir de este punto uso la etiqueta "relativismo" para referirme exclusivamente al relativismo no deíctico. Además, argumento a favor de la caracterización estricta y pruebo su potencia de dos maneras distintas. En primer lugar, la uso para responder a la afirmación de Stojanovic (2007, 2012) de que el relativismo y el contextualismo son variantes notacionales el uno del otro. Durante la discusión, distingo entre el componente semántico del relativismo, que puede ser deíctico o no deíctico según el parámetro forme parte de la proposición o de las circunstancias de evaluación, y el componente postsemántico, que exige que dicho parámetro esté determinado por el contexto de valoración. En segundo lugar, aplico tanto la caracterización general como la específica a tres teorías que en su momento se llamaron relativistas: la de Harman (2013), la de Williams (2006) y la de Perry (1993). Mi tarea es establecer si alguna de estas teorías es una variedad de relativismo de acuerdo con las dos caracterizaciones. Puesto que todas ellas lo son solo con respecto a la general, discuto cómo clasificarlas.

Una vez clarificado lo que se entiende por "relativismo" en esta tesis, ofrezco un ejemplo del modo en que se ha argumentado tradicionalmente a favor de él. En particular, propongo abrazar el relativismo no deíctico para un campo al que no se ha aplicado previamente: las atribuciones opacas de creencia. Esto es lo que hago en el capítulo 4. Como cabe esperar, el relativismo no deíctico con respecto a las atribuciones opacas de creencia involucra tanto un componente semántico como un componente postsemántico. Por un lado, el componente semántico es responsable de la parte no deíctica de la teoría, esto es, hace que los valores de verdad de las proposiciones expresadas por atribuciones opacas de creencia dependa de

algo que no es parte de la proposición misma, sino de sus circunstancias de evaluación. Ver de este modo las atribuciones opacas de creencia puede ayudarnos a dar cuenta de su rasgo más sobresaliente, esto es, la opacidad. La opacidad ha dado lugar al puzzle de Frege (véanse Jaszczolt 2009; Recanati 2009): si los nombres refieren a sus portadores, sustituir un nombre por otro con la misma referencia no debería afectar al valor de verdad de una oración, pero esto es precisamente lo que parece ocurrir cuando consideramos atribuciones opacas de creencia. Si tratando de dar cuenta de la opacidad introducimos modos de presentación en la proposición expresada (Crimmins & Perry 1989; Recanati 2010), obtendremos resultados indeseables con respecto a la inocencia semántica, al menos por lo que respecta a la anáfora transactitudinal (véanse Bach 1997, 2000; Nelson 2014: 135) al nivel de las oraciones y las atribuciones de actitud iteradas (véanse Barwise & Perry 1983; Salmon 1986; Saul 1998). Una forma de dar cuenta de la diferencia en valor de verdad mientras conservamos la inocencia semántica, sugiero, es la proporcionada por una semántica no deíctica para las atribuciones opacas de creencia. Por otro lado, el componente postsemántico de mi tratamiento de las atribuciones opacas de creencia es relativista en el sentido favorecido en el capítulo 3: el contexto que aporta las circunstancias de evaluación relevantes es el contexto de valoración, como sugieren algunos casos de retractación que discuto.

Si la conclusión del capítulo 3 es que el relativismo, tal como se entiende en esta tesis, es distinto en un sentido relevante del contextualismo, la del capítulo 5 es que los aspectos que hacen estas dos teorías diferentes no permiten distinguir el relativismo de todas las versiones del expresivismo. Sin embargo, el relativismo y el expresivismo se han entendido a menudo como teorías en competición. En particular, MacFarlane (2014: 172-175), por un lado, y Frápolli & Villanueva (2015), por otro, han señalado lo que consideran diferencias insuperables entre las dos teorías. Mi tesis en este capítulo es que lo que MacFarlane considera diferencias entre el relativismo y el expresivismo lo son solo si entendemos el expresivismo de una cierta forma, y lo que Frápolli y Villanueva consideran diferencias entre el relativismo y el expresivismo lo son solo si entendemos el relativismo de una cierta forma. En concreto, MacFarlane sostiene que el relativismo y el expresivismo son distintos por dos razones. En primer lugar, dice, el expresivismo no puede dis-

tinguir entre pensar que el regaliz está bueno, por un lado, y conocer de primera mano el sabor del regaliz y apreciarlo, por otra (MacFarlane 2014: 173-174). El relativismo, por el contrario, sí que puede hacerlo. En segundo lugar, el expresivismo no puede dar cuenta de la retractación, mientras que el relativismo sí (MacFarlane 2014: 175). En el capítulo, argumento que las afirmaciones de que el expresivismo no puede distinguir entre los dos estados mentales anteriormente mencionados y de que no puede dar cuenta de la retractación dependen de una interpretación *internista* del expresivismo, pero no sobreviven a una interpretación *no internista*, que es la que recomiendo. Frápolli y Villanueva, por su parte, sostienen que el relativismo y el expresivismo son diferentes porque el primero involucra un modelo de abajo a arriba de individuación del contenido, mientras que el segundo involucra un modelo de arriba a abajo. Contra esto argumento que, aunque es cierto que MacFarlane se compromete con un modelo de abajo a arriba de individuación del contenido, este no es un componente esencial del relativismo. Por tanto, podemos tener un relativismo que no sea distinto del expresivismo en este sentido. En el capítulo, de hecho, esbozo la imagen que resultaría de combinar el relativismo y el expresivismo no internista. Esta teoría entendería, por un lado, el significado como lo hace el expresivismo, y, por otro, haría uso del contexto de valoración.

La caracterización del relativismo propuesta en el capítulo 3 convierte en relativista cualquier teoría que relativice la verdad de las proferencias, algo que es compatible con el expresivismo no internista pero no con el contextualismo. Sin embargo, el hecho de que una teoría relativice la verdad de las proferencias no constituye en sí mismo un argumento a favor de esa teoría. En el capítulo 6, proporciono las piezas que faltan para completar un argumento. En concreto, sostengo que cualquier teoría que relativice la verdad de las proferencias será capaz de implementar la actitud relativista, el tipo de actitud que debemos adoptar si queremos actuar de acuerdo con valores que las sociedades democráticas consideran dignos de perseguir. Los valores concretos que trato en el capítulo son la tolerancia y el progreso. Este es un argumento a favor de cualquier teoría relativista, incluyendo aquellas teorías que relativicen la verdad de las proferencias pero también incorporen las ideas clave del expresivismo no internista. Según la actitud relativista (véase Kusch 2019a,d), no existe un punto de vista privilegiado,

de modo que de nada puede decirse que sea verdadero o falso de una vez y para siempre. La actitud contraria sería la *actitud absolutista*. En el capítulo, defiendo que adoptar la actitud relativista, a diferencia de la absolutista, permite abrazar la tolerancia sin que por ello tengamos que relajar nuestras convicciones (véase Prinz 2007: 208) y contesto a la acusación de que la actitud relativista es incompatible con el progreso mostrando que, de hecho, nos proporciona la única forma de dar cuenta de él sin comprometernos con una concepción poco intuitiva del concepto de verdad. Al dar el peso que dan a quien habla, tanto el contextualismo como el expresivismo internista son incompatibles con la relativización de la verdad de las proferencias, lo que los hace incapaces de implementar la actitud relativista; lo contrario ocurre con el relativismo y el expresivismo no internista.

El capítulo 7, finalmente, se presenta como una conclusión que, al mismo tiempo, pretende atar algunos cabos sueltos. Por un lado, retomo el acercamiento a las atribuciones opacas de creencia ofrecido en el capítulo 4. Este tratamiento parece caracterizar la creencia como una relación entre agente y proposición, lo que parece en conflicto con la afirmación llevada a cabo en el capítulo 5 de que los usos del lenguaje que interesan al relativismo no sirven para describir el mundo. Aunque el enfoque relacional con respecto a la creencia hace más fácil introducir el relativismo sobre las atribuciones opacas, en el capítulo 7 muestro que una semántica más acorde con el espíritu del expresivismo, como es la de Hintikka (1962), puede también enriquecerse con la sensibilidad a la valoración. Por otro lado, uno podría preguntarse para qué sirve la verdad si puede ser relativa. Me enfrento también a esta cuestión, y muestro que, si bien hay muchas concepciones distintas de la verdad que son compatibles con el relativismo, este encaja de forma natural con una concepción prooracional de la verdad como la defendida por Frápolli (2013).

Chapter 1

Introduction

> This is *relativism*, the anthropologist's heresy, possibly the most absurd view to have been advanced even in moral philosophy. ([Williams 1972](): 20)

Relativism seems to be one of the main public enemies in modern democratic societies. In the quote above, Williams deems it absurd, but we would not have to be worried if that were all. There are plenty of absurd but otherwise harmless philosophical positions. Relativism, by contrast, is taken to be not only absurd but also dangerous: Blackburn deems it a "dehumanizing" ([Blackburn 2005](): 69) "perversion" ([Blackburn 2005](): 139) on a par with cynicism ([Blackburn 2005](): xiii), and calls relativists "abusers of their own minds and enemies to ours" ([Blackburn 2005](): 139) who, although "at first blush a tolerant, relaxed, laid-back, pluralistic kind of person, can suddenly seem to be a kind of monster" ([Blackburn 2005](): 68). Just to give another example, this time from the religious side, shortly before he became Pope Benedict XVI, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger delivered a homily in which he identified our age as that of the "dictatorship of relativism" ([Ratzinger 2005]()). Thus, relativism seems to have really bad press among intellectuals, whether philosophers or theologians.

While this trend of antirelativism has kept going on, the last fifteen years have seen the development, through lengthy technical discussions, of a family of theories in the philosophy of language that their own authors have happily

deemed relativist. Philosophers such as Kölbel (2002, 2004a,b, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2015a,b,c), MacFarlane (2003, 2005a,b, 2007, 2008, 2011a,b, 2012, 2014), Lasersohn (2005, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2017), and Recanati (2007, 2008), among others, take their theoretical contributions to be implementations of relativism. Are these formal theories a danger to civilization too?

Of course, these authors have strived to deny this accusation, mostly by distancing themselves from what has traditionally been called "relativism". The strategy is then to claim that the relativism they defend has nothing in common with the relativism everyone should fear except its name. For instance, in the preface to his influential[1] *Assessment Sensitivity: Relative Truth and Its Applications*, John MacFarlane confesses that he would have never expected to write a book defending relativism. This, he says, is because he assumed that relativism goes hand in hand with "the kind of postmodernist skepticism about the objectivity of science that the physicist Alan Sokal lampooned in his famous hoax article for *Social Text*" (MacFarlane 2014: v). By the time of writing the book, however, he claims to have understood that one can be a relativist without committing to the nonobjectivity of science, or to postmodernism.

This dissertation is an attempt to put relativism in context, to explore its consequences and to suggest new fields to which it can be applied. In particular, MacFarlane's being the state-of-the-art version of the theory as of today, the implementation of relativism that I will defend is his. As a defense of relativism, however, it is different from MacFarlane's, and from those of authors such as the ones mentioned above. I sympathize with these authors' insight that relativism is better understood as a semantic theory,[2] and that it can be rendered by using

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[1]As witnessed by the 594 quotations the book has in Google Scholar, as compared to Allan Gibbard's *Meaning and Normativity*'s 165, François Recanati's *Mental Files*' 285, and Jason Stanley's *How Propaganda Works*' 248, all of them highly discussed works from around the same time.

[2]Calling MacFarlane's relativism in particular a semantic theory requires taking some licenses. Strictly speaking, as we will see, MacFarlane takes his contribution to belong to postsemantics (MacFarlane 2014: 58), and I too will render relativism so that it cannot be characterized in purely semantic terms. However, for the time being I am using the word "semantics" in a loose way, so that any systematic theory in the philosophy of language that makes use of semantic values will provisionally count as a semantic theory.

tools not too far apart from those of standard semantics. The key intuition behind this idea, I think, is that accepting relativism does not necessarily mean having to renounce intellectual rigor. But one does not automatically renounce intellectual rigor when one acknowledges that there is more to talk about the objectivity of science than appears to be at first sight, or when one rejects such a devious tag as "postmodernism". I want to use the theoretical scaffolding contributed by authors such as MacFarlane and Lasersohn to defend some of the ideas from which the former, for one, wants to distance himself. Where MacFarlane, at least in principle, seems to aim at getting relativism rid of ideology, my purpose is in fact to make what is in part an ideological defense of a brand of relativism that can be put in his terms.

I contend that contemporary relativist semantics shares with classical relativism more than a name, and that the explanatory power of this semantics can be used as an argument to favor classical relativist intuitions. Relativist semantics is not a mere technical device, totally deprived of ideology, whatever the people who have proposed it claim. It is instead a technical implementation of some deep intuitions that are part of a way of seeing the world that I think we should adopt—a way of seeing the world that favors democratic values.

The aim of this dissertation is twofold. First, I intend to establish what it means to be a relativist. Second, once we know what being a relativist amounts to, I argue for becoming one. The first aim is achieved by first surveying a number of positions that have been called "relativist", and then trying to find out what they have in common. However, I will suggest to keep the label "relativism" only for a subset of these theories. The second aim is pursued by following two different strategies. Relativism, as I said above, has been usually defended as a mere technical device that allows us to account for certain phenomena. I will do this too, and showing how relativism can be applied to opaque belief ascriptions will be my first strategy. But I think that relativism cannot be completely dissociated from the spirit that lies behind it, so my second strategy will be to carry out an ideological defense of relativism. This is this dissertation's *leit motiv*—a move that should come as a surprise only if we ignore the fact that many rejections of relativism actually obey to ideological reasons.

In this introduction, I sketch the kind of theory that will be defended in this dissertation and present the conceptual tools that are needed in order to understand what the theory proposes, its differences with other theories and the arguments for it that I will offer. This will include introducing notions such as those of proposition, context, circumstance of evaluation, and standard of evaluation.

Relativism, as it will be finally characterized in this dissertation, is a kind of theory in the philosophy of language that has it that the propositions that we express through at least certain uses of language are not true or false *simpliciter*—they are true or false only with respect to a given parameter, and the context at which they are expressed is not enough to determine the value of this parameter. We will understand what this means in due time. But first, let me make clear what I mean by "certain uses of language". What are the uses on which relativism focuses its attention? This is what I try to answer in section 1.1.

1.1. The descriptive, the evaluative, and the normative

Relativism tells us that at least some propositions have a certain property—the context at which they are expressed is not enough to deem them true or false. By the end of this introduction, it will be clear what this means. But first, let us ask: specifically, what uses of language are those that according to relativism express propositions with this property? In this section, I try to answer this question by suggesting a taxonomy of uses of language and proposing relativism to apply to some of them, and not necessarily to others.

If we say that at least some propositions are such that the context at which they are expressed is not enough to deem them true or false, this is compatible both with only a specific set of uses of language expressing propositions that behave in this way, and with all uses of language doing so. In the former case, only the propositions expressed by a certain set of uses will need something beyond the context at which they are expressed to be called true or false. This set of uses will approximately coincide with those involving specific expressions, such as "tasty" and "ought". In the latter case, all uses will express propositions whose truth-value depends on something beyond the context of utterance. In particular, this

will be the case even for any utterance of "Black pudding is made out of pork". We might want to call the first version of relativism "local relativism", and the second one, "global relativism".[3]

I say that, in a local relativism, the set of sentences suitable for a relativist treatment will *approximately* coincide with those containing specific expressions because this dissertation is not concerned with linguistic expressions *per se*, but with uses of language. The same sentence can be used both in a way that calls for a relativist treatment and in a way that does not, depending on the role that its utterance plays in a specific conversational context. Thus, even if we are local relativists, we can imagine a context in which "Black pudding is made out of pork" is used in such a way that the proposition expressed is better seen as requiring more than the context at which it is expressed to be deemed true or false.

The areas of language with which relativists occupy themselves are sometimes called "the evaluative" or "the normative". Both fields are usually introduced in opposition to the descriptive. Where the evaluative ends and the normative begins, though, is hard to ascertain, and the labels have frequently been used interchangeably. Intuitively, we can say that a standard use of "Black pudding is made out of pork" is descriptive, while one of "Black pudding is tasty" is evaluative and one of "You ought to try black pudding" is normative. While it seems obvious that there is no evaluation in a standard use of "Black pudding is made out of pork", nor does it have to do with norms, it is harder to claim that norms play no role in the meaning of "Black pudding is tasty", or that there is no evaluation involved in "You ought to try black pudding". Predicates such as "tasty" are usually presented as evaluative, while operators such as "ought" are more often than not presented as normative.

The latter fact could lead us to think that, in general, the evaluative concerns first-order predicates, while the normative concerns higher-order operators. We use predicates such as "tasty" to *evaluate* worldly objects, such as black pudding, while predicates like "ought" tell us something about predicables. This is what

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[3]Frápolli (2019a) makes a similar classification when she distinguishes between global, local, and term-focused expressivism, drawing on Price's (2011) distinction between global and local expressivism.

seems to lie behind Chrisman's claim that "evaluative terms rarely embed whole propositions" ([Chrisman 2018](): 417), where propositions can be understood as ze-roadic predicables. For Chrisman, "good" is an evaluative term too, even if in many cases it does not apply to worldly objects but to actions; still, actions are not whole propositions. The difference between the evaluative and the norma-tive might thus seem to be more of a syntactic difference than one that concerns whether evaluation or norms are involved or not. In any case, we might want to keep the distinction as a way of classifying nondescriptive expressions into two groups. "Tasty" and "good" would belong to the evaluative field, while "ought" and (for instance) "know" would belong to the normative field. The distinction, even if it were merely syntactic, would be important to determine whether certain proposals that are intended to cover all the nondescriptive field are really apt only for one of the two categories. But we can still state it in terms that are not merely syntactic. A promising strategy to draw the line is based on the idea that, even if norms play a role in the meaning of "Black pudding is tasty", in uttering that sentence we are not saying that it follows from any norm that black pudding is tasty—we are not talking about the norm itself. "You ought to try black pudding", for its part, does not necessarily have any valence, whether positive or negative. It can be used to convey a positive evaluation, a negative one, or none. In this sense, "You ought to try black pudding" does not by itself involve any particular evaluation.

This dissertation is a defense of local relativism. I will argue that we should see how the evaluative and normative areas of language work in a relativist way,[4]

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[4]A reasonable worry might be this. I take relativism to apply to the evaluative and the normative, but one of the traditional areas for which contemporary relativism has been proposed is that of future contingents (a classical place is [MacFarlane]() ([2003]()), and the proposal there is improved in [MacFarlane]() ([2008]())). Future contingents are sentences such as "There will be a sea battle tomorrow", that is, sentences that may be true or false and whose truth-value will not be known before some point in the future. Future contingents are the kind of area of language that pumped relativist intuitions in the first place (see e.g. [Ockham 1969]()) and led to the development of relativism as we now know it; however, if "There was a sea battle yesterday" is clearly a description, there seems to be no reason to think that we are doing something different just by shifting tense. How does this match with the claim that relativism is concerned only with evaluative and normative uses of

not that we should see language as a whole as working in this way. In particular, I will neither defend relativism about the descriptive nor argue that the descriptive is also evaluative or normative. However, this does not mean that I will argue against such claims either. My defense of local relativism does not imply a rejection of global relativism. I will only argue for seeing the evaluative and the normative in a relativist way, but this does not exclude seeing the descriptive in this way too. Also, as suggested by my talk of descriptive, evaluative and normative uses rather than descriptive, evaluative and normative expressions, I would not want to preclude the possibility of defending relativism for a class of sentences featuring expressions that have traditionally been thought of as descriptive, but can sometimes be used in an evaluative or normative way.

Once we know to what areas of language relativism applies, the next step is to ask what it says about them. Understanding this is the aim of chapters 2 and 3, but I will advance the relativist thesis in section 1.3. Before that, however, we should first acquaint ourselves with some of the concepts that will be involved in stating such thesis. To this I devote the next section.

1.2.   Some preliminary notions

In this section, I introduce some notions that will be used in stating the relativist thesis. In particular, I characterize propositions, contexts, circumstances of evaluation, and standards of evaluation. I close with some words as to whether a commitment to any particular conception of truth is needed as well.

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language?

A tentative answer would be that, in cases like this, shifting tense does turn a description into a different thing—in particular, an evaluation. When we utter a future contingent, we use the information that we have about how the world is to assess possible future histories it could have, and we commit to one of them's being actual. This is not that different from an epistemic evaluation, for instance. Thus, it is possible to defend that future contingents, although looking like descriptions, are actually evaluations, which would allow us to still say that relativism applies only to the evaluative and the normative. However, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to argue at length for the view that future contingents belong to the evaluative.

1.2.1.   Proposition

The first notion that will play a key role in this dissertation is that of *proposition*. Its importance makes itself clear as soon as we acknowledge the way in which relativism in the philosophy of language is usually defined—as the view that some of our propositions belong to a certain kind. This is the one formed by relativized propositions, which have also received other names throughout the years. Thus, relativism is the view that at least some of the propositions we express are relativized propositions. Of course, there still remains the question as to what it is for a proposition to be relativized, and surveying the different answers given to that question, and arguing for one of them, is the aim of chapters 2 and 3. But another question that should be answered before addressing this one is what can be understood by "proposition".

Following Frápolli (2019b), I will take propositions to be the contents of assertions and beliefs, and the things we ordinarily deem true or false. Propositions might in this sense be understood as abstract objects that we use to characterize assertions and beliefs, in a way that is similar to how we use numbers to characterize physical magnitudes (Churchland 1979: 105; Field 1981: 113–114; Dennett 1982: 7–8; Stalnaker 1987: 8). For instance, on the one hand, if I say "Black pudding is tasty" and you say "That is true", the reference of "that" is a proposition: the proposition that black pudding is tasty. It is this proposition that you are deeming true in saying "That is true", and also the one that you are taking to be the content of my assertion of "Black pudding is tasty". On the other hand, if I say "Sharing is good" and you say "That's what I believe too", the reference of "that" is again a proposition: the proposition that sharing is good. It is this proposition that you are saying you believe in when you say "That's what I believe too". Propositions are then whatever you are referring to in saying "That is true" and "That's what I believe too". Propositions are whatever we ordinarily deem true or false, and whatever serves as the content of our assertions and beliefs. It is a separate question, though, what the things that actually play these roles are, if anything does.

It is part of the characterization of propositions that will play a role in this

dissertation that they are the contents of assertions and beliefs, and the things we ordinarily deem true or false. I will say other things about propositions throughout these pages; however, they will not be meant to characterize them, but to ascribe further properties to whatever falls within such characterization. In particular, I will assume throughout the dissertation that the contents of assertions and beliefs, and the things we ordinarily deem true or false, are the primary bearers of truth, but not the meanings of declarative sentences. In chapter 5, I will also claim that they are unstructured entities. This will be fully developed when the time comes. In what follows, I elaborate a little on my other two assumptions.

Propositions are not the meanings of declarative sentences. A sentence does not by itself give us a proposition—it actually does not give us even part of it. To see what sentences' partially giving us propositions would mean, consider the following. One can assume that a sentence such as "I am sitting" only yields a full proposition when the context provides us with a value for the indexical "I", i.e., the person who speaks at such context. In this sense, once we know the meaning of a sentence, we will still be halfway to getting a complete proposition. But this is only part of the story. What proposition is expressed through the utterance of a sentence depends on the function that the utterance is serving, and sentences can be used in ways that differ greatly from their literal meaning (see Recanati 2010). I will take it that propositions are the meanings of complete declarative speech acts, but not of declarative sentences by themselves. Once this has been taken into account, the content of an assertion (that is, the proposition expressed, the way I have defined propositions) will be its meaning.

Propositions are the primary bearers of truth. It is of propositions that we predicate the properties of truth and falsity in the first place, as stated in the definition above. When we say things like "That is true", it is a proposition that is referred to by "that". This does not mean that there are no other uses of truth, that is, that truth and falsity cannot be predicated of other kinds of entities. We can say, to take a very obvious case, that, when uttered in a particular context, sentences too can be said to be true or false. My claim that propositions are the primary bearers of truth is not meant to deny this, if only because the claim is that propositions are the *primary* bearers of truth, not the *only* ones. Thus, it is per-

fectly fine to say that the sentence "Black pudding is made out of pork", as uttered in a particular context, is a true sentence, that is, that it has the property of being true. In discussing these matters, we just have to be aware that, when we say that a sentence-in-context is true, we are saying that it is so in a derivative way. To say that a sentence-in-context is true is to say that it bears the appropriate relation with a true proposition; in particular, that it *expresses* a true proposition. When uttered in an appropriate context, "Black pudding is made out of pork" is a true sentence because it expresses the proposition that black pudding is made out of pork, which is a true proposition, and this is all it means for "Black pudding is made out of pork", as uttered in that context, to be a true sentence. I will assume that, if we can predicate truth or falsity of a certain kind of entity, that kind of entity can have the properties of truth or falsity. This is a somewhat deflationary notion of what having a property consists in that allows us to avoid the conclusion that, while truth and falsity can be predicated both of propositions and of sentences, only the former can have the properties of truth and falsity. Were we to follow that conclusion, we would have to say that propositions are not only the primary bearers of truth, but also the only genuine ones. But I want to claim that sentences are bearers of truth too, if only in a derivative way.

Relativism is at some points characterized as the view that truth is relative—that whether something is true or false depends on something else. Nevertheless, this characterization leads us to the one in terms of propositions as well, for propositions are the primary bearers of truth, as I have said. This means that any other thing with a truth-value (such as a sentence or a belief) will have it in virtue of standing in an appropriate relation to a proposition. The core idea behind relativism, then, is that the truth of propositions is relative, which amounts to saying that some propositions have a particular property—that of being truth-relative. In which sense propositions have to be truth-relative to support relativism is the question that, as advanced before, I aim at answering in chapters 2 and 3.

1.2.2. Context and circumstance of evaluation

Another notion that will play a major role in stating what this dissertation is about is that of *context*. This notion, along with that of circumstance of evaluation, will be characterized in detail in subsections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2, where I will also provide the reasons for keeping both notions instead of trying to reduce one to the other. For now, let us say that a context is an occasion at which a certain act takes place (see Kaplan 1989: 494; Lewis 1980a: 79). Contexts of utterance, for instance, are the situations that speakers inhabit when they utter a certain sentence, and contexts of assessment are the situations that agents inhabit when they consider whether a certain proposition is true or false. Contexts are responsible for supplying both the references of indexical expressions and the circumstances of evaluation of propositions, the notion that I will define next.

The *circumstances of evaluation* of a proposition are the n-tuples of separately shiftable parameters with respect to which it is possible to ask whether a proposition is true or false (see Kaplan 1989: 502). I will take the circumstances of evaluation of a proposition to be *indices*, in a special sense of the term. As originally defined, an index is an n-tuple of separately shiftable parameters that can be retrieved from a context (Lewis 1980a: 79). The values for these parameters do not necessarily have to go together in any possible context: as Lewis says, "an index might consist of a speaker, a time before his birth, a world where he never lived at all, and so on" (Lewis 1980a: 79). Some propositions are true with respect to an index but not with respect to another. For instance, the proposition that I am here is true with respect to an index that includes the present time, but it might be false with respect to an index that differs from that one with respect to time. What coordinates a particular index includes depends on the proposition whose truth-value we are evaluating with respect to that index. If the proposition does not involve perspectival expressions, for instance, the index will not feature a personal taste standard. In other words, a personal taste standard is not metaphysically required, as a world is (see Recanati 2002: 305–306). Thus, not all indices have the same number of coordinates.

Historically, only parameters that can be shifted by actual operators that we

have in language have been considered part of indices. But, as Perry's Z-landers'
case shows (Perry 1993; see subsection 2.3.2), some of our propositions could be
true or false only with respect to parameters of which we are not aware and for
which, in consequence, we lack operators.[5] However, it is reasonable to expect for
these operators to become available as soon as we learn that the truth of some of
our propositions depends on those parameters. Indices should thus be enriched
so that they can feature any parameter with respect to which our propositions
could be true or false, whether or not we have at the present time an operator
that can shift that parameter. Thus defined, the circumstances of evaluation of a
proposition are the indices with respect to which it is possible to ask whether that
proposition is true or false.

   As I said above, I will explain in subsection 2.3.2 why we cannot dispense
neither with contexts nor with circumstances of evaluation. Let me advance the
reasons here though. On the one hand, we cannot make it with contexts alone
because, in accounting for the behavior of intensional operators such as "It used
to be the case that", we need parameters to vary independently from one another,
while, for instance, the world, time and place of a context are compatible only
with one agent—the one who is at that time and place in that world. On the
other hand, we cannot make it with circumstances of evaluation alone because
we can never give a full list of the parameters that define a context—two contexts
can always differ with respect to a parameter of which we were not aware (see
Lewis 1980a: 79;[6] Perry's 1993 Z-landers' case can also be seen as supporting an
argument to this effect). An additional reason for keeping the two notions apart is

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   [5] Perry (1993: 215) claims that our propositions *concern* only those parameters of which we are
not aware, whereas I will apply the term to circumstances of evaluation in general. This means
that I will also apply the term to what Perry calls "unarticulated constituents", i.e., parameters on
which we are aware that the truth of the proposition depends but which are not designated by any
subsentential expression.

   [6]Lewis' indices do not include parameters that cannot be shifted by the operators that are avail-
able at the present time, so that the index, in Lewis' sense, with respect to which we evaluate the
truth of a proposition might lack coordinates that appear in the circumstances of evaluation as
understood here. However, this difference is irrelevant to Lewis' argument for keeping indices as
well as contexts, which can thus be used to argue for the necessity of having both contexts and
circumstances too.

that the values that a context provides for the circumstances of evaluation are not necessarily those that figure in the *index of the context*: the personal taste standard determined by the context of assessment might not be that of the assessor, but the one that is relevant at that context, whether or not the assessor endorses it (see Recanati 2007: 6).

1.2.3.   Standard of evaluation

Among the list of parameters that might get into the circumstances of evaluation, we have mentioned epistemic standards and personal taste standards. *Standard* is the last of the notions that I set myself to clarify in this section. It makes sense to say that some uses of language are true with respect to one standard and false with respect to another. This happens with uses that involve gradable adjectives such as "tall" (see Kennedy 2007): we can say that people are tall if what matters is whether they can work as flight assistants but not if we are wondering whether they could be basketball players. Some gradable adjectives are multidimensional (see Kamp 1975; Klein 1980; Bierwisch 1989; Sassoon 2013), and some of them carry evaluations. For instance, we can say that a dish is tasty according to a given personal taste standard but not according to another. Lastly, not all uses of language whose truth-value depends on standards involve adjectives: we can say that someone knows that p according to ordinary standards, but not according to sceptic standards. It is reasonable to assume in these cases, as I have done in the previous pages, that standards are part of the circumstances of evaluation.

It is important to note that speakers do not have to be entirely consistent in the application of their standards. For instance, my preferences do not necessarily have to be transitive: I may prefer licorice to fish sticks along a certain dimension and fish sticks to black pudding along another dimension that makes me prefer black pudding to licorice, and the standard that sanctions these preferences is still describing my personal taste. Also, speakers do not have to be conscious of the standards they have—my personal taste standard is not an entity I look at whenever I want to know whether to like a given thing, but the standard that approves of the things I like. In this sense, standards are individuated by what

they sanction. This conception of the relation between standards and evaluations is akin to Kinzel & Kusch's (2018) conception of the role of rules in what they call "situated judgments". Their view is that "situated judgments fix the content of the rules, not rules the content of situated judgments" (Kinzel & Kusch 2018: 58).

Lastly, applying a standard does not require that there is something that the standard puts over anything else. A standard just has to tell us, for a sufficient number of pairs of things, which thing ranks higher than the other, but not which of all the things ranks the highest. Personal taste standards, if they are determined by our dispositions to like or dislike, do not give us a value for the definite description "the thing I like most in the world". They just tell us whether a certain dish is tastier than another one, and not always. Moral standards, if they are determined by our dispositions to approve or disapprove, do not give us a value for the definite description "the most moral thing to do". They just tell us whether a given course of action is preferable to another one, and again, not always.

Besides standards, I have characterized propositions, contexts, and circumstances of evaluation. However, one might find a characterization missing—that of truth, a notion that also plays a role in explaining what the relativist claims. This is intended, for I take my proposal to be independent from any particular understanding of this notion. In fact, whereas "proposition", "context", and "circumstance of evaluation" are all technical terms, we deem things true or false in ordinary discourse too. My point in this dissertation should be compatible with many different conceptions of what we do when we say things like these. Nonetheless, I think my proposal fits especially well with a particular conception of truth, one that we could call "prosentential". I will introduce this conception and connect it with relativism as we approach the end of this dissertation, in section 7.3.

Once propositions, circumstances of evaluation, contexts and standards have been defined, we can characterize what relativism says. This is the aim of the next section.

1.3. What is relativism?

With standards, the list of notions that we need to characterize what relativism says is now complete. However, characterizing relativism is a task that will ask for two whole chapters of this dissertation—chapters 2 and 3. What I aim at doing in this section is to advance the characterization at which we will arrive at the end of chapter 3, so that we can get a sense of the kind of theory for which I will argue.

Relativism in the philosophy of language, as I will use the term in this dissertation, is the thesis that truth is not a function of sentences and contexts of utterance. An alternative way of putting this thesis is by saying that a sentence's truth-value is not a function of the context of utterance—it is not enough to supply a context of utterance in order to know what a sentence's truth-value is. This way of talking commits us to the idea that *sentences* have truth-values, even if they do so only in a relative way. As stated in subsection 1.2.1, it is a contentious matter whether truth is the kind of thing that can be predicated of sentences, but the position in this dissertation will be that sentences, although not the primary bearers of truth, are truth bearers anyway.

So, relativism will be the thesis that sentential truth is not a function of contexts of utterance: there is some information missing if we want to know whether the sentence "Black pudding is tasty", as uttered at context c, is true or false. What is missing, in particular, is a personal taste standard that cannot necessarily be retrieved from c. What gives us this personal taste standard is our context, the context that we who want to know the sentence's truth-value inhabit. This is what MacFarlane (2014) calls the *context of assessment*. Once we take the context of assessment into account, we can say that the sentence "Black pudding is tasty" is true if black pudding is tasty according to the personal taste standard that is relevant at our context, and false if black pudding is not tasty according to that same standard.

Since an utterance is characterized by what sentence is uttered and at what context, another way of putting the relativist thesis is to say that utterance truth is relative. This is the simplest way of stating the relativist thesis: different truth-

values might be compatible with the same utterance (sentence and context of utterance), and we need to supply more information if we want to choose among them. This could be explained by making what proposition is expressed depend on the context of assessment, or by making propositional truth-values relative to contexts of assessment. Although I will discuss the first option in section 3.3, I will opt for the second one and say that, even if an utterance expresses only one proposition, this proposition is true or false only with respect to the context of assessment. However, both options are compatible with characterizing relativism in terms of utterance truth. One could reject this move by claiming that, like sentences, utterances do not have truth-values in a genuine sense (see MacFarlane 2014: 47–49). But, as we did with sentences, we can talk about utterances' having truth-values in a derivative way, that is, in virtue of being the acts through which we express propositions that have truth-values in a primary sense, even if they are relative to a context of assessment. So, propositions are still the primary bearers of truth, and we can characterize relativism in terms of utterance truth.

What distinguishes relativism from other alternatives is better stated by explaining how it accounts for faultless disagreement and retraction, two phenomena that will be thoroughly addressed in chapter 2. Let me characterize them here briefly, though. In some situations, on the one hand, I can say "Black pudding is tasty" and you can say "Black pudding is not tasty", and it seems hard to say that any of us is wrong. Relativism allows us to make sense of this intuition by claiming that our utterances are not true or false by themselves, but only with respect to a context of assessment; in particular, my utterance is true for me but false for you, while your utterance is false for me but true for you. This phenomenon is called "faultless disagreement" (Kölbel 2002, 2004a, 2008; Wright 2006), and is usually used to argue for relativism, although other theories, such as nonindexical contextualism (see section 2.3), seem to be able to account for it as well.

On the other hand, if I now say "Black pudding is tasty" but later change my mind and no longer take it to be tasty, relativism allows us to make sense of the fact that I can retract my previous utterance. The utterance, although true as assessed from the original context, is false from the context at which retraction takes place. The phenomenon of retraction is, in fact, what MacFarlane uses to

introduce his particular brand of relativism and what distinguishes it from other alternatives (MacFarlane 2014: 108).

The relativist thesis that utterance truth is relative is not intended to apply to all utterances. Thus, the kind of relativism defended here is what I called a "local" relativism in section 1.1. Those utterances that belong to the evaluative or the normative will not have a truth-value by themselves, but it does not follow from the commitments in this dissertation that utterances in the descriptive field are truth-relative too. However, as stated in section 1.1, I will take no stance as to descriptive utterances not being truth-relative either. This dissertation is neutral in this respect.

This is relativism, the kind of theory for which this dissertation is aimed at arguing. How in particular the argument will proceed will be summarized in the next section.

1.4. The argument

We can distinguish two broad groups of arguments for relativism. The first group of arguments defends relativism as the most plausible explanation as to how language actually works. An argument belonging to this group would typically take the special behavior of sentences including a certain expression and hypothesize the assessment-sensitivity of such sentences as the feature that explains such behavior. An example of this model of argument will be found in chapter 4, in which I will argue that relativism can be used to account for the special features of opaque belief ascriptions.

However, this dissertation's main focus is on arguments belonging to the second group. Once we are convinced that language behaves in a certain way, we might want to consider other possible ways in which it could work. This second family of arguments speaks against reforming our linguistic practices in these directions. There is a variety of dimensions along which language should or should not work. On the one hand, we can say that it is appropriate that language works in a certain way because this makes it more efficient. MacFarlane (2014: chapter 12), for instance, argues that it is fine that certain areas of language

are assessment-sensitive because this makes them serve the purpose they are intented to fulfill in a more efficient way. This is how he replies to the accusation that, even if some areas of language are indeed assessment-sensitive, we should reform the way we talk about those matters ([MacFarlane 2014](): 305). On the other hand, we can say that it is right that language works in a certain way because, by doing so, certain values are promoted. This dissertation is concerned with the latter kind of considerations. I will defend the way in which relativism predicts language to work as being in accordance with certain values that we take to play a role in democratic societies.

The argument, roughly sketched, is the following. Relativism implements a certain stance, which I will call "the relativist stance". This is the kind of stance that one should adopt if one wants to act in accordance with values that democratic societies take to be worth pursuing, such as tolerance and progress. Hence, it is right that language works as depicted by relativism if we want to act in accordance with such values. Most of this dissertation will thus be devoted to showing that relativism in fact implements the relativist stance and arguing for such stance as the one to adopt. Note, however, that I am not proposing an error theory. I am not suggesting to change the way we speak, because I think that, besides being the best theory about how language should work, relativism is also the best theory about how language actually works. I am in fact arguing against those who might claim that, even if we talk as relativists, we should reform our language so that we cease to do so. Sometimes, this will be argued by claiming that our democratic values require us not to be relativists. But, precisely, I contend that democratic values should help us see that language works in a relativist way.

This argument presupposes that, if a theory implements the relativist stance, only that theory will do so. If two theories can be said to implement the relativist stance, they should be considered equivalent for the purposes of the argument. Throughout this dissertation, I will consider two alternatives to relativism: contextualism and expressivism. (Although I will also mention invariantism, it will receive much less attention than the other two theories.) The conclusion will be that contextualism does not implement the relativist stance, but some versions of expressivism do. This does not mean that the argument in this dissertation works

any less, inasmuch as these versions of expressivism can be proven to be equivalent to relativism with respect to the aspects that interest us here. Thus, I also argue for a kind of theory that can be deemed a variety of both relativism and expressivism.

On our way to relativism via the relativist stance, I will also make other contributions. First, a characterization of relativism that covers all the theories that have been deemed so will be advanced. Then, I will defend another one that, although leaving out some varieties of relativism, I find more useful. As advanced above, I will also propose a relativism about opaque belief ascriptions. Finally, I will argue for the particular variety of expressivism that can be taken to be equivalent for our purposes to relativism, which I will call, drawing inspiration from Frápolli (2019a), "noninternalist expressivism".

This outline will be carried out throughout six chapters. In the next section, I explain how the content of this dissertation is distributed among them.

1.5. Plan of the dissertation

In this dissertation, I first characterize relativism and then offer an argument for it. More in detail, I start out by surveying the different families of theories that have been labeled "relativism". Then, I argue that it is possible to give a characterization of relativism that covers all of them, but propose to adopt an alternative characterization that, although more useful, applies only to a subset of the families. The rest of them, inasmuch as they are relevantly different from the kind of theory in which we are interested here, will remain varieties of contextualism. I then apply relativism to opaque belief ascriptions as an illustration of how traditional arguments for relativism go. Next, I argue that, unlike contextualism, expressivism is not necessarily different from relativism with respect to the aspects that are relevant for this dissertation. Finally, I show that these aspects correlate with a theory's capacity for implementing the relativist stance and offer some arguments for such stance, and hence, for relativism as well as for some varieties of expressivism.

As advanced above, this plan is carried out throughout six chapters. The one

devoted to introducing the different varieties of relativism is chapter 2. In it, I first use three different phenomena to motivate three different families of relativist theories. The first phenomenon is the faultlessness of faultless disagreement, which might lead us to embrace what is called "indexical contextualism" (section 2.1). The second one is the fact that faultless disagreement is a kind of disagreement. The kind of theory that is proposed as a response to it is nonindexical contextualism. To introduce it, I first present the debate between temporalism and eternalism (section 2.2), and then develop temporalism into nonindexical contextualism (section 2.3). The third phenomenon is retraction, which motivates assessor relativism (section 2.4). However, not only how to best account for this phenomenon, but also what the phenomenon exactly is has been subjected to discussion, as I show in this same section. Finally, I complete the theoretical landscape by introducing the two remaining theories that will play a role in this dissertation: invariantism and expressivism (section 2.5).

The names given to indexical and nonindexical contextualism are in line with the second of the two characterizations that I offer after the survey, which also provides us with a nomenclature. This is given in chapter 3. The first characterization takes all the reviewed forms of relativism to stem from challenging what I call "the Fregean picture", but I propose another one that would require us to keep the label for theories that challenge such picture in a particular way. In section 3.1, I introduce the Fregean picture and review the ways in which it can be challenged, which in section 3.2 I link to different varieties of relativism. In that same section, I propose the alternative characterization, according to which only some of the reviewed varieties are varieties of relativism. This characterization opens a theoretical space for what I will call "indexical relativism", which I discuss in section 3.3. I argue for the second characterization in section 3.4. In this chapter, I also prove the power of my final characterization by using it to show (in section 3.5) that relativism and contextualism are not notational variants of each other, and by applying it to some classical theories that were in their moment proposed as relativisms (section 3.6).

Once what is understood by "relativism" in this dissertation has been made clear, I offer an example of the way in which it has traditionally been argued for it.

In particular, I propose to embrace relativism for a field to which it has not been applied before—opaque belief ascriptions. This is what I do in chapter 4. There, I first present the problem that I aim at solving by proposing my relativism about opaque belief ascriptions: Frege's puzzle (section 4.1). Then, I show the problems that contemporary contextualist theories seem to have when trying to solve this puzzle (section 4.2). I introduce the semantic component of my relativism about opaque belief ascriptions, which is a form of nonindexicalism (section 4.3), and show how it would deal with the problems that its alternatives face (section 4.4). Finally, I discuss to which of the different kinds of relativisms pointed out in chapter 3 this account would belong. I do so by taking into account the phenomenon of retraction, which is the one that allows us to establish which theories are not only nonindexical but also relativist in the sense preferred in this dissertation. This sense is related with the postsemantic component of the theory (section 4.5).

In chapter 5, I compare relativism and expressivism. To do so, I first offer a neutral characterization of expressivism (section 5.1). The traditional picture about the relation between this kind of theory and relativism, according to which they are incompatible with each other, is presented in section 5.2, after which I argue (in section 5.3) that some of the alleged differences between the two theories stem from understanding expressivism in an internalist way. I offer the alternative to internalist expressivism, noninternalist expressivism, in section 5.4, and argue that, understood in this way, expressivism is not that different from relativism. In section 5.5, I argue that another alleged difference between the two theories arises only if we attribute relativism a bottom-up model for the individuation of content, something that we do not necessarily have to do. In section 5.6, finally, I sketch the picture that would result from combining relativism and noninternalist expressivism.

In chapter 6, I complete the argument for relativism around which this dissertation revolves. Remember that the argument is the following: the relativist stance is the one to adopt if we want to act in accordance with values that democratic societies consider worth pursuing, so theories that are able to implement such stance, such as relativism and noninternalist expressivism, are the ones that best describe how language should work. In section 6.1, I refresh the positions

that have been discussed so far. In section 6.2, I offer a picture of the antirelativist trend in modern thinking. I contrast this trend with the relativist stance in section 6.3, and argue for it in section 6.4. I link the relativist stance to relativism and noninternalist expressivism, but not to the rest of the theories, in section 6.5. In section 6.6, finally, I review some other arguments for relativism that bear similarities with the one here.

Chapter 7 is presented as a conclusion that at the same time aims at tying up some loose ends. After summarizing the dissertation's outcome in section 7.1, I devote section 7.2 to making the account of opaque belief ascriptions offered in chapter 4 compatible with expressivism, and section 7.3 to discussing which concept of truth fits best with the relativization argued for throughout these pages.

Chapter 2

Relativism: Some varieties

Relativism is the topic of this dissertation. However, a number of positions have been called "relativism" over the last years. Is "relativism" an ambiguous term, having different meanings depending on the context? Or are all the theories to which the term is applied members of a same family? At first glance, it seems plausible to maintain that all instances of relativism are committed to some thing or other's being relative (see Haack 1996: 297). For instance, moral relativists claim that what is good and what is wrong are relative, and relativists about future contingents claim the same thing about what will happen tomorrow.

I think that the intuition that relativist theories form a homogeneous class is essentially correct, especially when it comes to theories in the philosophy of language, the field to which this dissertation belongs. In the next chapter, I offer a way of characterizing what makes a theory within the philosophy of language deserve to be called "relativist", one that covers all and only theories that have been historically deemed so. This general characterization builds upon the intuition that all instances of relativism claim that some thing or other is relative. Thus, I do not think that "relativism" is necessarily an ambiguous term. I think that, when one says that both Recanati's (2007) and MacFarlane's (2014) theories are varieties of relativism, one is using the word in only one sense.

This, however, does not mean that this should be the *preferred* sense of "relativism". Although this general characterization allows us to make sense of the

historical fact that both Recanati's (2007) and MacFarlane's (2014) theories have been deemed so, this is not the only thing we may want to ask from a characterization. I think it is more useful to reserve the name only for some of these theories, and, in the next chapter, I also present a second, specific characterization in line with this spirit.

Before offering my two characterizations, one general and the other specific, I devote this chapter to surveying the theories to which they are intended to apply. Such survey will be guided by the debate about how we can best account for some phenomena concerning sentences featuring certain terms. In particular, the aim will be to accommodate faultless disagreement and retraction. I start with what is called "indexical contextualism",[1] and then move on to nonindexical contextualism, and finally to MacFarlane's (2014) assessor relativism. All these theories fall under the first characterization that I offer in the next chapter. My second characterization, by contrast, will be one according to which, out of all the reviewed theories, only assessor relativism is true relativism.

In section 2.1, I characterize the phenomenon of faultless disagreement and introduce the first historical form of relativism, which comprises indexical contextualism, as a way to account for it. However, this form of relativism, even if able to accommodate the intuition of faultlessness that goes with the phenomenon, fails to make justice to the fact that speakers characterize their exchange as a disagreement. The tools for achieving both things (characterizing the disagreement as faultless, and as a disagreement) at once can be found in the debate between temporalism and eternalism, which I present in section 2.2. Temporalism is the view that some of our propositions are true or false only with respect to time, and eternalism is the view that none is. Temporalism can be extended to obtain a form of relativism without the shortcomings of indexical contextualism—nonindexical

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[1]Here I will be using the label "contextualism" to refer to those theories according to which the context responsible for supplying the parameter required to yield a truth-value, whether such parameter is part of the proposition or part of the circumstances of evaluation (see section 2.3), is the context of utterance. This sense of "contextualism" diverges from the one embraced by e.g. Recanati (2002), who defines contextualism as the view that there is no level of meaning that is both truth-evaluable and unaffected by top-down factors (Recanati 2002: 303).

contextualism, which I introduce in section 2.3. However, nonindexical contextualism seems to have problems when trying to account for the phenomenon of retraction, as explained in section 2.4. There, I also introduce the third form of relativism—MacFarlane's assessor relativism, which is designed to overcome the problems of its predecessors. Some debate has been raised, though, as to which are the facts concerning retraction for which a theory should account. I review this debate too. In section 2.5, finally, I introduce the two theories that complete the theoretical landscape of this dissertation: invariantism and expressivism.

2.1. Faultlessness, and indexical contextualism

The first family of so-called relativist theories that I want to review is indexical contextualism. Indexical contextualism can be motivated as a theoretical explanation of a certain phenomenon—faultless disagreement. These theories seem able to explain the special features of this kind of dispute; however, they fall short of explaining what they have in common with more ordinary ones, i.e., what makes them actual disagreements. This is the problem of *lost disagreement* (see e.g. Kölbel 2004a; Chrisman 2007; MacFarlane 2007, 2014; Baker 2012; Marques 2014). In this section, I first characterize faultless disagreement and use it to motivate indexical contextualism in the way sketched above. Then, I review a couple of contemporary theories that can be classified as varieties of indexical contextualism. Finally, I develop the aforementioned objection to this kind of view.

2.1.1. Faultless disagreement

In the debate on which this chapter focuses, indexical contextualism is presented as trying to explain the special features of a kind of disagreement. We can disagree about many different things. Think about black pudding. Suppose, first, that *A* says "Black pudding is made out of pork". If *B* replies "No, it isn't", it seems clear that at least one of them must have made a mistake. It would be enough to look at black pudding's elaboration process to know who. Black pudding cannot be made and not made out of pork at the same time, so if *A* is right, *B* is wrong; and if *B* is right, *A* is wrong. But there are other things that can be said about

black pudding that are not like being made out of pork—for instance, whether it is tasty. Consider the following dialogue. *A* and *B* are at a restaurant and they are looking at the menu, trying to choose a starter that they can share. They say:

(D)   *A*: Black pudding is tasty.
       B: No, it isn't.

In this case, things do not seem as easy as they were in the previous one. *A* and *B* can both have a right to say what they say, and it is not clear in which sense at least one of them has to have made a mistake. Moreover, it is hard to imagine a fact that could settle their dispute, something that was easier to do when they discussed black pudding's ingredients.

Disagreements such as (D) above are "faultless disagreements" (Kölbel 2002, 2004a, 2008; Wright 2006). In (D), it seems possible to say that none of the speakers is at fault if no mistake is involved in their saying what they say, hence the name chosen for the phenomenon. When discussing black pudding's ingredients, by contrast, at least one of the speakers has to be at fault. It has been discussed whether there is such a thing as faultless disagreement. Some authors (see, for instance, Stojanovic 2007) have argued that, as long as there is no fault in the exchange, it cannot count as a disagreement. I will briefly return to this issue in subsection 2.1.3. For the time being, however, I will leave this discussion aside and assume that it makes sense to talk about faultless disagreement, and that it is something for which we should expect a theory to account.

2.1.2.   Indexical contextualism

One way to account for the difference between being made out of pork and being tasty is this. Consider *A*'s contribution to (D):

(1)   Black pudding is tasty.

We can say that, when *A* utters (1), what she is really saying is that black pudding is tasty for her. When *B*, for her part, says "No, it isn't", she is saying that black pudding is not tasty for her. It is thus possible that none of them has

made a mistake, since there is no incompatibility in black pudding's being tasty for *A* but not for *B*. This is the intuition that lies behind indexical contextualism.

There are at least two ways in which the personal taste standard can get into the proposition if we become indexical contextualists about "tasty". First, we can say that sentences including such predicate of personal taste, like (1), feature a *hidden indexical*. To understand what a hidden indexical is, let us first introduce Kaplan's (1989) distinction between *content* and *character*. Both content and character are kinds of meaning, but the character of an expression is given by linguistic conventions, while its content is given by the character together with the context. An indexical is thus an expression whose character is a rule that provides a content determined by the context (Kaplan 1989: 505). For instance, "I" is an indexical whose character tells us to assign the speaker as its content—if Obama says "I like black pudding", the content of "I" is Obama. In a similar way, according to some forms of indexical contextualism, "Black pudding is tasty" features a hidden indexical that has a personal taste standard as its content. Thus, although "tasty" may seem a monadic predicate, it really is a dyadic predicate when we look at its logical form. The extra argument place can be made explicit, as when one says "Black pudding is tasty for most people, but not for me". In this case, we could either say that the extra argument place is filled, or that it is bound by a quantifier (see Stanley 2000, 2002). But, if none of these two things happen, it is the context that provides us with a value.

Although we can trace back the origin of the label "indexical contextualism" to theories according to which the personal taste standard is the value of a hidden indexical (hence the name of this family of theories), this is not the only way in which the standard can get into the proposition. The second path that indexical contextualist theories can follow requires not an obligatory process, such as the one triggered by indexicals, but an optional one—a free enrichment process for which no particular linguistic expression, but the whole sentence, is responsible (see Recanati 2010). In making the proposition contain a personal taste standard that depends on the context of utterance, these theories would be varieties of indexical contextualism even if they make no use of indexicals. Alternatively, we could reserve the label for theories that use hidden indexicals to explain how the

standard becomes part of the proposition, such as Stanley's (2000, 2002).

However the personal taste standard gets into the proposition, we still need to know how to determine which standard to pick from the context as part of it. A straightforward proposal, and a common option among indexical contextualists, is that the personal taste standard to be introduced is that of the speaker of the context (Glanzberg 2007; Stephenson 2007; López de Sa 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011; Schaffer 2011; Sundell 2011, 2016). But in general, indexical contextualisms about predicates of personal taste are just theories according to which the personal taste standard is determined by the context at which the sentence is uttered. The personal taste standard is not necessarily that of the speaker, for the context could determine it to be that of an ideal judge, or that of most people in the community, etc. For Harman (2013) and Dreier (1990), for instance, the relevant standard is one shared by the speaker and the hearer.

Along with predicates of personal taste, indexical contextualism has also been proposed as the correct theory to account for the behavior of other expressions, such as the epistemic modals "must" and "might" (Schaffer 2011). Here, however, I will stick to how some of these theories would analyze our sentence (1) and how this would make them able to explain the special features of disagreements such as (D). In particular, I will focus on Glanzberg's (2007) and Schaffer's (2011) proposals.

Glanzberg (2007) defends what Hirvonen (2014: 105) has called a "flexible contextualism", according to which predicates of personal taste have to be analyzed along the lines of gradable adjectives. An example of a gradable adjective is "tall". The semantic value of "tall" is a function that takes an individual as its argument and yields a grade within a height scale. Gradable adjectives are context-dependent in regard to two different aspects (Kennedy 2007). First, the context determines the comparison class. A schoolkid may be tall for her age, but not for a basketball player; thus, when we say that she is tall, the relevant comparison class is that of kids her age. Second, the context determines the threshold: how tall one has to be in order to be considered tall. In the case of sentences involving predicates of personal taste, according to Glanzberg, the personal taste standard of the speaker is the component of the context responsible for determining the

threshold,[2] and such standard is part of the content (Glanzberg 2007: 15). This is what makes it possible for us to consider Glanzberg's flexible contextualism a form of indexical contextualism. In (D), *A* and *B* have different personal taste standards, and this results in different thresholds. Even if black pudding is assigned the same grade of tastiness according to the scales of both speakers, the different thresholds may be such that it is tasty enough to count as tasty for *A*, but not for *B*. Glanzberg's flexible contextualism thus makes us able to explain faultless disagreement.

Schaffer (2011), for his part, defends a "meaning perspectivalism" in which personal taste standards (perspectives, in his own terms) play a semantic role as to which proposition is expressed through sentences involving personal taste predicates (Schaffer 2011: 180). Again, saying that something plays a semantic role as to which proposition is expressed amounts to saying that it is part of such proposition. Thus, Schaffer's meaning perspectivalism is a form of indexical contextualism. As such, it can make sense of (D) by claiming that each speaker's perspective is part of the proposition expressed, so that it is possible that neither *A* nor *B* have made a mistake.

2.1.3.   Is there such a thing as faultless disagreement?

I have reviewed two versions of indexical contextualism. The problem with such theories, which led to the proposal of other forms of relativism, is the following. It is true that indexical contextualism accounts for the possibility that, in disputes such as (D), none of the parties is making a mistake. However, it seems unable to account for the fact that (D) is a dispute. If what *A* is saying is that black pudding is tasty for her and what *B* is saying is that black pudding is not tasty for her, what are they arguing about? This is Moore's "What's at issue?" argument (Moore 1993: section 11; see also Gibbard 2003: 23–29). "Black pudding isn't tasty for me", as uttered by *B*, is not the negation of "Black pudding is tasty for me", as uttered by *A*. If what we claim is that *B* is saying that black pudding is not

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[2]Glanzberg (2007: 10) also takes the personal taste standard to fix a scale among the several ones that a multidimensional adjective such as "tasty" might select.

tasty for *A*, then first, we seem to have introduced a crucial modification into indexical contextualism, for the personal taste standard built into the proposition is no longer that of the speaker; and second, we are implausibly changing what the disagreement is about. (D) is not a disagreement about whether black pudding is tasty for *A*. It is a disagreement about whether black pudding is tasty, period.

We face two options. On the one hand, as advanced before, we can claim that there is no such thing as faultless disagreement. For instance, Stojanovic (2007) would claim that (1) can be interpreted in two different ways: as an expression of the personal taste of the speaker (as in "I find black pudding tasty"), or as a description of the taste of the majority of the judges (as in "Most people find black pudding tasty"). If interpreted in the first way, there is no fault on either part, but there is no disagreement either. If interpreted in the second way, there is disagreement, but one of the parties has to be wrong, for either the majority of the judges find black pudding tasty, or they do not. In a similar way, Iacona (2008) claims that disputes can either be interpreted objectively, in which case they are not faultless, or subjectively, in which case they are not instances of disagreement.

If, on the other hand, we think that faultless disagreement is a phenomenon that deserves an explanation, we need to account for the presence of a disagreement while still being able to explain why none of the parties in it seems to be making a mistake. To do so, we need to accommodate the possibility that both speakers are affirming or denying the same thing. What is asserted or denied is a proposition. Hence, *B* must be denying the same proposition that *A* is asserting when she utters (1). To account for the possibility that none of them has made a mistake, we must allow for propositions to be evaluated relative to different parameters—in this case, different personal taste standards. If we do so, we can claim that the proposition that black pudding is tasty is true for *A* but false for *B*, so that *A* can assert it while *B* denies it without any of them having made a mistake.

The tools for achieving this can be found in temporalism, a position about the semantics of tensed sentences. In the next section, I review the debate between temporalism and a position closely resembling indexical contextualism for tense—eternalism, according to which tensed sentences express propositions that

include the time of utterance. Temporalism, by contrast, makes the truth-value of these propositions relative to time. After introducing temporalism, we will be able to transform it into a kind of relativism (nonindexical contextualism) that can account for disagreements such as (D) by relativizing propositions not to time, but to other parameters, such as personal taste standards.

2.2. Temporalism and eternalism

Indexical contextualism seems able to account for the faultlessness of faultless disagreement, but not for the fact that it is a kind of disagreement. In order to be able to account for both things, nonindexical contextualists claim, we need for propositions to be susceptible of being affirmed or denied relative to different parameters. In the case of (D), the parameter would have to be of the same kind as the one that went into the proposition in the indexical contextualist account of such disagreement—a personal taste standard. This, which may sound like an original and risky move, acquires a different dimension when we look at the work that has been done since the 50s for a different parameter: time.

The position that has it that propositions can be affirmed at one time and denied at a different one is called "temporalism". Temporalism is an extension of the intuitions behind Prior's (1957, 1967, 1969) temporal logics,[3] in which temporal operators do not function as referential expressions, but rather as adverbs. Presenting the debate between temporalism and eternalism (the position resembling indexical contextualism about time) will allow me to explain how they work. This is what I do in this section. In the next one, I characterize nonindexical contextualism as a generalized version of temporalism.

2.2.1. The positions

To establish the contrast between temporalism and eternalism, let us consider sentence (2) first:

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[3]This insight is compatible both with nonindexical contextualism and with assessor relativism, which will be introduced in section 2.4. However, to my knowledge, assessor relativism has not been proposed for tense.

(2)   Donald Trump is not the president of the USA.

It is natural to say that sentence (2) expressed something true in 2009, while it expresses something false in 2019. However, we can give two different explanations as to why this happens: the *temporalist* and the *eternalist* one. The temporalist, on the one hand, thinks that (2) expresses a proposition p that was true in 2009 and is false in 2019. The eternalist, on the other hand, thinks that (2) expressed a proposition in 2009, and a different one in 2019, the first being true, the second false. For the temporalist, (2) expresses a proposition that can change its truth-value over time. These propositions are called "temporal". For the eternalist, however, the proposition expressed by (2) at each time is true or false once and forever. We will say that, for the eternalist, (2) expresses an eternal proposition.

According to what has been said up to now, we can propose the following definitions:

> **Temporal proposition:** A proposition is a temporal proposition iff its truth-value changes with respect to time.

> **Eternal proposition:** A proposition is an eternal proposition iff its truth-value keeps constant with respect to time.

Hence, for the eternalist, what proposition is expressed will change depending on the time at which (2) is uttered. Let us call the speaker who utters (2) in 2009 and in 2019 "S". According to the eternalist, the proposition that S expresses in 2009 is the same that she would have expressed by uttering the following sentence:

(3)   Donald Trump is not the president of the USA in 2009.

This proposition is always true—it is true in 2019 too that Donald Trump was not the president of the USA in 2009. For this reason, because it expresses an eternal proposition, we say that (3) is an eternal sentence. However, according to the eternalist, when S utters (2) in 2019, the proposition she is expressing is the same proposition that she would express if she uttered the following sentence:

(4) Donald Trump is not the president of the USA in 2019.

Now we have a proposition that is always false—it was already false in 2009 that Donald Trump would not be the president of the USA in 2019. (4) is an eternal sentence too, for the truth-value of the proposition it expresses is the same independently of the time with respect to which we assess it. Hence, for the eternalist, (2) expresses a true proposition in 2009, whereas it expresses a different, false proposition in 2019. For the temporalist, by contrast, (2) expresses the same proposition both in 2009 and in 2019, but this proposition was true in 2009 and is false in 2019. This is how the temporalist and the eternalist explain that (2) expresses something true in 2009 and something false in 2019.

Sentences that express eternal propositions, as I have said, are eternal sentences. If we also say that sentences that express temporal propositions are temporal sentences, we can say that the eternalist thinks that all our sentences are eternal, while the temporalist considers that at least some of them are temporal, for they express propositions whose truth-value is relative to time.

2.2.2. The arguments

There are several arguments that may make one opt for eternalism or temporalism. An argument for eternalism, due to Richard (1981: 3–5), is this. If, back in 2009, Mary believed that Donald Trump was not the president of the USA,[4] we can report her past belief through the following sentence:

(5) Mary believed that Donald Trump was not the president of the USA.

Now, consider the following argument:

(5) Mary believed that Donald Trump was not the president of the USA.

(6) Mary still believes everything she once believed.

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[4]I have adapted Richard's example.

> (7)   Mary believes that Donald Trump is not the president of the
>   USA.

This argument, Richard would say, is intuitively invalid, but temporalism leads us to consider it valid—if what Mary believed is the temporal proposition that Donald Trump was not the president of the USA and she still believes it, she believes the temporal proposition that Donald Trump is not the president of the USA. Eternalism, by contrast, is able to accommodate the intuition that the argument is invalid by understanding the content of Mary's belief in (5) as the proposition expressed by "Donald Trump was not the president of the USA in 2009" and the content of her belief in (7) as the proposition expressed by "Donald Trump is not the president of the USA in 2019", so that (7) does not follow from (5) and (6).

Recanati (2007: 85–86), though, replies to Richard's argument by inviting us to imagine that, unbeknownst to her, Mary has just awoken from a ten-year sleep.[5] In this case, the most salient interpretation is one according to which she believes the temporal proposition that Donald Trump is not the president of the USA. Thus, the intuitive invalidity of the argument is context-dependent, so it cannot be used against temporalism.

A well-known temporalist argument (Kaplan 1989: 502–503) goes like this. Temporal operators take propositions as their arguments. For instance, the temporal operator "It used to be the case that" can take the proposition expressed by the sentence (2) to yield the following sentence:

> (8)   It used to be the case that Donald Trump was not the president
>   of the USA.

For (8) to be true, the proposition under the scope of the operator needs to be true at some time previous to the time of utterance. But, if the time of utterance were part of the proposition expressed, it would make no sense to ask whether that very same proposition would have been true at another time. As noted above, if it is false that Donald Trump is not the president of the USA in 2019, it will be false at any previous time that Donald Trump is not the president of the USA in

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[5]I have adapted Recanati's example too.

2019. Building time into propositions would thus make the temporal operators that are in fact part of our language redundant.

However, this can be argued about any parameter, not only time. This is the motivation that lies at the bottom of nonindexical contextualism: why should we allow the truth-value of our propositions to be only time-neutral? Why not suppose that there are other parameters with respect to which a proposition can be neutral? After all, there does not seem to be anything about time that makes it special when compared to other parameters, for there are other operators in our language besides temporal ones. In the next section, I present the picture of language that would result from allowing propositions to be neutral with respect to parameters other than time.

2.3. Disagreement, and nonindexical contextualism

In this section, I show how temporalism can be extended to obtain a theory that allows for faultless disagreement's being a kind of disagreement. To do so, I first revisit the notions of context and circumstance of evaluation (see subsection 1.2.2), and use the latter to characterize relativized propositions. Then, I use the two notions together to characterize nonindexical contextualism and show how it can deal with the "disagreement" in "faultless disagreement".

2.3.1. Context and circumstance of evaluation, revisited

I ended section 2.2 suggesting to extend Kaplan's operator argument to parameters other than time. If we did so, time would not be the only parameter with respect to which propositions can be neutral. Let us consider, for instance, the following sentence:

(9)   It is raining.

For a temporalist, (9) expresses a single proposition p that is true with respect to any t at which it is raining and false with respect to any t at which it is not. But let us suppose that it is raining now and I utter (9). We then evaluate p with

respect to the time of my utterance. Can we say that p is true without taking anything else into account? Well, p can be false even with respect to the time of my utterance, because, just like it is raining in Granada (where I am), it is also true that it is not in other cities. So, there is at least one more parameter with respect to which we have to evaluate p's truth: location (let us call it "l").

We then have that p is true for t = 12 September 2019 and l = Granada, false for t = 11 September 2019 and l = Granada, and false for t = 12 September 2019 and l = Seville. p is relativized to time and location—it is what we call a *relativized proposition*.[6] And we can go further; for instance, p would be false even at this moment and location if the climate had been changed by a nuclear accident. We can model this by saying that, for the same time and location, p is true in the actual world (let us call it "@"), but it would not be so in that alternative world (let us call it "w^*"). Let w be the parameter corresponding to the possible world with respect to which we assess p. Then, p is true for t = 12 September 2019, l = Granada, and w = @, and false for t = 12 September 2019, l = Granada, and w = w^*.

The n-tuples of separately shiftable parameters with respect to which relativized propositions are true or false are their *circumstances of evaluation*. In general, circumstances of evaluation are the sequences of parameters with respect to which it is possible to ask about the extension of a certain expression (see Kaplan 1989: 502). Hence, for instance, we cannot abstractly wonder what the extension of the predicate "dinosaur" is. This is so because the extension of a predicate is the set of objects that fall within it. So right now, the extension of "dinosaur" is the empty set, while it was not 70 million years ago. If we consider the extension of a sentence to be its truth-value, we can talk of circumstances of evaluation of sentences. But also, it seems natural to say that sentences are true or false in virtue of their expressing propositions. Following this intuition, we can also talk of circumstances of evaluation of propositions (MacFarlane 2014: 76). So finally, the circumstances of evaluation of a proposition are the sequences of parameters

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[6]Relativized propositions can be relativized to any parameter, not just time and location. Temporal propositions, for instance, are relativized propositions, and so will be the propositions relativized to the parameters that I will introduce next.

with respect to which it is possible to ask whether it is true or false. Circumstances of evaluation consist of parameters. Some typical parameters which I have already mentioned are time, location, and possible world, but many others can be introduced, such as epistemic standards, personal taste standards, etc.

A *context*, for its part, is an occasion in which a certain act takes place (see Kaplan 1989: 494; Lewis 1980a: 79). Contexts are responsible for supplying both the references of indexical expressions and the circumstances of evaluation of propositions. I will talk about contexts of utterance, and these will be the occasions that speakers inhabit when they utter a certain sentence. I will also talk about contexts of assessment, and these will be the occasions that agents inhabit when they consider whether a certain proposition is true or false. There are potentially infinite things that we can say about the occasion that a person inhabits: where that person is, what time it is, what the relevant information in that occasion is, etc. Thus, the only way to univocally refer to a certain context is by the definite description "the context at which act X took place"—two contexts may always differ with respect to a parameter of which we are not even aware. The difference between contexts and circumstances of evaluation can thus be summarized by saying that, while contexts are concrete entities, circumstances of evaluation are abstract lists of values for parameters.

The need to have contexts as well as circumstances of evaluation might not be apparent at first sight. In the next subsection, I explain the reasons for this need.

2.3.2.   Why keep both notions?

On the one hand, once we have circumstances of evaluation, we still need contexts, because more than one context will be compatible with any sequence of parameters. Once we have contexts, on the other hand, we still need circumstances of evaluation to account for the behavior of intensional operators. In what follows, I develop these two arguments.

The fact that more than one context will be compatible with any circumstance of evaluation is nicely put by Perry (1993). He invites us to imagine a country, Z-land, whose inhabitants, the Z-landers, do not know that other places exist be-

yond their borders. When a Z-lander utters ([9]), the proposition expressed is to be evaluated with respect to Z-land—it will be true if it is raining in Z-land, and false if it is not. However, the Z-landers cannot make this explicit, because they are not aware of the fact that more than one location exists, and consequently, of the fact that all their propositions are to be evaluated relative to a parameter that can change, such as location. What is the difference between Z-landers and ourselves? Of course, we are aware that multiple locations exist, and that propositions can have different values depending on the location. But what precludes us from being unaware of other features that can distinguish one context from another? All we know is that a given sentence is true at one particular context, false at another. We can then say that the sentence expresses a proposition that is neutral regarding whatever parameter we find that distinguishes these two contexts. But we may as well find a third context at which the sentence seems to be false, even if the parameter at issue does not distinguish the new context from the one at which the sentence was true. We would then need to introduce a new parameter that distinguishes the contexts, just like the Z-landers would be forced to do if they found out that the world is bigger than they thought. We had a set of circumstances at first, and we thought it to uniquely determine a context, but then we found out that it does not. A new parameter can always be introduced.

Thus, we cannot make it with circumstances of evaluation alone. We want to make sense of the notion of truth at a context. We want to be able to say that a given sentence is true or false at this or that context; thus, we need the concept of a context. Note that we can make propositional truth-value relative just to circumstances of evaluation, and define what it is for a proposition to be true or false at a context in terms of its being true or false at the circumstances of evaluation determined by that context. But we will still need to have the notion of a context that determines those circumstances; and a context cannot be reduced to the circumstances of evaluation that it determines, for we do not have a comprehensive list of the parameters that constitute these circumstances of evaluation.

If, in general, contexts are going to determine the circumstances of evaluation, the question remains why we need circumstances of evaluation at all. Why not make propositional truth-value relative just to contexts? Before answering

this question, consider that the parameters in the circumstances of evaluation are features of contexts, but they may be so that they cannot be found together in any possible context. This is so because the circumstances of evaluation of a proposition can be taken to be *indices*, in a special sense of the term. As originally defined, an index is an *n*-tuple of separately shiftable parameters that can be retrieved from a context (Lewis 1980a: 79). Thus, as Lewis says, an index might consist of a speaker, a time before her birth, and a world where she never lived at all. What coordinates a particular index includes depends on the proposition whose truth-value we are evaluating with respect to that index. If the proposition does not involve expressions such as "tasty", for instance, the index will not feature a personal taste standard. In other words, a personal taste standard is not metaphysically required, as a world is (see Recanati 2002: 305–306). Thus, not all indices have the same number of coordinates.

We should not dispense with indices because being determined by a context is not the only thing that indices do. They can also be *initialized* by intensional operators. For instance, as noted in subsection 2.2.2, "It used to be the case that" takes the proposition under its scope, tests its truth-value for each value that we could give to the time parameter in the index previous to the time of utterance, and yields true in case the result of the test is true for at least one possible value. None of these values will be the one provided by the context. Remember that, while any sequence of parameters can constitute an index, some of them do not correspond to any context. If we take intensional operators to switch the context, they will in some cases require to evaluate the proposition at an impossible context, such as that in Lewis' example featuring a speaker, a time before her birth, and a world where she never lived at all. For instance, consider, as Lewis himself suggests, the sentence "If someone is speaking here, then I exist". This sentence is true at any context. But "Necessarily, if someone is speaking here, then I exist" is false. If we make operators shift contexts altogether, though, "Forevermore, if someone is speaking here, then I exist" will be true if and only if "If someone is speaking here, then I exist" is true at every context that features a different time. However, there is no context in which only the time parameter is different—any context in which the sentence is uttered at a different time will be a context in which the sentence

is uttered in a different possible world, since in this world, the sentence is uttered at this particular time (Lewis 1980a: 79). Thus, if we only allow propositions to change their truth-value with respect to the context, we will be unable to explain how intensional operators work.

In sum, we need to account for how the truth-value of a sentence changes across contexts, on the one hand, and to explain how intensional operators work, on the other. This is what Lewis nicely summarizes in the following passage:

> Since we are unlikely to think of all the features of context on which truth sometimes depends, and hence unlikely to construct adequately rich indices, we cannot get by without context-dependence as well as index-dependence. Since indices but not contexts can be shifted one feature at a time, we cannot get by without index-dependence as well as context-dependence. (Lewis 1980a: 79)

Instead of indices, I have been talking about circumstances of evaluation. It is important to note, however, that indices have to be significantly enriched if we want circumstances of evaluation to be indices. Historically, only parameters that can be shifted by actual operators that we have in the language have been considered part of indices. But, as Perry's Z-landers' case shows, some of our propositions could be true or false only with respect to parameters of which we are not aware and for which, in consequence, we lack operators. It is nonetheless reasonable to expect for these operators to become available as soon as we learn that the truth of some of our propositions depends on these parameters. Indices should thus be enriched so that they can feature any parameter with respect to which our propositions could be true or false, whether or not we have at the present time an operator that can shift that parameter. Thus defined, the circumstances of evaluation of a proposition are the indices with respect to which it is possible to ask whether that proposition is true or false. And, with this qualification on Lewis' notion of an index, his argument for keeping contexts and indices apart can be used for keeping contexts and circumstances of evaluation apart as well.

An additional reason for distinguishing the notions of context and circumstance of evaluation is that it is possible for a context to provide a value for a parameter in the circumstances of evaluation that is different from the one that figures in the *index of the context.* For instance, we should say that the location in the index of a certain context of utterance is the location at which the utterance takes place. However, the location that such context supplies as part of the circumstances of evaluation need not be that place, but only the one that is relevant for determining the truth-value of the proposition that is expressed through that utterance. This might be, as Recanati (2007: 6) says, "some other place that is being talked about". In a similar vein, the personal taste standard supplied by the context of assessment need not be that of the assessor. It might be a different one that is relevant in assigning a truth-value to the proposition expressed.

2.3.3. Relativized propositions

For nonindexical contextualists to be able to say that some proposition is true with respect to a certain parameter and false with respect to another, they have to accept that both the proposition and the circumstances of evaluation are needed to determine a truth-value. This feature is called "duality" by Recanati (2007: 33). If relativized propositions are what we have once we accept duality, we have the following definition:

> **Relativized proposition:** A proposition is a relativized proposition iff its truth-value might vary along with the circumstances of evaluation.

Supporters of nonrelativized propositions, however, will hold that no proposition can change its truth-value as we switch the circumstances of evaluation. Using the terminology that we have just introduced, they reject duality—it is for them enough to have a proposition to determine a truth-value. So:

> **Nonrelativized proposition:** A proposition is a nonrelativized proposition iff it is true or false *simpliciter.*

Along with duality, Recanati holds that the determinants of truth-value distribute over content and circumstances of evaluation: if something contributes to

determining a truth-value, then it is part either of the proposition or of the circumstances of evaluation. Recanati calls this feature "distribution" (Recanati 2007: 34). The supporter of relativized propositions accepts distribution. The supporter of nonrelativized propositions, however, cannot accept it. This is so because, once we have (by rejecting duality) rejected that the proposition and the circumstances of evaluation are determinants of truth-value, it makes no sense to require that they are the only determinants of truth-value.

Thus, the nonindexical contextualist will need to commit to the following thesis:

(T$_\text{p}$) Some propositions do not contain all the information that is relevant to assess them as true or false.

Let us flesh out (T$_\text{p}$) for propositions such as the one expressed by (1). What we want is to develop (T$_\text{p}$) so as to get a rule that gives us the proposition expressed by a sentence containing "tasty", that is, a rule that gives us the truth-conditions of a sentence containing "tasty". Based on MacFarlane (2014: 150–151), the rule would be this:

(ST) $[\![\text{``}A \text{ is tasty''}]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, g, a \rangle} = 1$ iff $[\![A]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, g, a \rangle} \in [\![\text{``tasty''}]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, g, a \rangle}$, where w is a possible world, t is a time, g is a personal taste standard, and a is an assignment of values to the variables.

In an indexicalist setting, propositions are functions from possible worlds to truth-values. For instance, the proposition that water boils at 100° C is a function that yields true for those worlds in which water boils at 100° C. In a nonindexicalist setting, propositions are functions from tuples that include possible worlds, and any other parameter to which propositions are relativized, to truth-values. If S is a sentence, let $|S|^a_c$ denote the proposition it expresses at context of utterance c under assignment a, and let us call tuples consisting of a possible world, a time and a personal taste standard "circumstances of evaluation". $|\text{``}A \text{ is tasty''}|^a_c$ is then a function $f$ from circumstances of evaluation to truth-values such that $f(\langle w, t, g \rangle) = [\![\text{``}A \text{ is tasty''}]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, g, a \rangle} = 1$ iff $[\![A]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, g, a \rangle} \in [\![\text{``tasty''}]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, g, a \rangle}$. As can

be seen, $|\text{"}A\text{ is tasty"}|_c^a$ is a relativized proposition, since it lacks at least a personal taste standard to be able to be declared true or false. MacFarlane (2014: 152–156) allows to derive truth-conditions for much more complex sentences than those of the simple form "A is tasty", but let this serve as a mere illustration.

Let us introduce some of Perry's (1993) terminology. A proposition is *about* its components.[7] That is, if we assume that the concept of raining is part of the proposition that it is raining, we can say that the proposition that it is raining is about raining. The things about which a proposition is have an impact on its truth-value: if in the proposition above we substitute the concept of snowing for the concept of raining, its truth-value will change on the assumption that it cannot rain and snow at the same time. But there are other things beyond those about which the proposition is that can have an impact on its truth-value. When a proposition's truth-value depends on something that is not part of the proposition itself, we say that the proposition *concerns* that thing.[8] For instance, the proposition that it is raining may be true today, false tomorrow. But neither today nor tomorrow are components of this proposition, and so, the proposition is not about time. However, it concerns time inasmuch as its truth-value depends on what time it is (Perry 1993: 215).

2.3.4. Nonindexical contextualism, and how it accounts for fault-less disagreement

If we accept (T_p), there will be propositions that lack part of the information needed to deem them true or false. This information will belong not to the proposition, but to its circumstances of evaluation. It is a different question, though, how the circumstances of evaluation get determined. Accepting the existence of relativized propositions is compatible with different options as to how this is done. In this subsection, I introduce the mechanism suggested by nonindexical

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[7]It is not necessary to accept that propositions have components (i.e., they are structured entities) in order to draw the distinction introduced in this paragraph, that is, the distinction between a proposition's being about something and the proposition's concerning that something. I will explain how the distinction can be reconstructed to avoid such commitment in section 5.6.

[8]See chapter 1, note 5 for some remarks on my use of "concern".

contextualism and show how, according to its supporters, it makes it possible to characterize faultless disagreement as a kind of disagreement while still being able to predict faultlessness.

As I said in the previous section, contexts are assumed to provide us with both the values of indexicals and the circumstances of evaluation of propositions. What is left to be explained once we relativize propositions, then, is which context is responsible for supplying the circumstances of evaluation. According to nonindexical contextualism, this is the context of utterance. Where indexical contextualism would take the context of utterance to supply a parameter that gets into the proposition, nonindexical contextualism takes the same parameter to be part of the circumstances of evaluation. Thus, besides (T_p), nonindexical contextualism is also committed to the following thesis:

(T_u)   The context of utterance always determines the information that cannot be found in the proposition and is missing when it comes to fix its truth-value.

Relativized propositions' being called this way is the reason why nonindexical contextualism is usually presented as a variety of relativism. By extending temporalism to other parameters beyond time, one seems to obtain a kind of relativism that can overcome the difficulties of indexical contextualism. Remember (1) "Black pudding is tasty". We now have the tools to say that it expresses a proposition whose truth-value is relative to a personal taste standard, which is part of the circumstances of evaluation. This makes it possible that neither *A* nor *B* has made a mistake when *A* says that black pudding is tasty and *B* denies it, but also accounts for the fact that it is a disagreement that they are having—they are disagreeing about the same proposition.

Nonindexical contextualism has been proposed, among other things, as the best account for personal taste predicates (Kölbel 2002, 2004a,b, 2008, 2015c; Einheuser 2008), moral judgments (Kölbel 2005, 2015a; Capps et al. 2009), epistemic modals (Egan 2007; Bach 2011), secondary qualities (Egan 2006), *de se* assertions (Recanati 2007, 2008), and future contingents (Moruzzi & Wright 2009). However, although it seems to explain the behavior of these areas with respect to the

phenomenon of faultless disagreement, it can be shown to have problems with another kind of phenomenon, as I do in the next section.

2.4.   Retraction, and assessor relativism

It seems that nonindexical contextualism can account for faultless disagreement. It can explain both our intuition that the speakers involved disagree, and our intuition that none of them has made a mistake. However, nonindexical contextualism does not do so well when trying to account for a different phenomenon: retraction. MacFarlane (2014) uses retraction to argue for his own brand of relativism, which has subsequently been called "assessor relativism". In this section, I introduce the phenomenon of retraction, show how nonindexical contextualism falls short of being able to explain it, and characterize assessor relativism as an alternative that allows us to make sense of this phenomenon. I also address the question as to whether retraction should be mandatory or just possible.

2.4.1.   Retraction

Retraction is a sort of speech act that takes place when speakers reject, in a special sense, an earlier speech act that they have made. One may "retract something" or "take something back" when one changes one's mind and considers what was said, asked, ordered, etc. wrong in some sense. So, when one retracts something, one evaluates that prior speech act as inaccurate or mistaken. As MacFarlane points out, "the effect of retracting a speech act is to "undo" the normative changes effected by the original speech act" (MacFarlane 2014: 108). For example, if the prosecutor in a trial retracts a previous, felicitous question to a witness, the witness' responsibility of answering to it is canceled. If the prosecutor asks the witness to reaffirm or retract a statement, and the witness decides to retract, it is avoided, for instance, having to give explanations to the audience if the witness acts against the commitments acquired in making the statement.

In other words, retraction can be seen as what Marques deems a "second-order speech act" (Marques 2018: 3336) that takes place when one disapproves of an earlier speech act of one's own. Reasons for retracting are varied. One

reason, naturally, is the acknowledgment that one was at fault when the speech act took place. Nevertheless, it is not necessary for the speaker who retracts to have been at fault at all. For instance, if, given the evidence that was available to me at some point, I said "There is beer in the fridge", but once I open the fridge door I realize that there was none, it is natural for me to acknowledge that I was mistaken and take my previous assertion back, which does not mean that I was at fault when I made it (see MacFarlane 2014: 110). Moreover, we may retract even if the content of our past assertion is not strictly false according to our present standards: as MacFarlane (2014: 109) points out, it may be that we want to avoid another person to rely on our own testimony regarding some issue; or it may be that we want to retract a past speech act because we have been "unkind, offensive or just callous" (Marques 2018: 3336).

As we will see later, it has been discussed whether retraction is a *mandatory* speech act. It is less contentious that, in some contexts, it is at least *possible* to retract. Can nonindexical contextualists make sense of this fact? Remember (1). If the proposition expressed by (1) is to be evaluated relative to the judge determined by the context of utterance, it seems that nonindexical contextualism leaves no place for retraction. Suppose I uttered (1) some time ago, but now I have changed my mind and no longer find black pudding tasty. The nonindexical contextualist seems unable to account for the possibility that I say "I take that back", for the proposition I expressed back when I uttered the sentence is still true relative to the judge that matters—my past self.

2.4.2.   **Assessor relativism**

To be able to account for retraction, we must say that it is my current self who is to judge whether it is true that black pudding is tasty. This way, if I do not find it tasty now, I have the right to say "I take that back". This is the intuition behind MacFarlane's (2014) assessor relativism. Such intuition is made into something tangible by introducing the *context of assessment*. So, according to MacFarlane's assessor relativism, the context that is relevant to determining the truth-value of assertions involving "tasty" is not the context of utterance, but the context

of assessment, that is, the context from which we assess the assertion. In our example, the context of assessment is first the same as the context of utterance, since I was assessing the proposition as I was expressing it (in fact, I expressed it because I assessed it as true). However, as seen from today, these contexts differ—the context of utterance includes a past time and my past criterion, while the context of assessment concerns today and my current criterion. This is how we allow the truth-value of the assertion to vary: it was true as assessed from the context at which it was made, false as assessed from the present context.

Thus, assessor relativism can be characterized through two theses, the first one shared by other theories, the second one exclusive of relativism. The first thesis that characterizes assessor relativism is (T_p). This first thesis, as I said, is shared by nonindexical contextualism. The second thesis, however, is the one that distinguishes assessor relativism from its competitors:

(T_a) The context of utterance does not always determine the information that cannot be found in the proposition and is missing when it comes to fix its truth-value—there are occasions in which it is the context of assessment that supplies this information.

If A expresses a proposition p and B wonders whether this proposition is true or false, A's context is the context of utterance and B's is the context of assessment. The question is what information each context supplies when it comes to assess p as true or false. As can be seen, it cannot be said that the context of utterance does not supply the information that the proposition has not supplied if it is not as well said that the proposition has not supplied this information. That is, committing to (T_a) implies committing to (T_p).

Just like we did with (T_p), let us now flesh out (T_a) for propositions such as the one expressed by (1). As I will explain in section 3.5, (T_p) is a semantic thesis, while (T_a) is a postsemantic thesis. This means that, while (T_p) concerns what propositions contain or fail to contain, (T_a) concerns how the truth-values of propositions in context are determined. Once we have developed (T_p) so as to get a semantics for sentences containing "tasty", we also want to develop (T_a) so as to get a postsemantics for sentences containing "tasty". A postsemantics will tell us, for arbi-

trary contexts c_1 and c_2, when a given sentence is true as used at c_1 and assessed from c_2. For sentences containing "tasty", in particular, the postsemantics will be as follows (MacFarlane 2014: 151):

> (RPST) A sentence of the form "A is tasty" is true as used at a context c_1 and assessed from a context c_2 iff for all assignments a, $[\![S]\!]^{c_1}_{\langle w_{c_1}, t_{c_1}, g_{c_2}, a \rangle}$ $= 1$, where w_{c_1} is the world of c_1, t_{c_1} is the time of c_1, and g_{c_2} is the personal taste standard relevant at c_2.

Since the personal taste standard that is relevant for determining the truth-value of the sentence is not given by the context of utterance, but by the context of assessment, (RPST) is an implementation for sentences featuring "tasty" of the idea, encapsulated in (T_a), that sometimes the context of utterance is not enough to determine the truth-value, for it is the context of assessment that supplies the missing information.

Nonindexical contextualism for "tasty", while sharing (TS) with assessor relativism, will differ from it as to the postsemantics. Here is a contextualist postsemantics for "tasty" (MacFarlane 2014: 67):

> (CPST) A sentence of the form "A is tasty" is true as used at a context c_1 and assessed from a context c_2 iff for all assignments a, $[\![S]\!]^{c_1}_{\langle w_{c_1}, t_{c_1}, g_{c_1}, a \rangle}$ $= 1$, where w_{c_1} is the world of c_1, t_{c_1} is the time of c_1, and g_{c_1} is the personal taste standard relevant at c_1.

As can be seen, although we give truth-conditions for a sentence as used at a context c_1 and assessed from a context c_2, c_2 is in fact irrelevant in (CPST) when it comes to compute the sentence's truth-value. Thus, the context of utterance is enough to determine the sentence's truth-value, as would be required by contextualism.

As I have said, assessor relativism accepts the existence of relativized propositions, but it is not the only position that does so. This can seem counterintuitive if we assume that what gives assessor relativism its name is that it is the position that accepts the existence of relativized propositions. It all depends on the sense

in which we speak of relativism. In MacFarlane's sense, to embrace relativism is equivalent to commit not only to (T_p), but also to (T_a). In another sense, however, it is enough to commit to (T_p) for us to be said to embrace relativism. In chapter 3, I will argue for adopting the sense in which it is not enough for a position to be called "relativism" to assert (T_p).

When the circumstances of evaluation of a proposition are determined by the context of utterance, it is possible to make the parameters that such circumstances determine explicit. For instance, if we say "It is raining now", the context of utterance determines that the proposition expressed must be assessed regarding the time of utterance, i.e., 12 September 2019 at 12.05 p.m. We can make this information explicit by saying "It is raining on 12 September 2019 at 12.05 p.m." (see Richard 1981: 3). When the circumstances of evaluation are not determined by the context of utterance, but by the context of assessment, this maneuver is not possible anymore. To see this, let us introduce MacFarlane's operator "noy", an operator that shifts the time of evaluation not to that of the context of utterance but to that of the context of assessment (MacFarlane 2014: 62–63). Now, let us suppose that we say "It is raining noy". If "noy" works like we have said, the time of assessment cannot be made explicit in uttering the sentence, for, while the indicated value "12 September 2019 at 12.05 p.m." was just one, the time-values t now indicated are potentially infinite: "It is raining on 12 September 2019 at 12.05 p.m." is (making the pertinent assumptions) true or false *simpliciter*, but "It is raining at time t" is not. "Noy" is not an English word, of course. But MacFarlane's point is that some expressions of our language work in a similar way to "noy".

In nonindexical contextualism, the task of determining the proposition's truth-value splits between the proposition and the circumstances of evaluation, but both are fixed by the context of utterance. This has an additional consequence. In nonindexical contextualism, we can always say whether an utterance is correct—if the proposition expressed is true with respect to the circumstances of evaluation supplied by the context of utterance. In relativism, on the contrary, we can find utterances that cannot be said to be accurate or not. This happens when the truth or falsity of the proposition expressed does not depend on circumstances supplied by the context of utterance, but on circumstances supplied

by the context of assessment (Field 2009: 273). This will play a key role in the decision to keep the name "relativism" just for theories like MacFarlane's, as well as in the argument for relativism that this dissertation advances.

Assessor relativism is the view supported for epistemic modals by Egan et al. (2005), Dietz (2008), Egan (2011), and MacFarlane (2014: chapter 10); for predicates of personal taste, by Lasersohn (2005, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2017) and MacFarlane (2014: chapter 7); for epistemic evaluations, by Field (2009); for deontic discourse, by Kolodny & MacFarlane (2010) and MacFarlane (2014: chapter 11), and for future contingents and knowledge attributions, by MacFarlane (2014: chapters 8, 9). In this subsection, I have motivated assessor relativism through our interest in accounting for the phenomenon of retraction. But the facts that a semantic theory should account for are far from clear. In the next subsection, I review the discussion held in recent times about when it makes sense to retract, or whether it is ever required.

2.4.3.   The debate on retraction

I have introduced assessor relativism as the theory that makes sense of the fact that we can retract our previous assertions. But MacFarlane thinks that assessor relativism does not only make it possible to retract. It also makes it mandatory under certain circumstances. He proposes the following rule as the one that guides retraction:

> **The Retraction Rule:** An agent in context c_2 is required to retract an (un-retracted) assertion of p made at c_1 if p is not true as used at c_1 and assessed from c_2. (MacFarlane 2014: 108)

As we can see, to characterize retraction as mandatory, MacFarlane puts into operation the two contexts that his position involves: the context of utterance (the context at which the speech act took place) and the context of assessment, that is, the context from which one evaluates that speech act. Thus, if retraction is required under certain circumstances, we need to introduce the context of assessment in order to explain this fact. But, although MacFarlane takes the

compulsoriness of retraction for granted, other authors have challenged such assumption (von Fintel & Gillies 2008; Ross & Schroeder 2013; Knobe & Yalcin 2014; Marques 2018). However, inasmuch as the context of assessment is also needed to characterize retraction as possible, assessor relativism does not need retraction to be mandatory to be motivated.

In von Fintel & Gillies (2008), the claim is that speakers are often not inclined to retract an utterance of "There might be ice cream in the freezer" after finding out that, after all, there was no ice cream in the freezer. They may even resist, they say, with something like "Look, I didn't say *there is* ice cream in the freezer; I said *there might be*" (von Fintel & Gillies 2008: 81). In a parallel way, Marques (2018: 3345–3346) says that Mimi is not irrational nor insincere when she refuses to retract her previous utterance of "*Pocoyo* is funny", made when she was three years old. Even if she no longer finds *Pocoyo* funny, she might say that it was funny for her then.

Ross & Schroeder (2013), in fact, go as far as to deny that it is even rational to commit to retracting. Their argument goes like this. Imagine Ankita is writing a newspaper story on an ongoing murder investigation. A test conducted in the afternoon will reveal whether the suspect, Axeworthy, is the murderer or not. In the morning, Ankita sincerely utters "Axeworthy might be, and might not be, the murderer". If Ankita commits to retracting, she will know she has to do so in the evening, so either she is insincere, which we have ruled out in stating the case, or she is irrational. Thus, it is irrational to commit to retracting (Ross & Schroeder 2013: 69–70).

The intuition that utterers of a sentence involving "might" are not obliged to retract when confronted with new, incompatible evidence has been tested by Knobe & Yalcin (2014). They presented the participants with the following case:

> Fat Tony is a mobster who has faked his own death in order to evade the police. He secretly plants highly compelling evidence of his murder at the docks. The evidence is discovered by the authorities, and word gets out about his apparent death. The next evening, from his safehouse, Fat Tony watches a panel of experts on the news dis-

cussing the question of whether he is dead.

Expert *A* has had a good look at the evidence found at the scene. "Fat Tony is dead", he says. Expert *B* has also had a good look at the evidence, but his assessment is more cautious. "Fat Tony might be dead", *B* says. (...)

Shortly thereafter, new evidence comes to light, and everyone now agrees that Fat Tony is actually alive.

Expert *A* then says, "I was wrong—Fat Tony was actually alive."

Expert *B* also says, "I was wrong—Fat Tony was actually alive." (Knobe & Yalcin 2014: 4–6)

Then, participants were asked for their degree of agreement with Expert *A*'s and Expert *B*'s utterances. The result was that participants tended to disagree with Expert *B* much less than they tended to disagree with Expert *B*, that is, they tended to disagree with reports about the falsity of sentences containing "might" much less than they tended to disagree with reports about the falsity of sentences not containing it (Knobe & Yalcin 2014: 10–12).

After this, participants were asked for their degree of agreement with the sentences "Expert *A* was right to say "I was wrong"" and "Expert *B* was right to say "I was wrong"". While there seems to be a correlation between the falsity of the sentence and the appropriateness of retracting in the case of Expert *A*'s utterance, participants judged appropriate for Expert *B* to retract his utterance even if it was not judged as false in the light of new evidence (Knobe & Yalcin 2014: 12–13). The empirical evidence thus seems to show that, if we consider appropriate to retract something that has turned out to be false under new evidence, it is not because we take ourselves to have said something false. So, we do not need a theory that makes the context of assessment the relevant one, because we seem to stick to the context of utterance in assigning truth-values to these utterances. Retraction should be explained in some other way, because the way in which assessor relativism does it seems to be incompatible with the evidence. As Knobe and Yalcin put it:

> This surprising fact (that retraction judgments and falsity judgments can come apart) suggests that retraction is not —or not generally— a way of manifesting a view about the truth value of a claim. We might therefore seek some other kind of theoretical understanding of retraction. One possible approach would be to view retraction as a phenomenon whereby speakers are primarily indicating that they no longer want a conversational common ground incorporating the update associated with a sentence that they previously uttered. On this approach, what is retracted is a certain conversational update; retraction is in part a means of undoing or disowning the context change or update performed by a speech act. (Knobe & Yalcin 2014: 16)

It seems, then, that retraction is not a mandatory speech act. This would only be a problem, though, for a relativism that took it to be so. What is clear is that retraction is a possible speech act, and it seems that only by introducing the context of assessment can we make sense of this fact. MacFarlane's retraction rule is an accessory component of relativism.

2.5.   Completing the theoretical landscape

In the next chapter, I will propose to consider assessor relativism the only theory reviewed so far that is worth the name "relativism". Thus, indexical and nonindexical contextualism will not be varieties of relativism, but theories against which relativism is to be defended. However, contextualism will not be the only alternative to relativism that will be considered in this dissertation. In particular, I will compare relativism with two other theories: invariantism and expressivism. In this section, I introduce both. The characterization of expressivism might nonetheless involve complex issues that will be addressed in chapter 5.

Invariantism (see Fantl & McGrath 2002; Hawthorne 2004; Stanley 2005; see also Chrisman 2007: 225; Baker 2012: 110, n. 7; MacFarlane 2014: 2–7) shares features with the three so-called relativisms considered in this chapter. According

to invariantism, "Black pudding is tasty" expresses the same proposition independently of the context at which it is uttered—the proposition that black pudding has the objective property of being tasty. Black pudding either has this property or not: it cannot be tasty relative to this and not tasty relative to that. It follows from this that, if *A* says "Black pudding is tasty" and *B* says "No, it isn't", either *A* or *B* has to be wrong. If *A* is right, then black pudding is tasty and, consequently, *B* has to have made a mistake, and the other way around. That is, invariantism denies the possibility of faultless disagreement. Exchanges like (D) are disagreements, but they are not faultless.

Retraction, though, would be easy to explain if we adopted invariantism. Just like it is natural to retract a previous utterance of "Black pudding is made out of pork" when faced with credible (even though false) evidence that it is made out of cow, it is natural to retract a previous assertion of "Black pudding is tasty" when new evidence is available that black pudding fails to have the objective property of being tasty. In a way, assessor relativism tries to recover what contextualism lost (being able to explain retraction) in trying to account for faultless disagreement.

Some might think that invariantism denies the role played by human tastes in what counts as tasty, but it is compatible with them playing such role. As MacFarlane (2014: 2) notes, to be tasty could mean to be pleasant to the taste of a normal human being under normal conditions. This way, what counts as tasty would still be set once and forever, no matter what each particular individual considers tasty.

Inasmuch as invariantism takes "Black pudding is tasty" to always express the same proposition, it distances itself from indexical contextualism, and stands closer both to nonindexical contextualism and to assessor relativism. But invariantism takes the proposition expressed to be true or false once and forever, independently of the context of utterance and the context of assessment. In this respect, invariantism stands closer to indexical contextualism than to nonindexical contextualism or to assessor relativism. In fact, invariantism could be seen as a limiting case of indexical contextualism according to which every context determines the same parameter.

As I said, I will characterize expressivism in chapter 5. Let this serve, though,

as a sketch that allows the reader to get an idea of the kind of theory that expressivism is. According to expressivism (see, for instance, Gibbard 1990, 2003, 2012; Chrisman 2007, 2008, 2018; Yalcin 2007, 2011, 2012, 2018; Schroeder 2008a, 2008b; Bar-On & Chrisman 2009; Price 2011; Bar-On & Sias 2013; Price et al. 2013; Bar-On et al. 2014; Ridge 2014; Charlow 2015; MacFarlane 2016; Starr 2016; Willer 2017), "Black pudding is tasty", even if a declarative sentence, does not serve to describe the world. It does not ascribe a property to black pudding—not even a property such that whether black pudding has it or not depends on the context of assessment, as MacFarlane's relativism would tell us. Most expressivisms are also committed to the idea that meaning should be given in terms of what linguistic expressions serve to do,[9] so it follows from the fact that "Black pudding is tasty" does not serve to describe the world that its meaning is different in kind from that of ordinary descriptions. This is what explains the characteristic behavior of this sentence, and it can be applied to explain the characteristic behavior of many other sentences.

The typically expressivist idea that the meanings of linguistic expressions should be given in terms of what they serve to do can be implemented in a number of different ways, though. Some of these ways will lead us to see the relation between assessor relativism and expressivism under a certain light, some of them under a different one. In particular, we can take linguistic expressions to serve to give voice to what speakers have in their heads, or we can take them to serve to propose ourselves as agents from whom to expect certain courses of action. As I will show in chapter 5, the first understanding of expressivism would make assessor relativism preferable to it. Expressivism understood this way would, among other things, be unable to make sense of retraction, the phenomenon that seems to speak for assessor relativism against indexical and nonindexical contextualism. However, the second reading of expressivism, which is the one that I will adopt in this dissertation, will make relativism and expressivism equivalent for our purposes here.

With invariantism and expressivism, the theoretical landscape that will be considered in this dissertation is now complete. We can now devote the rest of

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[9]Bar-On is a notable exception to this.

the dissertation to discussing the differences between indexical and nonindexical contextualism, assessor relativism, and these two other theories. Also, if they are significantly different, we will explore which of them is the one that should be adopted.

2.6.   Conclusion

In this chapter, I have motivated and presented three different families of theories that have at some point received the name "relativism". The first family, which comprises indexical contextualist theories, is motivated as a way of accounting for the faultlessness of some disagreements. However, indexical contextualism accounts for this feature at the cost of leaving unexplained the speakers' intuition that they are in a disagreement, and this is the reason for introducing nonindexical contextualism as a way of explaining both things. Still, nonindexical contextualism seems unable to account for a different phenomenon—retraction. Assessor relativism, by contrast, can explain faultless disagreement, but also retraction.

Is there anything that all these different families of theories share that explains the fact that all of them have been called "relativism"? This is the question that I intend to answer in the next chapter. My answer will be in the positive—all these theories share a certain commitment, and we can define relativism as the theory that undertakes that commitment. But I will also find it more convenient to characterize relativism in a different, more specific way, so that only a subset of these families counts as relativist.

Chapter 3

Two characterizations of relativism

All the families of theories reviewed in chapter 2, besides invariantism and expressivism, have at some point been deemed "relativism". Yet of the labels we chose when we introduced them ("indexical contextualism", "nonindexical contextualism", and "assessor relativism"), only the last one includes the word "relativism". Can we make sense of the fact that indexical and nonindexical contextualism have been historically thought of as varieties of relativism? That is, can we define relativism in such a way that it covers all the families of theories reviewed in chapter 2?

The first aim of this chapter is to show that it is possible to characterize relativism in such a way that indexical contextualism, nonindexical contextualism, and assessor relativism are all of them instances of the same general, *catch-it-all* characterization. But this does not mean that we should embrace such characterization, and in fact, I will propose a different, *strict* one. Of the three families of theories reviewed, only the one I have called "relativism" (assessor relativism) will fulfill the suggested requirement, which I find more useful than the one posed by the catch-it-all characterization.

The catch-it-all characterization can be summarized as a characterization according to which a relativism is any theory that challenges the *Fregean picture*,

which I introduce in section 3.1. I also devote this section to showing the different ways in which the Fregean picture can be challenged, which, in section 3.2, I link to the different relativisms reviewed in chapter 2. However, in this same section I propose the strict characterization of relativism advanced above and introduce the nomenclature with which it provides us—a nomenclature that keeps the labels "indexical contextualism" and "nonindexical contextualism", and rebrands assessor relativism as "nonindexical relativism". This could suggest a theoretical space for a position called "indexical relativism", which I discuss in section 3.3. I argue for the strict characterization of relativism in section 3.4. The two final sections are devoted to proving its power. In section 3.5, I use it to answer to Stojanovic's (2007, 2012) claim that relativism and contextualism are notational variants of each other. In section 3.6, finally, I apply both the catch-it-all and the strict characterizations to three theories that were deemed relativist back in their days: Harman's (2013), Williams' (2006), and Perry's (1993). My aim will be to establish whether any of these theories is a variety of relativism according to the two characterizations. If they are so only according to the catch-it-all one, I will discuss how to classify them.

3.1. Challenging the Fregean Picture

My first, catch-it-all characterization of relativism, as advanced above, sees it as the result of challenging the Fregean picture. In this section, I disclose what this means. First, I present what I will call "the Fregean picture". Then, I review the different ways in which it can be challenged. In section 3.2, these different ways will be linked to the different varieties of relativism surveyed in chapter 2.

3.1.1. The Fregean picture

The Fregean picture encompasses the relations between sentences, thoughts, and truth-values apparently endorsed by Frege[1] in places such as his annotations

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[1]It is not my commitment here that this is Frege's position. As we will see, the Fregean picture involves denying such an accepted phenomenon as indexicality, and it is doubtful that Frege consistently did so (see Harcourt 1999; May 2006). My aim here is just to take the passages quoted below

to Jourdain's 1912 article "The development of the theories of mathematical logic and the principles of mathematics", where he says:

> A thought is not true at one time and false at another, but is either true or false—*tertium non datur*. The false appearance that a thought can be true at one time and false at another arises from an incomplete expression. A complete sentence (*Satz*),[2] or expression of a thought (*Gedankenausdruck*), must also contain the time-datum. If we say: "The Elbe has risen one metre above the zero of the gauge at Magdeburg", the time belongs to the thought-content of the sentence if what is said is the case. But the truth is timeless. (Frege 1967: 338–339)

In this passage, Frege says that a thought cannot be true or false relative to a parameter (in this case, time), but has to be true or false *simpliciter*. In particular, Frege seems to claim that the thought has to contain a time, by which he cannot mean an instant in the physical sense, for it is not of physical objects that thoughts are made for Frege, if they are made of anything at all for him. Contrarily, what the thought should contain is the *sense* of the time-datum that refers to the time at issue. This is so because, for Frege, the notion of an incomplete thought makes no sense—something has to be able to be presented as true or false to count as a thought. But then, he goes on to claim that sentences, if complete, have to contain every piece of information needed to uniquely determine a thought. In the example, the information at issue is time.

Another passage in which Frege evinces his view on the relations between sentences, thoughts, and truth-values can be found in "Logic", written between 1879 and 1891:

> If someone wished to cite, say, "The total number of inhabitants of

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as suggesting a certain picture as to the relation between sentences, propositions, and truth-values, whether or not Frege was actually committed to it.

[2]The translation originally says "proposition", but I have replaced it with "sentence" to avoid confusion. It is in fact unfortunate that the term used for something with a linguistic structure, such as a sentence, is in so many translations the same we standardly use today for what Frege called "thoughts", which are not necessarily structured.

the German Empire is 52 000 000", as a counter-example to the time-
lessness of thoughts, I should reply: this sentence is not a complete
expression of a thought at all, since it lacks a time-determination. If
we add such a determination, for example, "at noon on 1 January 1897
by central European time", then the thought is either true, in which
case it is always, or better, timelessly, true, or it is false and in that
case it is false without qualification. (Frege 1979a: 135)

In other words, for a sentence to express a thought, that thought has to be
true or false *simpliciter*; its truth-value cannot depend on any parameter (in this
case, time). Both this passage and the previous one also insist that, for the thought
expressed to contain a sense for a time t, an expression with that sense (a time-
datum, in the first quote; a time-determination, in the second) has to explicitly
appear in the sentence. However, this thesis is independent from the one that
requires thoughts to be true or false *simpliciter*.

A final passage in which Frege requires sentences to uniquely determine a
thought, and thoughts to be true or false *simpliciter*, can be found in the first part
of his "Logical Investigations", called "Thoughts", and written between 1918 and
1919:

Now is a thought changeable or is it timeless? The thought we ex-
press by the Pythagorean theorem is surely timeless, eternal, unvary-
ing. But are there not thoughts which are true today but false in six
months' time? The thought, for example, that the tree there is cov-
ered with green leaves, will surely be false in six months' time. No,
for it is not the same thought at all. The words "This tree is covered
with green leaves" are not sufficient by themselves to constitute the
expression of thought, for the time of utterance is involved as well.
Without the time-specification thus given we have not a complete
thought, i.e., we have no thought at all. Only a sentence with the
time-specification filled out, a sentence complete in every respect,
expresses a thought. But this thought, if it is true, is true not only
today or tomorrow but timelessly. (Frege 1979b: 370)

This is perhaps the passage in which Frege insists with more clarity on the two ideas suggested in the two previous quotes: thoughts contain all the information needed to bear an absolute truth-value, and only when the sentence features all such information can we say that it expresses a complete thought.

If Frege's thoughts are our propositions, what follows from the three passages quoted above is that, by felicitously uttering a declarative sentence, one expresses a unique proposition that, in turn, is either true or false, *tertium non datum* (see Recanati 2007: 37–38; Einheuser 2012: 590). This claim involves two different ideas, one concerning the relation between sentences and propositions, the other concerning the relation between propositions and truth-values. In particular, the claim implies that both relations are functions. A function is a relation F such that, if both $\langle x, y \rangle$ and $\langle x, z \rangle \in F$, then $y = z$—no more than one single value can be assigned to the same argument. Applied to the relation between sentences and propositions, for instance, this means that, once a sentence is fixed, a unique proposition is determined. We can accordingly say that, if we see the relation between sentences and propositions in a Fregean way, propositions are functions of sentences. The same, as I said, applies to the relation between propositions and truth-values. A proposition, in a Fregean spirit, uniquely determines a truth-value, so that truth-values are functions of propositions.

This picture of the relation between sentences, propositions, and truth-values I will call "the Fregean picture". I will represent the fact that A is compatible with B thus (if only one B is represented as compatible with A, then A determines B, i.e., B is a function of A):

$$A \mapsto B$$

So, the Fregean picture claims these two things:

$$\text{Sentence} \mapsto \text{Proposition}$$

and

$$\text{Proposition} \mapsto \text{Truth-value}$$

For the sake of brevity, both representations can be combined thus:

$$\text{Sentence} \mapsto \text{Proposition} \mapsto \text{Truth-value}$$

This is what the Fregean picture claims. But something else follows from what is explicitly represented in our diagram. If C is a function of B and B is a function of A, then C is a function of A. Hence, according to the Fregean picture, truth-values are also functions of sentences: a sentence, if felicitously uttered (that is, if, among other things, complete), uniquely determines a truth-value.

If we commit to the Fregean picture as the appropriate depiction of what happens in sentences featuring "tasty", for instance, we will be invariantists about "tasty" (see section 2.5): we will hold that "tasty" expresses a property that objects either have or do not have independently of everything but how the world is. In this sense, characterizing the different relativisms as the results of challenging the Fregean picture in different ways, as I will do, allows us to characterize invariantism as a limit case as well—as the result of respecting the Fregean picture. This does not mean that invariantism requires all constituents of the proposition to have a linguistic counterpart in the sentence. This is Frege's particular path to invariantism, but there are alternative ones.

3.1.2. Challenging the picture

The Fregean picture can be challenged in many different ways. For each of the pictured relations, one can deny that, for at least some sentences, the left-hand element uniquely determines the right-hand one. That is, if the Fregean claims that $A \mapsto B$, one can reply that more than one value for B is compatible with the same value for A. Claiming this for any of the pictured relations will be enough to count as a relativism according to the first characterization that I will propose. There are in particular four "atomic" ways in which the Fregean picture can be challenged:

(D$_1$) By denying that sentences uniquely determine propositions;

(D$_2$) By denying that sentences uniquely determine truth-values;

(D$_3$) By denying that pairs of sentence and context of utterance uniquely determine propositions,[3] and

(D$_4$) By denying that pairs of proposition and context of utterance uniquely determine truth-values.

For instance, it is nowadays untenable to claim that any sentence will uniquely determine a proposition—more than one proposition is compatible with the same sentence, as happens with "I am here", which determines a different proposition depending on who utters it. I will call this phenomenon "indexicality". However, it is also reasonably standard to hold that the sentence together with the context in which it is uttered is only compatible with one proposition: the one that is expressed at that context. "I am here", by itself, does not uniquely determine a proposition, but it does when a context of utterance is supplied: it determines the proposition expressed at that context.

So, we would say, propositions are functions of sentences and contexts of utterance. In this sense, even if one claims that propositions are not functions of sentences, one can still hold that they are functions of sentences plus something more—contexts of utterance. If we do not claim that C is a function of A anymore, but a function of $\langle A, B \rangle$, we say that C is *relativized* to B. Thus, we can see this as a proposal to *relativize* propositions to contexts of utterance.

Remember that, if C is a function of B and B is a function of A, C will be a function of A. Does this mean that denying either that C is a function of B or that B is a function of A amounts to denying that C is a function of A? If it did, we could say that, whenever the Fregean picture is challenged, it is denied that sentences uniquely determine truth-values. However, this does not follow, because there could be something in the relation between propositions and truth-values that neutralized the context-sensitivity in the relation between sentences and propositions, thus assigning a unique truth-value to each sentence. To see this, consider the following case. Suppose that we have a theory that relativizes

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[3]This way of challenging the Fregean picture, the only one that will not been linked in this section to any of the theories reviewed in chapter 2, will be linked in section 3.2 to a variety of relativism that will be discussed in section 3.3: what I will call "indexical relativism".

propositions to contexts of utterance, so that the proposition expressed by the sentence "I am here" is the proposition that the speaker at the context of utterance is at the location of the context of utterance. But now, suppose that our theory tells us the improbable result that the truth-value of such proposition is true, no matter who or where the speaker is. This is an implausible theory, but one that relativizes propositions to contexts of utterance without relativizing sentential truth-value. In what follows, though, I will ignore this possibility and assume that, for all theories worth taking into consideration, denying either that sentences uniquely determine propositions or that propositions uniquely determine truth-values will result in denying that sentences uniquely determine truth-values. Thus, we can say that, whenever the Fregean picture is challenged, it is denied that sentences uniquely determine truth-values.

If we implement the modification of the Fregean picture according to which pairs of sentence and context of utterance determine a proposition, the picture will turn into something like this:

$$\langle \text{Sentence}, \text{Context of utterance} \rangle \mapsto \text{Proposition} \mapsto \text{Truth-value}$$

Instead of "$\langle A, B \rangle \mapsto C$", I will write "$A \overset{B}{\mapsto} C$". We have assumed that a sentence uniquely determines a proposition at a context of utterance, but that, had the context of utterance been a different one, it could have determined a different proposition. If at context of utterance c_2 the sentence determines, let us say, Proposition$_2$, there could be contexts at which it would have determined Proposition$_1$, Proposition$_3$, and so on. Each of these propositions will nevertheless determine a unique truth-value, although each one can determine a different one (say, Truth-value$_1$, Truth-value$_2$ and Truth-value$_3$, respectively). Hence, the picture becomes as in Fig. 3.1. As can be seen, this picture corresponds to indexical contextualism: the same sentence can express different propositions depending on the context of utterance, but, once we fix the proposition, it can only have one truth-value, no matter what the context of utterance is. For instance, a sentence featuring "tasty" will express different propositions depending on which personal taste standard is determined by the context of utterance.
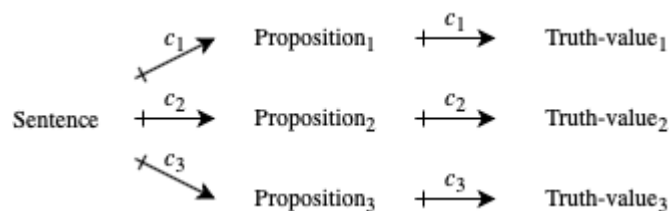
Figure 3.1: Indexical contextualism

If, in line with the discussion in section 2.3, we want to account for faultless disagreement, we can add to the previous modification that each of the propositions that are compatible with a single sentence is itself compatible with different truth-values, depending on the context of utterance:
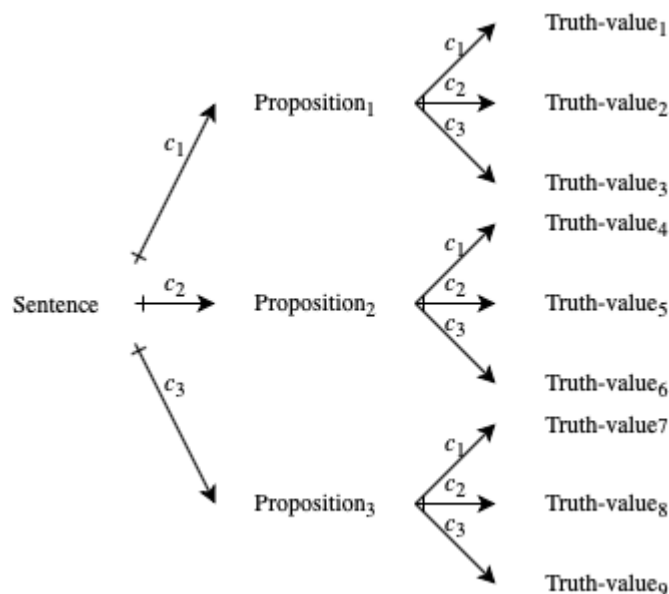
Figure 3.2: Nonindexical contextualism

The corresponding theory is nonindexical contextualism, according to which, for instance, a sentence featuring "tasty" expresses at a context of utterance a proposition that can be true or false depending on the personal taste standard determined by that context. Of course, Fig. 3.2 also represents the indexical con-

textualist thesis that the same sentence is compatible with more than one proposition, but this, as I said before, is pretty much shared by every theory nowadays. What distinguishes indexical contextualism is that it does not recognize any relativity beyond that of the proposition with respect to the context of utterance. I will discuss in more detail what it takes for a theory to be a variety of nonindexical contextualism, or any other of the families under review, in section 3.2.

If we now want to account not only for faultless disagreement but also for retraction, in line with the discussion in section 2.4, we can also make the same pair of proposition and context of utterance not determine a single proposition:
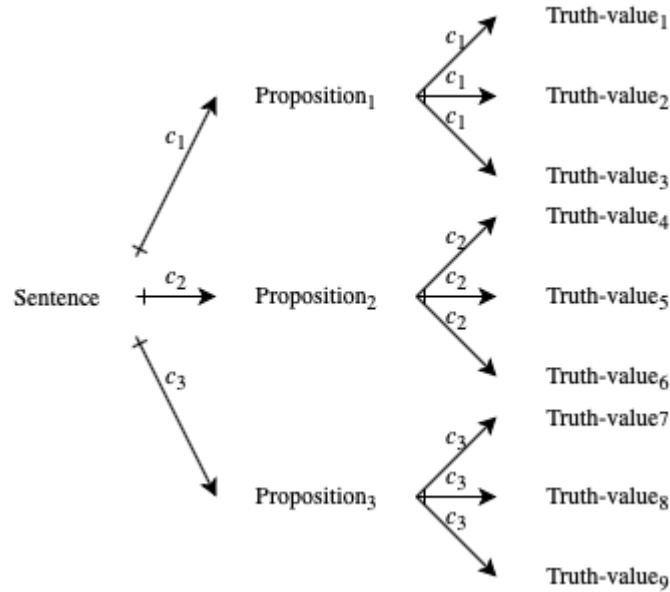
Figure 3.3: Assessor relativism

This is what assessor relativism proposes—for instance, a sentence featuring "tasty" expresses at a context of utterance a proposition that can be true or false depending on a personal taste standard that is not determined by the sentence or the context of utterance, but by the context of assessment.

Since there are four "atomic" ways in which the Fregean picture can be challenged, there are eight possible combinations of "atomic" challenges to the Fregean

picture (see Fig. 3.4, where also the picture itself is represented). According to the *catch-it-all* characterization of relativism, any theory that can be represented by any of these combinations will count as such. But, since denying that a pair $\langle A, B \rangle$ uniquely determines C implies that neither does A, we arrive at the following definition:

> **Relativism$_{\text{cia}}$:** A theory is a variety of relativism iff it challenges the Fregean picture, that is, iff it denies either that sentences uniquely determine propositions, or that propositions uniquely determine truthvalues.

The previous assumption that every sensible theory that does any of this will also deny that sentences uniquely determine truth-values allows us to simplify this to say that relativism denies that sentences uniquely determine truth-values. The reason for distinguishing four atomic ways of challenging the Fregean picture, even if only two of them play a role in this characterization of relativism and they can be reduced to one, is that they will allow us to distinguish between different *varieties* of relativism. Since only some of the latter will be selected as true relativisms by the strict characterization that I will propose, we need all atomic ways of challenging the Fregean picture for what will come later. The next section is devoted to the strict characterization.

3.2.   The many relativisms

In this section, I draw a classification of the theories that were deemed relativist by the characterization offered in the previous section. After this, I propose an alternative characterization that deems relativist only theories belonging to some of the categories distinguished in the classification.

3.2.1.   A classification and another characterization

Remember that, if we do not claim that C is a function of A anymore, but a function of $\langle A, B \rangle$, we say that C is relativized to B. According to this, each proposal challenging the Fregean picture can be seen as a proposal to relativize the
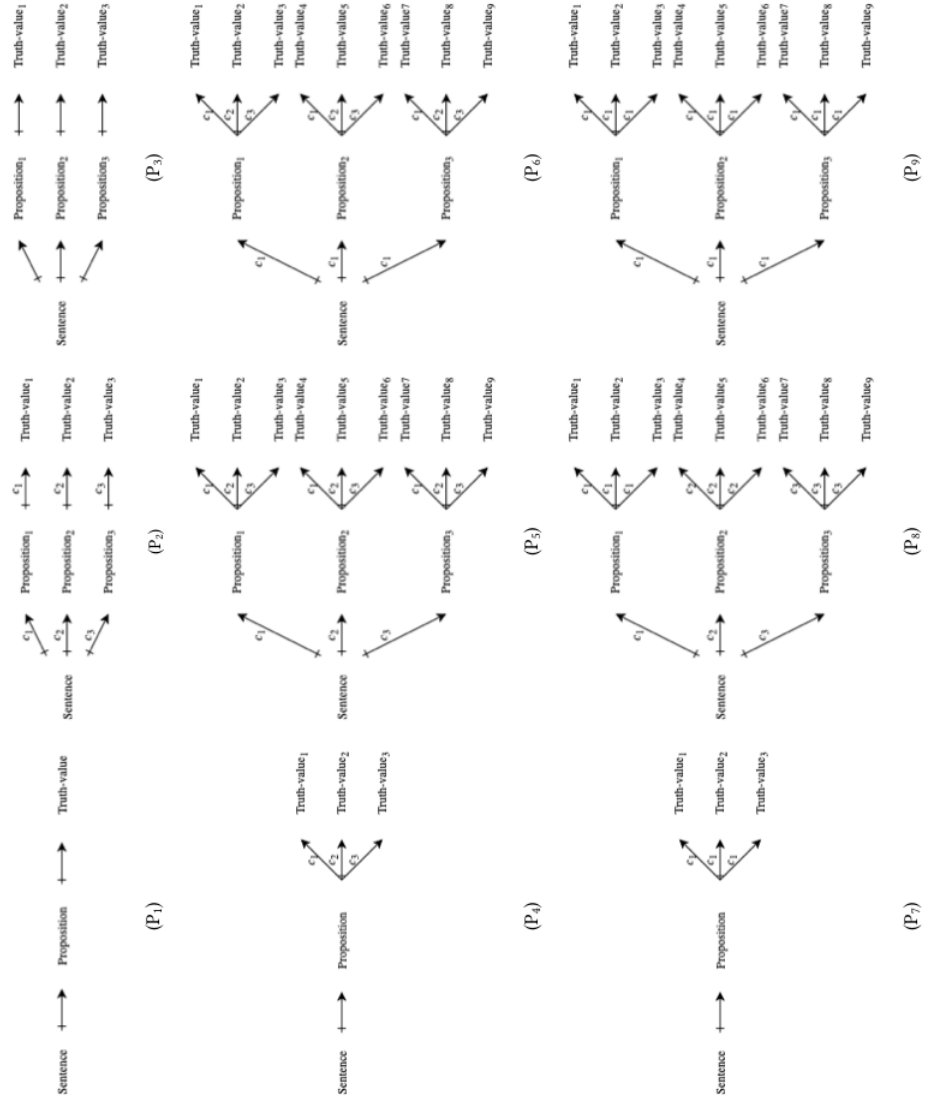
Figure 3.4: Varieties of relativism

right-hand element in at least one of the two relations it features. In our first example (corresponding to indexical contextualism), the proposition expressed by uttering a sentence is relativized to contexts of utterance; in the second one (corresponding to nonindexical contextualism), propositional truth-values are relativized to contexts of utterance; in the third one (corresponding to assessor relativism), propositional truth-values are relativized to contexts of assessment. Accordingly, all of these proposals have at some point been called "relativist". At least four different relativizations have been defended as ways of characterizing relativism, each one of them corresponding to one of the atomic ways of challenging the Fregean picture mentioned in section 3.1:

(R_1) Relativization of propositions to contexts of utterance;

(R_2) Relativization of propositional truth-values to contexts of utterance;

(R_3) Relativization of propositions to contexts of assessment, and

(R_4) Relativization of propositional truth-values to contexts of assessment.

We can say that (R_1) characterizes indexical contextualism, (R_2) characterizes nonindexical relativism, and (R_4) characterizes assessor relativism. In section 3.3, I will talk about the theories supported by those who propose to relativize propositions to contexts of assessment. Now, I want to propose a second characterization of relativism that, unlike the catch-it-all characterization, focuses only on some of these relativizations.

Note that (R_1) and (R_2) have the same consequences regarding the relativity of sentential truth—in both cases, a sentence has its truth-value relative to a context of utterance. The difference lies in whether the context of utterance determines the sentence's truth-value by contributing with part of the proposition expressed by it, as in (R_1), or by supplying the circumstances in which such proposition is to be evaluated, as in (R_2). Something similar happens with (R_3) and (R_4). Both relativize sentential truth to contexts of assessment, but, while the latter plays a semantic role in (R_3), it just supplies the circumstances of evaluation in (R_4).

It seems clear that two dimensions can be distinguished here. A first dimension concerns the context to which sentential truth is relativized—the context of

utterance in (R$_1$) and (R$_2$), the context of assessment in (R$_3$) and (R$_4$). A second dimension concerns whether the context at issue contributes with part of the proposition expressed, as in (R$_1$) and (R$_3$), or with part of the circumstances of evaluation, as in (R$_2$) and (R$_4$). Remember that, since section 2.1, we take "contextualism" to refer to those theories according to which the context responsible for supplying the value for the parameter at issue is the context of utterance. Thus, the first dimension allows us to distinguish between indexical and nonindexical contextualism, on the one hand, and assessor relativism, on the other. Since in section 2.1 we also defined indexical theories as those according to which the parameter belongs to the proposition, the second dimension allows us to distinguish between indexical and nonindexical contextualism. But it also allows us to say that assessor relativism is a nonindexical theory, if indexical theories are those according to which the context at issue contributes with part of the proposition expressed, while, according to nonindexical theories, the role played by such context is limited to the circumstances of evaluation.

I claim that only when the relevant context is that of assessment can we talk about a relativist theory; if the relevant context is only that of utterance, we are just talking about contextualism. In this sense, the first dimension would allow us to distinguish between genuinely relativist and contextualist theories, so that only (R$_3$) and (R$_4$) would count as relativist theories. A strict definition of relativism would be this:

> **Relativism$_{ss}$:** A theory is a variety of relativism iff it relativizes sentential truth to contexts of assessment.

Note again that this relativization can be implemented both by relativizing propositions to contexts of assessment, and by relativizing propositional truth-values to contexts of assessment.

Sentences and contexts of utterance together determine an utterance. If a sentence plus a context of utterance no longer determines a truth-value, this means that an utterance no longer determines a truth-value. This amounts to relativizing utterance truth. Thus, an equivalent definition to Relativism$_{ss}$ would deem relativist any theory that relativized utterance truth:

Relativism$_{su}$: A theory is a variety of relativism iff it relativizes utterance truth.

Given the strict characterization of relativism, we can now justifiedly say that theories characterized by (R$_1$) are varieties of indexical contextualism; theories characterized by (R$_2$) are varieties of nonindexical contextualism, and theories characterized by (R$_4$), which I have up to now been calling "assessor relativism", are varieties of *nonindexical relativism.*

What about (R$_3$)? I have talked about indexical contextualism, nonindexical contextualism, and nonindexical relativism. A natural question might arise after reading these three labels in a row: is there not a combination missing? Is there not such a thing as an *indexical relativism*? There are indeed some theories that naturally fall under such tag, although they have not been much discussed. In fact, a great part of the discussion is occupied by MacFarlane's (2014: 73) knockdown argument against them. I will discuss indexical relativism in section 3.3. The question for now should be what to do with theories that incur in more than one relativization—is a theory that relativizes both propositions and truth-values to contexts of utterance an indexical contextualism, a nonindexical contextualism, or is it possible for a theory to be both an indexical and a nonindexical contextualism? This is what I try to answer in the next subsection.

3.2.2. Classifying theories

The strategy that I will follow in answering the question posed at the end of the previous subsection is to review the ways of challenging the Fregean picture represented in Fig. 3.4 and try to determine which family of theories corresponds to each one. (P$_1$) is the Fregean picture: a sentence uniquely determines a proposition, which in turn uniquely determines a truth-value. When this is applied, for instance, to sentences featuring "tasty", the result is invariantism about this class of sentences (see section 2.5). (P$_2$) is indexical contextualism: given a context of utterance, a sentence determines a proposition, but it could have determined other propositions given different contexts of utterance. Once the proposition is fixed, however, it still uniquely determines a truth-value. (P$_3$) is a variety of indexical

relativism: since a context of utterance is needed to assign a truth-value, the same sentence is compatible with more than one proposition given the same context of utterance, but, once the proposition is fixed, again, it still uniquely determines a truth-value.

(P_4) is a form of nonindexical contextualism inasmuch as it makes propositions determine different truth-values given different contexts of utterance. It is hard to find defenses of this kind of position in the literature, though, since it is committed to the absoluteness of the proposition expressed in a way that only Fregeanism is—it does not recognize such an established phenomenon as indexicality. (P_5) is a form of nonindexical contextualism, and a much more standard one: given a context of utterance, a sentence determines a proposition, but it could have determined other propositions given different contexts of utterance; and, once the proposition is fixed, it will determine different truth-values given different contexts of utterance. As I said when commenting Fig. 3.2, indexicality is a massively acknowledged phenomenon that allows us to distinguish just theories that *only* acknowledge such form of relativity. In (P_6), the same sentence is compatible with more than one proposition given the same context of utterance, and, although each proposition determines a unique truth-value, it could have determined other truth-values given different contexts of utterance. I would say that (P_6) is a variety of indexical relativism. It shares features with nonindexical contextualism as well, but I think the first label should be the dominant one, relativization of propositions to contexts of assessment being quite a radical move.

(P_7) is a variety of nonindexical relativism inasmuch as it makes propositions determine different truth-values even given the same context of utterance, depending on the context of assessment. Again, though, it is a weird form of nonindexical relativism, since it does not recognize indexicality. (P_8) is a much more standard variety of nonindexical relativism, and in fact, it should work as a representation of MacFarlane's (2014) theory: given a context of utterance, a sentence determines a proposition, but it could have determined other propositions given different contexts of utterance; and, once the proposition is fixed, it will determine different truth-values even given the same context of utterance, for it is the context

of assessment that is responsible for supplying the circumstances of evaluation. Faced with the decision as to how to classify this kind of theory, MacFarlane's should be a variety of nonindexical *relativism* if anything is. In (P_9), the same sentence is compatible with more than one proposition given the same context of utterance, and each proposition is compatible with more than one truth-value given the same context of utterance. Thus, (P_9) shares features of both indexical and nonindexical relativism. This time, I cannot see a reason why one label should have preference over the other, so (P_9) can be seen as a variety of either indexical or nonindexical relativism.

So this is what we have. Indexical contextualism comprises (P_2): you can only be an indexical contextualist if you relativize propositions to contexts of utterance but do not relativize anything else. Nonindexical contextualism comprises (P_4) and (P_5): once you relativize propositional truth-value to contexts of utterance, you can either admit or deny indexicality. Indexical relativism comprises (P_3) and (P_6): once you relativize propositions to contexts of assessment, you can either relativize propositional truth-values to contexts of utterance or not relativize them at all. Nonindexical relativism comprises (P_7) and (P_8): again, relativizing propositional truth-value beyond contexts of utterance is compatible with admitting or denying indexicality. As to (P_9), it can be called a variety of both indexical and nonindexical relativism.

The resulting classification, once indexical relativism is taken into account, is this. Theories that have been deemed relativist all have in common that they relativize sentential truth to something, and they all can be grouped into four different classes. The class to which a theory belongs depends on whether it relativizes sentential truth to the context of utterance or to the context of assessment, and on how it relativizes sentential truth—by relativizing which proposition is expressed, or by relativizing that proposition's truth-value. Theories that relativize sentential truth to the context of utterance only by relativizing which proposition is expressed to the context of utterance are varieties of indexical contextualism. Theories that relativize sentential truth to the context of utterance at least by relativizing propositional truth are varieties of nonindexical contextualism. Theories that relativize sentential truth to the context of assessment by relativizing which

proposition is expressed to the context of assessment are varieties of indexical relativism. Theories that relativize sentential truth to the context of assessment by relativizing propositional truth are varieties of nonindexical relativism.

It is now time to fill in the gap that lies at the intersection between relativism and indexicalism. In the next section, I explore theories that could fall within this gap.

3.3.   Indexical relativism

In section 3.2, I have classified the families of theories reviewed in chapter 2 along two different dimensions. The first one concerns whether the parameter at issue that has an impact on the proposition's truth-value is part of the proposition. This dimension allows us to distinguish between indexical and nonindexical theories. The second dimension concerns what context is responsible for providing us with a value for such parameter, and allows us to distinguish between contextualist and relativist theories. Theories should thus be able to be deemed varieties of indexical contextualism, nonindexical contextualism, indexical relativism, and nonindexical relativism. In chapter 2, we saw examples of theories belonging to three of these four families: indexical contextualism, nonindexical contextualism, and nonindexical relativism, but not indexical relativist theories. It seems that indexical relativism is a possible position, but one might ask whether there have been actual theories that relativize which proposition is expressed by a given sentence to contexts of assessment. The aim of this section is to show that such theories exist. However, as advanced before, they are residual, and much of the section will be devoted to showing how their lack of appeal explains why.

The label "indexical relativism" is not completely novel, since it has been used by Weatherson (2009: 241). Indexical relativism has also been dubbed "expressive relativism" (MacFarlane 2005b: 312), "pluralistic content relativism" (Cappelen 2008: 266), or "content relativism" (Egan et al. 2005: 154; Egan 2009: 274; 2011: 226; López de Sa 2011: 154; MacFarlane 2014: 73–76). Theories able to be subsumed under any of these labels have it that there is a contribution to the truth-value that can be traced back neither to the sentence nor to the context of

utterance, but can be seen as part of the proposition expressed, just like indexical contextualism claims about the contribution of the context of utterance. Hence, a potentially infinite number of different propositions might be expressed at the same context. These different propositions can each have a different truth-value, so the same utterance can have a number of truth-values.

Indexical relativism, even if quite unpopular, has been defended by authors such as Cappelen (2008), Egan (2009), and Weatherson (2009). Their proposals all have it that the pair composed of the sentence and the context of utterance does not contribute with all that is needed to determine a truth-value. The candidate to fill in the gap is, of course, the context of assessment, although only Weatherson talks explicitly about the assessor's context (Weatherson 2009: 341). The assessor's context, though, is not necessarily the context of assessment—the latter could determine a parameter that is not part of the index of the context, that is, it is not the parameter of the assessor (see subsection 2.3.2). Cappelen claims that the propositions one expresses by uttering some sentences in a suitable context can be determined only relative to the context of interpretation (Cappelen 2008: 266), and Egan relativizes the proposition to the particular audience members (Egan 2009: 256). However, the three proposals can be seen as equivalent for the purposes of this section. I will assume that, in all of them, it is the context of assessment that contributes with the part of the proposition expressed with which both the sentence and the context of utterance fail to contribute.

To see how any of these theories would work, let us apply them to our example (D):

> (D) *A*: Black pudding is tasty.
>   *B*: No, it isn't.

Suppose that *A* utters (1) "Black pudding is tasty" at context c_A, and that *B* hears it from context c_B. As assessed from c_A, (1) expresses the proposition that black pudding is tasty according to *A*'s personal taste standard, while, as assessed from c_B, it expresses the proposition that black pudding is tasty according to *B*'s personal taste standard. This would allow (1) to be true according to *A*, since *A*'s personal taste standard sanctions her judgment. But it would also allow (1) to be

false according to B, since black pudding is not tasty according to B's personal taste standard, thus making it appropriate for B to reply "No, it isn't". Here, c_A and c_B are both contexts of assessment (c_A is both the context of utterance and one of the contexts of assessment). Hence, according to the indexical relativist, (1) expresses one proposition relative to one context of assessment and a different one relative to another. It follows from this that, if we adopt indexical relativism, (D), although faultless, is not a true disagreement.

This was to be expected. What makes nonindexical relativism able to deal with the faultlessness of faultless disagreement, after all, is the fact that it relativizes sentential truth to contexts of assessment, not the nonindexical way in which it does so. However, the nonindexical component of nonindexical relativism was what allowed it to account for the fact that faultless disagreement *is* a kind of disagreement. By lacking such component, indexical relativism makes the propositions under discussion compatible. So, just like indexical contextualism, indexical relativism seems unable to characterize faultless disagreement as a kind of disagreement.

For its part, relativization of sentential truth to contexts of assessment was what allowed nonindexical relativism to deal with retraction, so indexical relativism seems fit to deal with it as well. If, at a later time, A assesses her utterance of (1), she will take such utterance to express the proposition that black pudding is tasty according to her current personal taste standard. This would allow (1) to be false now, since, if A's standard has changed, her present standard precludes finding black pudding tasty.

Thus, indexical and nonindexical relativism seem to work equally well when trying to account for faultlessness and retraction, but indexical relativism has problems when dealing with the fact that faultless disagreement is a kind of disagreement. However, this is not indexical relativism's only problem, nor the most important one. There has been a lot of debate regarding whether an indexical theory can account for disagreement. There is much less to discuss with respect to indexical relativism's other disadvantage, which is that it leads to implausible readings of certain sentences.

MacFarlane (2014: 73) provides the following argument to the effect that in-

dexical relativism is implausible when it comes to explaining how sentences containing "tasty" work, which could be equally applied to (1). Let us suppose that Yum says "Licorice is tasty", which is true according to her standards of personal taste, false according to Yuk's. MacFarlane considers two possible explanations for this. One is that the proposition expressed by Yum is true relative to her standards, false according to Yuk's. This is what the nonindexical relativist would say. The other explanation is that, from her perspective, Yum has expressed the proposition that licorice is pleasing to her tastes, while, from Yuk's perspective, Yum has expressed the proposition that licorice is pleasing to *Yuk's* tastes. But let us suppose that Yum now says "I asserted that licorice is pleasing to my tastes". If we are indexical relativists about "tasty", this will again be true according to Yum's standards, false according to Yuk's. But now, the indexical relativist explanation seems highly implausible. For, if it were true, it would imply that, from Yuk's perspective, Yum would have expressed the proposition that licorice is pleasing to *Yuk's* tastes, which is simply not how "my" works, however "tasty" could work— by saying "I asserted that licorice is pleasing to my tastes", Yum is talking about Yum's tastes, not about Yuk's. One could of course explain the first stage in an indexical relativist way and the second in a nonindexical relativist way, but why then not become a nonindexical relativist from the beginning? Thus, indexical relativism for "tasty" seems a nonstarter.

Indexical relativism has been defended, though, for different kinds of cases. For Egan, for instance, the sentence "Jesus loves you", written on a billboard, expresses a different proposition for each person who reads it (Egan 2009: 259–261). But MacFarlane's argument can be replicated for this case, as follows. Frank considers himself a good Christian and thus thinks that what the billboard says is true. Daniel, however, considers himself a sinner and thus thinks that what the billboard says is false. Hence, "Jesus loves you" is true as assessed from Frank's perspective and false as assessed from Daniel's perspective. Now, suppose that Frank says "The billboard said that Jesus loves me". This is true from Frank's perspective, but not from Daniel's—he thinks the billboard said that Jesus loves *him*, even if, according to him, this is false. This might be so because, from Frank's perspective, "The billboard said that Jesus loves me" expresses the proposition that

the billboard said that Jesus loves Frank, while, from Daniel's perspective, "The billboard said that Jesus loves me" expresses the proposition that the billboard said that Jesus loves Daniel. But, again, this is not how "me" works. "Me" refers to Frank even from Daniel's perspective, so Daniel should understand Frank's utterance of "The billboard said that Jesus loves me" as reporting that the billboard said that Jesus loves Frank.

One could of course propose an indexical relativism for other areas of discourse. But reporting practices seem ubiquitous, no matter with what area of discourse we are dealing. There is no topic about which it should be forbidden to report what other people say. Hence, indexical relativism seems an implausible theory even for those areas for which it has been defended. However, it is not a contradictory position *per se*, and as such, it deserves a place among the varieties of relativism classified in this chapter.

Once the picture of the different varieties of relativism is completed, we can wonder why my final criterion has deemed only some of them relativist. In the next section, I address this question and offer some arguments in favor of such move.

3.4.   Why so strict?

In sections 3.1 and 3.2, I have offered two different characterizations of relativism: Relativism$_{cia}$ and Relativism$_{su}$, which is equivalent to Relativism$_{ss}$. Relativism$_{cia}$ allows us to make sense of the fact that all the theories reviewed in chapter 2 have at some point been called "relativism", but I have proposed to reserve the label just for the subset of them that falls under Relativism$_{su}$. In this section, I argue for this move. In particular, I rely on MacFarlane's (2014) reasons to keep the label "relative truth" for the kind of phenomenon with which his theory deals.

MacFarlane claims that it is only worth talking about relative truth when truth is relative not only to a context of utterance, but to a context of assessment. He sees his own project as that of offering an *explication*, in Carnap's sense, of philosophical talk of "relative truth". He acknowledges that there are many ways in

which the phrase "relative truth" is used in philosophical discourse, and his sense does not exclude others (MacFarlane 2014: 44). In the same vein, this chapter could be seen as an attempt at offering an explication of philosophical talk of "relativism". Since the reasons for preferring one sense of "relativism" are connected to the reasons for preferring the corresponding sense of "relative truth", MacFarlane's arguments should serve our purpose too.

MacFarlane's arguments operate under the assumption that we only need to prove why nonindexical contextualism is not a variety of relativism, because it is out of discussion that indexical contextualism is not. (On the other hand, he assumes that only his own proposal stands as a form of relativism after the arguments, but none of them touches indexical relativism, which I think is a variety of relativism.) Thus, I will first present MacFarlane's arguments and then try to establish whether they can be adapted to rule out indexical contextualism too as a form of relativism.

MacFarlane gives three arguments for excluding nonindexical contextualism as a variety of relativism (MacFarlane 2014: 50). The first one is that doing so would classify orthodox philosophers of language such as Prior and Kaplan, who relativize propositional truth to time, as relativists. The extent to which Prior and Kaplan should be called "orthodox" philosophers of language has a lot to do with how used we are to the machinery that they proposed, and this is one reason to rule out indexical contextualism as well: indexicality is a widely acknowledged phenomenon, and recognizing it is not distinctive of any theory in the sense that would make it a variety of relativism.

The second argument is that the historical motivation for the position held by authors such as Prior and Kaplan, i.e., temporalism, has more to do with the relation between tense and semantic values than it has to do with the traditional debates about relative truth that motivate relativism. This argument, in contrast with the first one, is difficult to replicate for indexical contextualism, since debates about relative truth are among the ones that have traditionally motivated it.

The third and final argument is that nonindexical contextualists are still "absolutists" about utterance truth: even if relativized propositions do not have a fixed truth-value, utterances expressing them do, since individuating utterances

involves fixing all the parameters determined by the context in which they are made, and according to nonindexical contextualists, the values for these parameters are all we need to fix the truth-value of the proposition expressed. Indexical contextualists are absolutists about utterance truth too, so this argument leaves just the families of theories that I have proposed to deem relativist.

But why has relativism to be defined in terms of utterance truth, and not, for instance, in terms of propositional truth? In section 3.2, I defined relativism in terms of sentential truth, and said that, according to it, sentential truth is relative to a context of assessment. As I said, since a sentence and a context of utterance together define an utterance, this is equivalent to saying that utterance truth is relative. Only theories that relativize utterance truth are relativist, and the third of MacFarlane's arguments for this is that these theories are the only ones that relativize utterance truth. The argument is circular.

I want to complete the argument by providing a reason why only theories that relativize utterance truth are varieties of relativism. The reason has to do with what is special about utterances as opposed to sentences and propositions. Utterances are particular things that people do, while both sentences (understood as types) and propositions are theoretical entities. As relativists, what we want to do is to relativize the appropriateness of certain actions, as utterances are, and not the properties of some kind of theoretical entity. Relativism in the philosophy of language, as I advanced in section 1.4 and will develop in chapter 6, should connect with a certain stance, a stance that understands human interactions in a certain way that embodies values such as tolerance and progress. These values are implemented when we understand the appropriateness of some human actions, i.e., utterances, as relative to a certain standpoint. Neither indexical nor nonindexical contextualism accomplish this—both have it that, once an utterance is made, it will be appropriate or not by its very defining characteristics (which sentence is uttered, and at what context). This, as I will argue in chapter 6, does not fit too well with the open-minded attitude that is required by the relativist stance. In fact, being an absolutist about utterance truth leads to what, in that same chapter, I will call "the absolutist stance", which is the opposite attitude.

These are MacFarlane's and my reasons for keeping the name "relativism"

only for theories that relativize sentential truth-value beyond contexts of utterance, that is, for theories that relativize sentential truth-value to contexts of assessment. If we are compelled by these reasons, the only ways of challenging the Fregean picture that will lead to relativism are (P_3), (P_6), (P_7), (P_8), and (P_9)—(P_2), (P_4), and (P_5) will lead to different varieties of contextualism. (P_3), (P_6), (P_7), (P_8), and (P_9) can be grouped into two varieties of relativism: indexical relativism, which comprises (P_3), (P_6), and maybe (P_9), and nonindexical relativism, which comprises (P_7), (P_8), and maybe (P_9). MacFarlane rejects what I have called "indexical relativism" here for the reasons stated in the previous section. Moreover, he is committed with indexicality as a widely acknowledged phenomenon in the current philosophical tradition, so (P_7) is out of the picture. Thus, (P_8) is the figure that represents the way in which he thinks that language works. A theory in accordance with (P_8) is what I will call "relativism" for the rest of this dissertation. In the next two sections, I show the power of this characterization, and the classification of so-called relativist theories that goes with it, in two ways. In section 3.5, I show how it can be used to answer to Stojanovic's (2007, 2012) claim that relativism and contextualism are notational variants of each other. In section 3.6, I apply the characterization to some theories that have historically been called varieties of relativism.

3.5. Against the "notational variant" claim

In section 3.2, I have offered a classification of so-called relativist theories. This section and the next one are devoted to proving the power of this classification. While in the next one I do so by applying it to several theories that their authors proposed as forms of relativism, in this one I use it to answer to Stojanovic's (2007, 2012) claim that relativism is nothing but a notational variant of contextualism.

I have classified so-called relativist theories along two dimensions: whether the parameter at issue is part of the proposition, and what context is responsible for supplying it. Where to place a parameter and how to determine its value are both questions belonging to the philosophy of language, but finding a place in the discipline for the latter is a little more complicated an issue. Traditionally,

philosophy of language has been divided into syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Relativism, whatever its flavor, has usually been characterized as a semantic theory. In the last few years, however, the consideration that semantics deals with content has led philosophers of language to think that relativism is better accommodated in *postsemantics*. After all, it is said, the key relativist insight (as I have characterized it in the previous subsection) that the truth-value of some sentences is relative to contexts of assessment does not tell us anything about the contents of the propositions expressed by those sentences. I would nonetheless say that the specific implementations of this insight carry semantic commitments with them— both indexicalism and nonindexicalism are proposals about what the proposition expressed contains, and can consequently be deemed semantic proposals. Thus, although what makes relativism what it is belongs to the postsemantic level, semantic commitments need to be taken to deliver a complete theory. Relativism, once it is developed either in an indexical or nonindexical way, is hence a theory that makes contributions both at the semantic and postsemantic levels.

Stojanovic (2007), however, argues that relativism and contextualism are "not much more than notational variants of one another" (Stojanovic 2007: 691). She does so by defining a semantics for each theory and a bidirectional translation procedure that allows us to predict the truth-value of a relativist sentence (a sentence of the language of relativist semantics) given that of its contextualist version, and vice versa (Stojanovic 2007: 700–703). This procedure makes what in a contextualist semantics is an argument a parameter of the circumstances of evaluation, and what in a relativist semantics is a parameter of the circumstances of evaluation an argument. The result is that the two alternatives will predict exactly the same truth-value for each pair of sentence and set of circumstances of evaluation.

Stojanovic's claim, to be fair, is that relativism and contextualism are equivalent "from the viewpoint of semantics" (Stojanovic 2007: 691). She develops this idea in her sequel to her 2007 paper (Stojanovic 2012). There, she distinguishes, as I have done, between relativism as a theory that relativizes propositional truth (what I have called "nonindexicalism"), and relativism as a theory that relativizes sentential truth to contexts of assessment (what I have called "relativism"). Relativism in the first sense, she argues just like she did in her 2007 paper, is nothing

but a notational variant of (indexical) contextualism—if the context responsible for supplying the circumstances of evaluation is the context of utterance, thus yielding a nonindexical contextualism, both theories will predict the same truth-value for any sentence as uttered in a particular context. The novelty of Stojanovic's (2012) paper lies in arguing against relativism in the second sense as a *semantic* alternative to contextualism as well. For it is true that (nonindexical) contextualism will assign a particular truth-value to any sentence as uttered in a context, while relativism will be compatible with a variety of truth-values for the same sentence-in-context. But what truth-value we assign to a sentence-context pair is not a matter of semantics. Semantics, as Stojanovic understands it, is "the machinery that maps, in a compositional manner, the sentences of a language to truth values (as a function of appropriate parameters)" (Stojanovic 2012: 627). Thus understood, relativist *semantics* and (nonindexical) contextualist semantics are equivalent—they will assign the same truth-value to each pair of sentence and sequence of parameters. The only difference will be that (nonindexical) contextualists will claim that it is the context of utterance that determines the sequence of parameters relative to which the sentence is to be evaluated, while relativists in the second sense will allow each context of assessment to determine a different sequence of parameters. However, this is not semantics, but what Stojanovic calls, following MacFarlane (2003, 2012), "postsemantics".

So, "bridging" principles that give us a sentence's truth-value in a context of utterance as a function of that sentence's truth-value relative to a certain sequence of parameters are a matter of postsemantics. Relativism is distinguished from (nonindexical) contextualism only with respect to the postsemantics, not with respect to the semantics. A plausible answer to this kind of criticism would be to bite the bullet and just move the whole discussion to the postsemantic level; the question would now be which of these two *postsemantics* accounts better for the linguistic evidence that we have. Stojanovic, however, thinks that such a discussion would make no sense, for it would depend on the assumption that we need some bridging principle or another. This is the kind of assumption that she rejects—which context determines the relevant parameters is not set once and for all, but is a matter of pragmatics. Different conversational settings can make

different contexts the ones to look at; sometimes, the relevant e.g. personal taste standard will be that of the speaker, while in other cases it may be that of the assessor (Stojanovic 2012: 631–632). In fact, it may be neither of them, since the absence of a bridging principle allows parameters to take virtually any value, if needed. This flexibility is something that Stojanovic vindicates in favor of her approach.

The distinction between semantics and postsemantics seems stipulatory to me. I think that the fact that two theories predict different truth-values for a single utterance is enough to make them interestingly different, and to make us engage in the discussion about which of them is worth embracing. If this discussion does not belong to semantics, then, as suggested above, I think we should move to the postsemantic level and try to establish which theory explains the postsemantics of our language better. Whether postsemantics, once defined, are a part of semantics or not depends only on how we define "semantics".

At any rate, Stojanovic has an answer for those who are disposed to move to the postsemantic level, as I said above. But I think that Stojanovic's defense of her approach as more flexible than the relativist one stems from assigning contextualism more flexibility than it is in fact capable of, or from assigning relativism less flexibility than it is in fact capable of. Remember that, the way we understood relativism, the context of assessment does not necessarily fix the *assessor*'s values for each parameter—only the values that are relevant in that context. Recall also that this was one of our reasons for distinguishing between contexts and circumstances of evaluation, for the circumstances of evaluation supplied by a context do not have to be those in the index of that context. Of course, the values determined by the context of utterance, in contextualism, do not necessarily have to be those of the speaker either. Just as with relativism, they can be those that are relevant in the speaker's context. But, since there is only one context of utterance and infinitely many potential contexts of assessment, relativism is still much more flexible than contextualism. Contextualism is still committed to the claim that utterances are true or false once and forever—it is committed to absolutism about utterance truth, which yields wrong predictions about retraction and, as I said in section 3.4 and will develop in chapter 6, puts it in the path to the absolutist

stance.

Thus, a contextualism that were open to incorporating the assessor's values for some parameters would still be a variety of contextualism according to my classification, since the pair formed by the sentence and the context of utterance would still be enough to determine a truth-value. If we break the link between the pair and the truth-value, though, we will have a variety of relativism, and it will be different from contextualism in a way that will make it have the predictive power that we need, and be disconnected from the absolutist stance.

In this section, I have classified relativism's commitments between semantic and postsemantic commitments. What distinguishes relativism from contextualism is its postsemantics, while its semantics allows us to distinguish between different implementations (indexical or nonindexical) of the relativist insight. I have also argued, against Stojanovic, that the fact that relativism is ultimately characterized by its postsemantics does not make its contribution to the philosophy of language any less worth noting. In fact, the classification of so-called relativist theories in section 3.2 allows us to say that Stojanovic's enriched contextualism still falls short of being able to do the things that relativism can do.

3.6. Applying the characterizations

In section 3.1, I have offered a characterization of relativism that covers all the families of theories reviewed in chapter 2 plus indexical relativism, allows us to classify them and provides us with a homogeneous terminology. In section 3.2, I have offered an alternative characterization that only applies to a subset of the theories surveyed in chapter 2. In this subsection, I prove the power of both characterizations by applying them to three antecedents of contemporary relativism: Harman's (2013) moral relativism, Williams' (2006) relativism of distance, and Perry's (1993) proposal. I use the criterion that I have offered to establish, first, whether they challenge the Fregean picture, and second, whether they are instances of indexical contextualism, nonindexical contextualism, indexical relativism, or nonindexical relativism.

Harman's relativism is a thesis about what he calls "inner judgments", that

is, judgments such as the one that someone ought to act in some way (Harman 2013: 4) that have two characteristics. First, they imply that agents have reasons to do what they do. Second, the speaker endorses such reasons and supposes that the audience does at well (Harman 2013: 8). In particular, Harman's relativism is a thesis about the logical form of such judgments (Harman 2013: 3). Harman claims that the logical form of an inner judgment such as "A ought to D", where A is an agent and D is a course of action, is "Ought(A, D, C, M)", where C stands for considerations and M, for motivating attitudes (Harman 2013: 10). Thus, by saying "A ought to D" at a context where C and M are the salient considerations and motivating attitudes respectively, one means that, "given that A has motivating attitudes M and given C, D is the course of action for A that is supported by the best reasons" (Harman 2013: 11). In other words, "ought", even if apparently a dyadic predicate that has an agent and an action as its arguments, really works as a tetradic predicate that also takes considerations and motivating attitudes. Remember that the judgment will be an inner one only if the agent's motivating attitudes M are shared by the speaker and (the speaker assumes) the audience.

Harman's relativism challenges the Fregean picture inasmuch as it denies that sentences uniquely determine propositions—what proposition "A ought to D" expresses does not only depend on the sentence itself, but also on C and M. In particular, Harman's relativism is a variety of indexical contextualism. It is an indexical theory because the parameters relative to which inner judgments are true or false are part of the propositions expressed by such judgements. This should be obvious once we take into account that C and M are considered by Harman as part of the logical form of "A ought to D" (Harman 2013: 10). Harman's relativism is a contextualism because it is the context of utterance that determines what C and M are to be. The values for C and M can come from any context, but what is important is that, once the utterance has been made, they are set once and forever. Speakers imply that agents have some reason to act and that they share that reason (Harman 2013: 8). M is thus fixed by the context of utterance, and the same goes for C. Hence, Harman's moral relativism is not a relativism in the sense defined in this chapter, but a variety of indexical contextualism. We could use (P$_2$) in Fig. 3.4 to represent Harman's view: the same sentence is compati-

ble with different propositions depending on the context of utterance, but each of these propositions will be compatible with just one truth-value.

The key to Williams' (2006) relativism of distance lies in the difference between *real* and *notional* confrontations (see also Gaitán & Viciana 2018). A real confrontation between two outlooks takes place when there is a group of people for which both outlooks are real options (they could "go over to them"), while a notional confrontation takes place when, for any person, at least one of the outlooks does not represent a real option (Williams 2006: 160). The latter is what happens, for instance, with the life of a medieval samurai—it is simply not an option for us. Williams' relativism of distance is the thesis that it is only in real confrontations that we can assess a given outlook, for it is inappropriate to assess outlooks in notional confrontations (Williams 2006: 161).

Williams' relativism of distance challenges the Fregean picture too, and it is also a variety of contextualism. It challenges the Fregean picture because, according to it, sentences cannot be assessed as true or false without first looking at who has uttered them. When establishing whether the confrontation at issue is real or notional, we have to look at two different subjects: the agent and the speaker. If the distance between these two subjects is small enough, the confrontation is real, and the speaker is allowed to say that the agent has done right or wrong. If, contrarily, the distance is too big, the confrontation is merely notional, and it is inappropriate for the speaker to assess the agent's behavior as correct or incorrect. The agent is given by the sentence, the speaker is given by the context. Thus, when trying to assess a sentence, the only thing we need beyond the sentence itself is the context at which it is uttered. This is what makes Williams' theory an instance of contextualism.

Is Williams' a variety of indexical contextualism? It does not seem like one, attending to the emphasis that Williams puts on rejecting what he calls "relational relativism", which can be roughly equated to what I have called "indexical contextualism" here. Relational relativism interprets claims such as the ones in (D) "as each introducing a relation to a different item" (Williams 2006: 156). Williams goes on to understand this in semantic terms really close to the ones I have used in characterizing indexical contextualism: relational relativism posits

"an implicit relativization hidden in (...) language" (Williams 2006: 159). The grounds on which he rejects relational relativism are also very similar to the ones on which indexical contextualism has usually been rejected in favor of nonindexical contextualism—while it can account for the fact that there is no conflict (which amounts to faultlessness), it cannot account for the appearance of conflict (Williams 2006: 156–157). This is so because "the more convincing it is to claim that the statements are really relational, the more puzzling it is that people should have thought that there was a conflict" (Williams 2006: 157). The gist of Williams' argument against relational relativism can be found in the following passage:

> When it is first exposed to another culture and invited to reflect, it cannot suddenly discover that there is an implicit relativization hidden in its language. It will always be, so to speak, too early or too late for that. It is too early, when they have never reflected or thought of an alternative to "us." (...) It is too late, when they confront the new situation; that requires them to see beyond their existing rules and practices. (Williams 2006: 159)

So, the truth of many ethical claims is in Williams' theory partially relative to the context at which they are uttered. This does not imply that what these claims mean is relative to the context of utterance, for Williams' relativism of distance is not an indexical theory, as we have just seen. But Williams' theory, even if nonindexical, is still a variety of contextualism, not of relativism. Williams is a nonindexical contextualist. In particular, he seems assimilable to (P_5) in Fig. 3.4: the same sentence is compatible with different propositions depending on the context of utterance, and the same proposition is compatible with different truth-values also depending on the context of utterance.

Finally, remember Perry's (1993) Z-landers' example (see section 2.3.2), and consider the proposal that stems from it. Perry's proposal challenges the Fregean picture: without any other information, we cannot know whether the sentence (9) "It is raining" that the Z-lander utters is true or false. In particular, the proposal could be seen as a variety of nonindexical contextualism, again representable by (P_5) in Fig. 3.4. The nonindexical component can be located in Perry's insistence

that some of our assertions concern things that are not part of the propositions we express through those assertions. The contextualist component can be deduced from his talk of speakers *intending* their assertions to concern these things. But, in a sense, Perry's proposal goes beyond the kinds of relativism that I have distinguished in this chapter. It does so because all the varieties of relativism reviewed here presumed that, even if we may not know what value to give to the parameter with respect to which the proposition is to be evaluated, we are aware that the truth-value of the proposition depends on that parameter. Perry gets rid of this assumption. Thus, there is a sense in which Perry's relativism, although not even a relativism in the sense preferred here, is more radical than MacFarlane's. And, even if Perry's theory does not explicitly feature contexts of assessment, we might say that we could combine his main insight with the notion of a context of assessment to deliver a theory that undoubtedly *is* more radical than MacFarlane's. But can this be done?

Let us think about what the consequences of doing this would be. We would have propositions that are to be evaluated relative to parameters that are provided by the context of assessment. The context of utterance is not enough to assign them a truth-value. Thus, utterances do not by themselves determine a truth-value—they cannot by themselves be said to express a true or false proposition. But this is precisely what Perry's proposal requires. In Perry's proposal, what parameters are part of the circumstances of evaluation is an open question, and the only thing that remains fixed is whether at some point speakers said something true or false. We need to keep this fixed in order to be able to make the proposition that they expressed at that moment neutral with respect to this or that previously unrecognized parameter. Thus, for instance, it is settled that Z-landers spoke truly when they uttered (9) and it was raining in Z-land, and this allows us to at some point start understanding their utterance as the expression of a proposition that is neutral with respect to location. But, if the context of assessment gets into the picture, we can no longer say, for some utterances, that it is by their very nature that the utterers spoke truly or falsely. Thus, we have to keep something fixed—either with respect to what parameters the proposition is neutral, or utterance truth.

This is the last thing I have to say about Perry's proposal in this dissertation. On the one hand, it can be seen as fitting within one of the categories that I have distinguished—nonindexical contextualism, so it is not a variety of relativism in the sense preferred here. On the other hand, it can be seen as more radical than MacFarlane's proposal, a fact to which my characterization is blind, since it is incompatible with what characterizes all the forms of relativism that I think deserve to be called that way—the relativity of utterance truth. But the relativity of utterance truth allows us to make sense of our linguistic practices and to implement the relativist intuitions in a technical way, while Perry's proposal is fit for making sense of an *ad hoc* case. This *ad hoc* case might make us think about how our language actually works, but, if Perry's and MacFarlane's insights cannot be implemented at the same time, I think that it is better for our theory to be able to account for the most prosaic data.

In this section, I have presented three antecedents of contemporary relativist theories in the philosophy of language and metaethics and used my characterization to establish whether they are varieties of relativism in my strict sense. My conclusion has been that neither of them is. Harman's (2013) moral relativism is a variety of indexical contextualism, Williams' (2006) relativism of distance is a variety of nonindexical contextualism, and Perry's (1993) proposal, although in a way more radical than MacFarlane's (2014) relativism, is a variety of nonindexical contextualism as well.

3.7.   Conclusion

In this chapter, I have offered two different characterizations of relativism. The first, catch-it-all one, which labels as a variety of relativism any theory that challenges the Fregean picture, allows us to see what all the families of theories that have been deemed relativist have in common. The second, strict one, which reserves the name "relativism" only for those theories that challenge the Fregean picture by relativizing utterance truth, connects better with the relativist stance (see chapter 6), and as such, is the one I suggest adopting.

To end with, I have proved the power of the characterization in two different

ways. First, I have used it to show what remains missing in Stojanovic's (2007, 2012) contextualist proposal. Second, I have applied both characterizations to three antecedents of contemporary relativism in the philosophy of language, and concluded that all of them are varieties of relativism according to the catch-it-all characterization, but none of them is according to the strict one.

Chapter 4

Relativism about opaque belief ascriptions

The theories reviewed in chapter 2 have been applied to explain a number of phenomena, such as the special behavior of sentences involving predicates of personal taste, or knowledge attributions. In this chapter, I offer an additional argument for nonindexical relativism by applying it to an area of language to which it has not been previously applied: opaque belief ascriptions.

My treatment of opaque belief ascriptions, as should be expected from a non-indexical relativism, features both a semantic and a postsemantic component (see section 3.5). On the one hand, the semantic component is responsible for the non-indexical part of the theory, i.e., it makes the truth-value of propositions expressed by opaque belief ascriptions depend on something that is not part of the propo-sition itself, but of its circumstances of evaluation.[1] I try to show how seeing opaque belief ascriptions in this way can help us account for their most striking feature, i.e., opacity. Opacity has given rise to Frege's puzzle, a classical problem within the philosophy of language that I intend to solve by proposing a nonin-dexical semantics for opaque belief ascriptions.

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[1]This position bears some strong resemblances to the view that Richard builds over the papers collected in his (2013). In fact, the way I see it (see Pérez-Navarro 2017), attributing to Richard a commitment to nonindexicalism is needed to make sense of his position.

Frege's puzzle can be roughly presented as follows. If names refer to their bearers, substituting coreferential names in a sentence should not affect its truth-value. However, this is precisely what seems to happen with opaque belief ascriptions—although "Superman" and "Clark Kent" refer to the same person, if Lois Lane does not know this, "Lois believes that Superman can fly" can be true even though "Lois believes that Clark Kent can fly" is not. Making the name's bearer its reference in these contexts seems incompatible with this difference in truth-value. One can try to solve this by introducing modes of presentation into the proposition expressed, but this has undesirable consequences regarding semantic innocence, as I will argue later. So, it seems that one has to choose: either one respects the difference in truth-value, or one respects semantic innocence, but one cannot do both things at the same time. One way to account for the difference in truth-value while keeping semantic innocence, I suggest, is by becoming a nonindexicalist about opaque belief ascriptions. The first aim of this chapter is to introduce this proposal and argue for its advantages.

On the other hand, the postsemantic component in my treatment of opaque belief ascriptions is relativist in the sense favored in chapter 3. The context that is responsible for providing us with the relevant circumstances of evaluation is the context of assessment, as suggested by some cases of retraction that I discuss. Thus, the second aim of this chapter is to argue that the behavior of opaque belief ascriptions in cases of retraction should make us become not only nonindexicalists, but also relativists about "believes".

The structure of the chapter is as follows. In sections 4.1-4.4, I address the semantics of opaque belief ascriptions. In section 4.1, I present Frege's puzzle and review the different solutions to it that have been proposed. As we will see in section 4.2, no existing solution can be said to be totally devoid of problems. My thesis is that at least a couple of these problems can be overcome by embracing a nonindexical semantics about opaque belief ascriptions, which is the theory that I characterize in section 4.3. In section 4.4, I show how this nonindexical semantics is able to cope with the aforementioned problems. The postsemantics of opaque belief ascriptions is addressed in section 4.5, in which I discuss how a theory about these kinds of sentences should deal with retraction, the phenomenon that distin-

guishes relativism from theories that have been deemed so but should nonetheless be considered varieties of contextualism, such as nonindexical contextualism.

4.1. Frege's puzzle

One of the aims of this chapter, as stated above, is to offer a way that a non-indexical semantics for opaque belief ascriptions could look like. Any semantics for opaque belief ascriptions will at some point have to face a problem—the problem of solving Frege's puzzle. In doing so, it will in many cases have to give up explaining some features of opaque belief ascriptions in favor of others. My proposal, I claim, can at least explain at once a couple of features that philosophers have strived to make compatible. But, before stating my proposal, let me present Frege's puzzle and review the different ways in which other semantics for opaque belief ascriptions have tried to solve it.

Frege's puzzle is this. Let "*A*" and "*B*" be two different names for a single object, and let *S* be a subject who is not aware of the identity between *A* and *B*. There is a predicate *P* that *S* thinks applies to *A* but not to *B*, so that "*S* believes that *A* is *P*" is true, while "*S* believes that *B* is *P*" is false. But how can this be? The principle of compositionality requires that, if we replace part of an expression with another that has the same reference, the reference of the whole expression does not vary. If the reference of a sentence is its truth-value, this means that replacing one of its constituents with another with the same reference should not affect the sentence's truth-value. So, if two sentences differ only in coreferential terms, they as a whole should, based on compositionality, have the same reference, i.e., the same truth-value (see Jaszczolt 2009; Recanati 2009).

To put it in less abstract terms: Lois Lane does not know that Clark Kent is Superman. She believes that Superman can fly. However, she does not believe that Clark Kent can fly. How is it that

(10)   Lois Lane believes that Superman can fly.

can be true while

(11)   Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent can fly.

is false? If "Superman" and "Clark Kent" are coreferential, no pair of sentences differing only in these names should differ in truth-value.

Semantics for opaque belief ascriptions, understood as solutions to Frege's puzzle, can be divided into two groups: Fregean semantics and Russellian semantics. Let us start with Frege's own solution to the puzzle. According to Frege, when embedded under a belief operator, names do not refer to their bearer, but to their sense (see Nelson 2019: section 2). This enables "Superman" and "Clark Kent" to refer to different things in (10) and (11), which in turn makes it possible for (10) and (11) to have different truth-values. However, this is achieved at the cost of losing semantic innocence (see Davidson 1968; Pietroski 1996), an essential principle of the way semantics seems to work:

> **Semantic innocence:** The semantic value of expressions must remain unaltered when they appear inside indirect contexts.

In other words, the change in context that comes from embedding an expression within the scope of a propositional attitude operator, such as "believes" or "knows", is not enough to change the semantic value of the expression—the semantic value of any given expression uttered in a context c should remain unaltered when uttered in another context c', provided that the only difference between c and c' is the presence of a belief operator. Particularly, the semantic value of "Superman" has to be the exact same whether the sentence appears under the scope of an intensional operator, as it does in (10), or not, as happens in

(12)   Superman can fly.

In Russellian semantics, by contrast, names keep their reference constant whether under the scope of a belief operator or not, and no two belief ascriptions differing only in one coreferential name can have different truth-values: "Superman" and "Clark Kent" have the same reference and (10) and (11) have the same truth-value. So, standard Russellian solutions (see e.g. Salmon 1986; Soames 2002)

bite the bullet and place the difference not in the truth-conditions of the two belief ascriptions, but somewhere else. The main problem with this kind of theory is that it conflicts with the insight that competent speakers' intuitions about the truth of what they say should be taken at face value as the data of our semantic theory.

Contemporary Fregean authors have tried to keep Frege's respect for speakers' intuitions while at the same time respecting semantic innocence too. Fregean theories are still those according to which the propositions expressed by belief ascriptions feature senses, or alternatively, modes of presentation. If Fregean theories are those that make modes of presentation part of the proposition expressed by an opaque belief ascription, then varieties of *truth-conditional contextualism*[2] are varieties of Fregeanism. However, the mode of presentation is not the reference of the name in these theories—it finds it way into the proposition through a different process, which can be mandatory, as in hidden-indexical theories, or optional, as in Recanati's theory.

Hidden-indexical theories (Crimmins & Perry 1989), on the one hand, are an example of contemporary Fregean theories according to which singular terms embedded under a belief operator contribute with both their bearer and a mode of presentation. These are theories according to which the process by which modes of presentation are included into the proposition is a mandatory one. Opaque belief ascriptions, according to these theories, feature a hidden indexical that recruits from the context a mode of presentation. With this modification, hidden-indexical theories claim to keep semantic innocence where the original Fregean theory failed to.

According to Recanati's (2010) theory, on the other hand, the mode of presentation finds its way into the proposition expressed by an opaque utterance

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[2]Note that the semantics that I will propose against this family of theories is still compatible with contextualism, understood as the view that the context responsible for supplying the values for the relevant parameter is the context of utterance (see section 3.2). What holds this family together is that all its members are varieties of what in chapter 3 I called "indexicalism" (even if only hidden-indexical theories feature indexicals). Thus, the target of sections 4.1-4.4 is indexicalism about opaque belief ascriptions. However, as I said, I will keep the traditional name "contextualism".

through some pragmatic process for which none of the expressions already contained in the uttered sentence is directly responsible. It is the utterance as a whole, together with the context, that triggers the process that ends up with a mode of presentation as part of the proposition expressed. Hence, in whatever of its two varieties, truth-conditional contextualism manages to predict a variation in truth-value without renouncing semantic innocence, for names embedded under the belief operator still contribute only with their bearer.

Contemporary Russellian theories, for their part, are still those according to which no mode of presentation is part of the proposition expressed by a belief ascription. If Russellian theories are those according to which modes of presentation are not part of the proposition, then *non-truth-conditional contextualism* is a variety of Russellianism. According to non-truth-conditional contextualism (Salmon 1986; Soames 2002), modes of presentation are not part of the semantic content, but pragmatically conveyed. In this theory, the truth-values of opaque belief ascriptions differing only in coreferential terms are still the same, even if what the ascriptions pragmatically convey is not.

Hence, we have three contending theories, all of which can be fairly deemed "contextualist" in the sense that the context of utterance supplies a mode of presentation that goes into some proposition, whether expressed or pragmatically conveyed. Non-truth-conditional contextualism, on the one hand, inherits the problem of the original Russellian semantics in accounting for the speakers' intuitions regarding truth-value. Varieties of truth-conditional contextualism such as hidden-indexical theories and Recanati's theory, on the other hand, claim to respect the speakers' intuitions and at the same time, unlike original Fregeanism, keep semantic innocence. In the next section, I will show that, despite what they claim, the latter theories fail to keep semantic innocence as well. As a result, no version of contextualism will seem able to respect semantic innocence and speakers' intuitions at once.

4.2. Truth-conditional contextualism and semantic innocence

In the previous section, I presented the theoretical landscape regarding opaque belief ascriptions. We saw that non-truth-conditional contextualism fails to account for speakers' intuitions regarding truth-value, whereas hidden-indexical theories and Recanati's theory claim to respect them while at the same time keeping semantic innocence. In this section, however, I argue that these varieties of contextualism still have problems accommodating two phenomena: *cross-attitudinal anaphora* and the *transparency of iterated attitude ascriptions*. The arguments having to do with these problems can both be seen as arguments to the effect that, despite claims to the contrary, none of the reviewed varieties of truth-conditional contextualism really keeps semantic innocence. They do so only at the subsentential level, but have to sacrifice it for sentences themselves when trying to explain the aforementioned phenomena.

This is what I argue in this section. My defense of nonindexicalism about opaque belief ascriptions will be completed in section 4.4, in which, after characterizing the theory in section 4.3, I will argue that it can account for these phenomena where the theories reviewed in this section fail to.

4.2.1. Cross-attitudinal anaphora

One major implication of losing semantic innocence is that it makes cross-attitudinal anaphora difficult to articulate (see Bach 1997, 2000; Nelson 2014: 135). It is not infrequent to find anaphorically used pronouns in simple sentences that have their anchors in preceding complex sentences falling under the scope of an intensional operator. Such is the case of "he" in

(13)   Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent can't fly, but in fact, he can.

If the mode of presentation is part of the semantic content of "Clark Kent", and, as seems reasonable to assume, anaphorically used pronouns inherit their contents from those of their anchors, then the mode of presentation of "Clark

Kent" must also be part of the semantic value of "he" in "He can". But Lois' mode of presentation for Clark Kent is, as can be seen, strictly irrelevant to determine the truth-conditions of the simple sentence—all we have to know is whether this person can fly or not, and it should not matter to us how Lois thinks of him. Even if a theory could devise a way to refrain the mode of presentation from interfering with the truth-conditions of the simple sentence, any alternative account —one in which no mode of presentation were part of the referent of the embedded name— would turn out to be superior in terms of simplicity.

To make things worse, anaphorically used pronouns can also appear under the scope of an intensional operator, while their anchors appear under the scope of a different intensional operator. Compare again "he" and "Clark Kent" in

(14)   Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent can't fly, but Martha Kent knows he can.

If any, the mode of presentation that is relevant for the truth-conditions of "Martha Kent knows he can" is the one that *Martha*, Superman's earthly mother, associates with Clark, rather than the one that Lois associates with him. This phenomenon has been widely discussed since it was put forward by Geach through the example "Hob thinks a witch has blighted Bob's mare, and Nob wonders whether she killed Cob's sow" (Geach 1967: 628). Again, if the mode of presentation is part of the semantic value of "Clark Kent" in "Lois believes that Clark Kent can't fly", then it should also be part of whatever "he" inherits as its content in the subsequent sentence, contrarily to what, as just said, we should expect. Our Fregean theory should be able to explain why Lois' mode of presentation for Clark gets somehow cancelled, while Martha's becomes part of it.

Sentences (13) and (14), as we have just seen, pose a problem for theories that make modes of presentation the reference of embedded terms, as classical Fregeanism does. Neither Russellian nor contemporary Fregean theories, however, have any trouble providing the simplest account for cross-attitudinal anaphora. The semantic value of any embedded subsentential expression is exactly what it is when unembedded, and therefore it can provide, as an anchor, perfectly normal content to potential proforms: the same person is the referent of "Clark Kent"

and "he" in both ([13](#)) and ([14](#)).

Truth-conditional contextualism finds it difficult, though, to accommodate a variation of cross-attitudinal anaphora: cases where we find pro*sentences* rather than pro*nouns*. To see this, consider the following case. Even though Lois Lane does not know that Clark Kent is Superman, she has an affair with him. However, she has only seen Clark Kent's underwear in less than perfect lightning conditions, so she only *believes* that Clark Kent's underwear is pink. It is, because Jonathan Kent buys Superman's underwear all in pink, his favorite color. He knows that, except for the underwear, his son never wears pink, and that Superman is really lazy with respect to these sorts of things and would preferably let someone buy his underwear for him. Jonathan Kent does not know that Superman's identity is a secret, that is, he does not know that there is a single person who ignores that Superman is Clark Kent. He has only briefly heard about Lois Lane as his son's coworker, but he has a very sharp intuition in matters concerning his son's personal life, and only by the way his son pronounces the name "Lois", he suspects that they are having an affair, and therefore that she has seen Superman's underwear.

In this context, it would not be odd to say:

> (15)   Lois Lane indeed believes that Clark Kent has pink underwear,
>   but Jonathan Kent wasn't supposed to know that, given the
>   secret nature of their affair.

It is natural to say that Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent has pink underwear instead of saying that she knows it because, remember, she has only seen his underwear in less than perfect lightning conditions. In this case, the secret nature of Lois Lane and Superman's affair is no reason for Jonathan not to know that Superman has pink underwear, but it is reason for him not to know that Lois Lane believes it. Thus, we need for the proposition expressed by the belief ascription, and not the embedded proposition, to be what is referred to by "that" if we want to make sense of the whole sentence. Also, Lois Lane's mode of presentation for Superman should not be part of the proposition to which "that" refers. It cannot

be part of what Jonathan Kent in fact knows, for he is not aware that Lois Lane does not know that Superman is Clark Kent.

According to truth-conditional contextualist accounts of opacity, what Lois Lane is said to believe involves a mode of presentation—Lois' mode of presentation for Clark Kent, which is clearly different from Jonathan's, since Jonathan knows, while Lois does not, Superman's secret identity. Hidden-indexical theorists would argue that such mode of presentation enters the proposition through a mandatory process, while, according to Recanati, the process would be optional. But Jonathan has no access to Lois' mode of presentation for her colleague, since he knows nothing about her, and in fact, he entertains wrong information about her. Therefore, the mode of presentation cannot be part of the content that the prosentence "that" inherits from its anchor, "Clark Kent has pink underwear".

If we want anaphorically used pronouns to inherit their anchors' reference, the arguments above show that we need to keep modes of presentation out of the proposition. As we will see in section 4.3, nonindexical semantics gives us a way to do this while still allowing modes of presentation to have an influence on the sentence's truth-value, thus making it possible for us to respect speakers' intuitions. Cross-attitudinal anaphora thus seems to provide reasons to favor a nonindexical approach to opaque belief ascriptions. I will explain how such approach accounts for this phenomenon in section 4.4.

Note, however, that Smit & Steglich-Petersen (2010) have argued against defenses of semantic innocence based on anaphora. Examples of such arguments are Bach's (1997, 2000) and mine above. Smit & Steglich-Petersen (2010: 120) claim that the phenomenon by which content changes from the anchor to the proform is a pervasive one, so that proforms do not automatically inherit their anchors' content. They do not, for instance, when the anchor is mentioned rather than used, as happens in

> (16)   Lois Lane considered whether the sentence "Clark Kent can
>   fly" is true. It is; he can fly.

The only alternative to claiming that anchor and pronoun differ in their content is to claim that the referent of "he" is the name "Clark Kent", which would

have the absurd consequence that the second half of the sentence means that a name, "Clark Kent", can fly. Thus, Smit and Steglich-Petersen claim, we have to accept that anchor and pronoun can differ in their contents, so we cannot use the fact that a theory predicts this as an argument against the theory.

If this is so, cross-attitudinal anaphora cannot be used to support semantic innocence and, in our case, challenge truth-conditional contextualist accounts of opacity. However, Smit and Steglich-Petersen would still have to explain what makes opaque belief ascriptions closer to quotations, in which we are talking about words, than to sentences in which we seem to talk about Lois Lane and Clark Kent themselves. And, even if Smit and Steglich-Petersen were right, we would still have the argument about iterated attitude ascriptions, which will be put forward in the next subsection.

4.2.2. Iterated attitude ascriptions

I am advancing some arguments against several varieties of truth-conditional contextualism about opaque belief ascriptions. In the previous subsection, I argued against them on the basis that moving modes of presentation out of the proposition is the only way to account for cross-attitudinal anaphora. I noted in closing, however, that maybe cross-attitudinal anaphora does not pose such a problem for theories other than relativism—it depends on how Smit and Steglich-Petersen would further argue. Even if this were so, this subsection is devoted to showing that another phenomenon does pose such a problem. This is the phenomenon of the transparency of iterated attitude ascriptions (see Barwise & Perry 1983; Salmon 1986; Saul 1998; but also Recanati 2012: 189 and ff.).

Remember the context from (15). Given that context, we could also truly utter

> (17)   Surprisingly, Jonathan Kent seems to believe that Lois Lane
>   believes that Clark Kent has pink underwear.

If the mode of presentation is part of the proposition expressed by the utterance of "Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent has pink underwear" in this context, it should be part of the truth-conditions of (17) as well. But is it justified to have

a mode of presentation that is particular to Lois within the proposition that is believed by Jonathan, who has no access to such mode of presentation?

The truth-conditional contextualist could interpret (17) as involving an existential quantifier ranging over modes of presentation,[3] so that it could be paraphrased as

(18)   Surprisingly, Jonathan Kent seems to believe that there is a mode of presentation such that Lois Lane believes with respect to that mode of presentation that Clark Kent has pink underwear.

However, this asks too much of believers as to their awareness of such things as modes of presentation. It seems implausible that agents entertain beliefs concerning the existence of such entities. What Jonathan Kent believes in (17) is that Lois Lane believes a certain thing, not that there is a mode of presentation that makes a certain thing the case.

Another option for the indexicalist would be to take Lois' mode of presentation for Clark Kent in (17) to be partial in the sense that it is compatible both with Lois knowing that Superman is Clark Kent and with her not knowing it.[4] However, in section 4.3 I will take it that it is essential for modes of presentation to license some inferences while blocking some others. If modes of presentation could be partial, they would not be able to play the role that we will ascribe to them of licensing some inferences while blocking others, and as such, they would be otiose.

Moreover, in general, our ability to understand iterated beliefs, even though limited, is certainly bigger than our ability to compute and eliminate the number of possibilities that open up when we take every embedded sentence to receive an opaque interpretation. Iteration boosts the transparent interpretation of belief reports. This cannot be accounted for by truth-conditional contextualists, since they include modes of presentation within the proposition expressed by belief reports, and claim to do so while respecting semantic innocence. Whether or

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[3]I would like to thank John MacFarlane for this suggestion.

[4]I owe this suggestion to JohnMacFarlane too.

not sentential cross-attitudinal anaphora poses a problem for truth-conditional contextualism, iterated belief ascriptions still do.

4.2.3. Summary

To sum up, we need two things. On the first hand, in order to take speakers' intuitions about the truth of what they say at face value, we need for modes of presentation to play a crucial role in determining the truth-conditions of opaque belief ascriptions. On the second hand, to grant identity of content between embedded anchors and their corresponding proforms, and a homogeneous treatment of belief iteration, we need to keep modes of presentation out of the propositions expressed by opaque belief ascriptions. Contextualism, whether truth-conditional or not, cannot satisfy both things at the same time, so our reasoning counts against it.

Of course, one way to keep modes of presentation out of the proposition while allowing them to play a role in determining the truth-conditions of the ascription is to make them part of the circumstances of evaluation, as happens in nonindexical semantics. Hence, the arguments above also provide reasons to adopt a nonindexical semantics for opaque belief ascriptions. In the next two sections, I will first characterize this semantics and then explain how it can deal with the phenomena described above.

4.3. A nonindexical semantics for opaque belief ascriptions

As we have just seen, both Fregean and Russellian solutions have undesirable consequences. But also, the Fregean and the Russellian share the assumption that propositions have their truth-value absolutely, that is, if the proposition expressed is the same (because even the words that distinguish the two sentences make exactly the same contribution), then the truth-value of the sentences has to be the same as well. What if we dropped this assumption and allowed propositions to have their truth-values only relative to a parameter besides possible worlds?

By uttering (10) and (11), we would then express the same proposition, so that the contribution of the two proper names could be the same, but this proposition would have in every case to be evaluated relative to a different parameter—a parameter, other than a possible world, that makes one sentence true, the other false. This would allow us to keep semantic innocence while respecting speakers' intuitions towards the sentences' truth-values.

The result of dropping the assumption for these cases would be a nonindexical semantics for opaque belief ascriptions, that is, a theory according to which a belief ascription, when uttered in an opaque context, expresses a proposition that is not true or false *simpliciter*, but only relative to a parameter besides possible worlds. This parameter would be the same that played an important explanatory role in the theories reviewed in section 4.2, i.e., a mode of presentation. This mode of presentation is not part of the proposition, as it would be for a hidden-indexical theorist or for Recanati, but part of the circumstances of evaluation; and, as part of these circumstances, it can have an impact on the ascription's truth-value, something that non-truth-conditional contextualists deny.

Nonindexical semantics about opaque belief ascriptions is similar to other nonindexical semantics mentioned in chapter 2. All these theories have in common their taking some propositions to be true or false not *simpliciter*, but only relative to a certain parameter besides possible worlds. What propositions are these, and which parameter contributes to determining their truth-value, is what distinguishes each application of nonindexicalism from the rest. As we saw, nonindexical semantics about predicates of personal taste will be concerned with the propositions expressed by sentences featuring predicates of personal taste, and claim that their truth-values are relative to a taste standard; in nonindexical semantics about future contingents, the propositions expressed when uttering sentences such as "There will be a battle tomorrow" are true or false only relative to a world history, and so on. The nonindexical semantics proposed here concerns the propositions expressed by ascribing opaque beliefs, and claims that they are true or false only relative to a mode of presentation.

But what is a mode of presentation? To start with, modes of presentation are things such that there is one for each par consisting of a believer and a name with

which the believer is acquainted. For instance, we talk about Lois Lane's mode of presentation for "Clark Kent". I characterize modes of presentation as the modes of presentation that a person has for a *name* (hence the inverted commas) because a person can and usually does entertain the same object under different modes of presentation. In the second place, a mode of presentation is that with respect to which relations can be true or false of a believer and a Russellian proposition (that is, a proposition in which modes of presentation, as might be expected, have no place).[5] For instance, Lois Lane's mode of presentation for "Clark Kent" is such that it is false that Lois believes the Russellian proposition that Superman can fly with respect to this mode of presentation, while her mode of presentation for "Superman" is such that it is true that she believes that very same proposition with respect to it. In order to put flesh on this, we can say that a mode of presentation is whatever parameter in the circumstances of evaluation that plays the role of licensing some inferences while blocking some others, in opaque utterances. So, modes of presentation are whatever allows us to infer from (10)

(19)   Lois Lane believes that Lex Luthor's archenemy can fly.

but not (11). For (19) to follow from (10), both (10) and (19) have to be true with respect to the relevant mode of presentation, which is Lois' mode of presentation for "Superman". Since (19) is insensitive to any mode of presentation other than the one that Lois has for Lex Luthor, (10) and (19) are both true with respect to Lois' mode of presentation for "Superman", so we are entitled to infer (19) from (10). For (11) to follow from (10), however, they both have to be true with respect to Lois' mode of presentation for "Clark Kent". (10) is, but (11) is not. Thus, Lois' mode of presentation for "Clark Kent" does not license the inference from (10) to (11).

Modes of presentation are whatever plays this role. Beyond that, I do not want to take any specific commitment regarding what the realizers of this role

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[5]This is all I want to commit to in talking about Russellian propositions. Particularly, I do not want to commit to the idea that Russellian propositions are constituted by objects and properties instead of modes of presentation, since my view should be compatible with propositions' being constituted by nothing at all, i.e., with them being unstructured entities. In fact, I will defend such conception of propositions in section 5.6.

are. In particular, it does not follow from my use of an expression such as "mode of presentation" that I think that there are actual psychological entities to which I am referring when I use it. Modes of presentation are just abstract entities that we postulate in order to model patterns of entailment such as the one that holds between (10) and (19), but not between (10) and (11).

Once what will be understood by "mode of presentation" here has been made clearer, let me make a little more explicit to what adopting a nonindexical semantics about opaque belief ascriptions would commit us, i.e., what the truth-conditions would be that relativism would predict for a given opaque belief ascription. Let us begin with the simplest form of belief ascription: one following the schema "S believes that A is P", such as (10). Let $|\text{"}R\text{ is }P\text{"}|_c^a$ denote the proposition that "R is p" expresses at context c under assignment a. The truth-conditions that the theory would predict for any such sentence would be as follows:

(SB) $[\![\text{"}S\text{ believes that }A\text{ is }P\text{"}]\!]^c_{\langle w,t,m,a\rangle} = 1$ iff $\langle [\![S]\!]^c_{\langle w,t,m,a\rangle}, |\text{"}A\text{ is }P\text{"}|_c^a\rangle \in$ $[\![\text{"believes"}]\!]^c_{\langle w,t,m,a\rangle}$, where w is a possible world, t is a time, m is a mode of presentation, and a is an assignment of values to the variables.[6]

Of course, not all (perhaps not even most) of our everyday belief ascriptions fall under this schema. We can have more than one ascribee in the same belief ascription ("S_1 and S_2 believe that A is P", or even "All Qs believe that A is P"), we can have more complex beliefs (with relations rather than properties, or with quantifiers or intensional operators, for instance), and we can ascribe more than one belief by uttering a unique sentence ("S believes that A is P and B is Q"). Ascriptions with more than one subject we can treat as conjunctions:

(SBC) $[\![\text{"}S_1\text{ believes that }R\text{ is }P\text{"}]\!]^c_{\langle w,t,m_1,a\rangle} = [\![\text{"}S_2\text{ believes that }R\text{ is }$ $P\text{"}]\!]^c_{\langle w,t,m_2,a\rangle} = 1$ iff $\langle [\![S_1]\!]^c_{\langle w,t,m_1,a\rangle}, |\text{"}R\text{ is }P\text{"}|_c^a\rangle \in$ $[\![\text{"believes"}]\!]^c_{\langle w,t,m_1,a\rangle}$ and $\langle [\![S_2]\!]^c_{\langle w,t,m_2,a\rangle}, |\text{"}R\text{ is }P\text{"}|_c^a\rangle \in$ $[\![\text{"believes"}]\!]^c_{\langle w,t,m_2,a\rangle}$, where w is a possible world, t is a time, m_1

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[6]This is adapted from the semantics for "tasty" that MacFarlane's (2014: 150–151) proposes (see subsection 2.4.2).

and m_2 are modes of presentation, and a is an assignment of values
to the variables.

(Something along similar lines would go for less common things like the afore-
mentioned "All Qs believe that a is P",[7] or like "Either S_1 or S_2 believe that A is
P".)

Another way in which opaque belief ascriptions can be more complex than
(10), which involves only one name under the scope of the belief operator, is by
involving more than one name under the scope of the same belief operator. Con-
sider, for instance, the sentence

(20)   Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent can fly and Lex Luthor is
       evil.

According to my proposal as it has been sketched up to this point, this sen-
tence expresses a proposition that is to be evaluated, among other things, with
respect to a mode of presentation. But which mode of presentation? It is to be
expected that it will be Lois', but Lois' mode of presentation for whom? Neither
taking her mode of presentation for Clark Kent nor taking her mode of presen-
tation for Lex Luthor will do, as any of these two options will make the other
mode of presentation irrelevant in a way that is incompatible with accounting for
opacity. Thus, the basic form of nonindexical semantics about opaque belief as-
criptions that we have developed up to this point seems insufficient to account for
opaque belief ascriptions only slightly more complex than the most basic ones.

These cases seem parallel to those featuring what Kneer et al. (2017) call "per-
spectival plurality". This phenomenon takes place when a sentence involves more
than one perspective-dependent predicate, such as "delicious" and "fun" (Kneer
et al. 2017: 39–40). Consider their own example:

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[7]A potential objection to the possibility of giving truth-conditions along these lines for "All Qs
believe that A is P" would be that it is not clear which mode of presentation the context would
determine, for there seems to be no particular person whose mode of presentation for a given
object could be selected. I leave answering this objection, which was suggested to me by Isidora
Stojanovic, to future work.

(21)　We took the kids to a resort in Italy this summer. The wine
　　　 was delicious and the water slide was great fun.

In this example, the most reasonable reading takes the wine to be delicious according to the adults' taste and the water slide to be fun according to the children's taste. *Multiperspectival* sentences like this one pose a problem for nonindexical semantics,[8] Kneer et al. (2017: 47) say, just like "multipresentational" sentences (if we may call them so) like (20) do. Kneer et al. consider two strategies that the supporter of nonindexical semantics could follow to deal with this problem. The first one is what they call "the paraphrasing strategy" (Kneer et al. 2017: 51–58). To follow this strategy implies paraphrasing multiperspectival sentences into series of *monoperspectival* units joined by logical connectives (Kneer et al. 2017: 52). This way, "The wine was delicious and the water slide was great fun", from the previous example, would be paraphrased as one unit to be evaluated from the adults' perspective and another one to be evaluated from the children's. That is to say, the sentence would express two different propositions, each to be evaluated relative to a different perspective.

We could apply this strategy to sentences like (20) as well. If we did so, we would take this sentence to express two different propositions—the proposition that Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent can fly, and the proposition that Lois Lane believes that Lex Luthor is evil, each to be evaluated relative to a different mode of presentation. In a sense, we would be paraphrasing (20) as

(22)　Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent can fly and Lois Lane be-
　　　 lieves that Lex Luthor is evil.

Truth-conditions for this kind of case would thus look like this:

(SBCP)　$[\![\text{``}S \text{ believes that } A \text{ is } P\text{''}]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, m_1, a \rangle} \quad = \quad [\![\text{``}S \text{ believes that } B \text{ is}$
$Q\text{''}]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, m_2, a \rangle} \quad = \quad 1 \text{ iff } \langle [\![S]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, m_1, a \rangle}, |\text{``}A \text{ is } P\text{''}|^a_c \rangle \quad \in$
$[\![\text{``believes''}]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, m_1, a \rangle} \quad \text{and} \quad \langle [\![S]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, m_2, a \rangle}, |\text{``}B \text{ is } Q\text{''}|^a_c \rangle \quad \in$

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[8]In their paper, Kneer et al. talk about relativist semantics, but this is the same semantics that I am calling "nonindexical".

$[\![$"believes"$]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, m_2, a\rangle}$, where w is a possible world, t is a time, m_1 and m_2 are modes of presentation, and a is an assignment of values to the variables.

This avoids the problem of having to choose which one of the two candidate modes of presentation is to appear in the truth-conditions. Here, we have two propositions, so that both modes of presentation can play a role.

We seem to still have a problem, however, when the ascribed belief includes a relation ("*S* believes that *A* is in relation *R* with *B*"). For here, no analogous move is available—we seem forced to accept that the appearance of at least two modes of presentation in the circumstances of evaluation is triggered, and this time, the proposition cannot be split into two. This is the problem with the paraphrasing strategy: not all cases are as straightforward as the one discussed above. There are other ways of complicating opaque belief ascriptions that do not consist in simply introducing conjunctions in them, and one is for opaque belief ascriptions to feature relations that fall under the scope of the belief operator. If the relata are referred to by names, the fact that the ascription is opaque will lead us to conclude that modes of presentation for all the objects that fall under the relation will play a role in determining the ascription's truth-value. If the relation is dyadic, for instance, there will be two modes of presentation involved. However, the sentence at issue will not be so easy to paraphrase into two "monopresentational" unities now. Consider, for instance,

(23)   Lois Lane believes that Lex Luthor is Clark Kent's archenemy.

It is hard to see how this sentence can be paraphrased into a conjunction, as we did with (22) before.

As a solution to this kind of case, I propose following the second strategy considered by Kneer et al.: the "multiindexing strategy" (Kneer et al. 2017: 50–51). Kneer et al. in fact prefer the paraphrasing strategy over the multiindexing strategy (Kneer et al. 2017: 50–51), but they do so because, even if not straightforwardly paraphrasable, multiperspectival sentences are at the end of the day para-

phrasable in a way in which multipresentational sentences are not.[9] If we apply multiindexing, (22) will express a unique proposition whose truth-value will be relative not to a single mode of presentation, but to *two* modes of presentation. There are precedents to multiindexing. Kamp (1971) and Vlach (1973) proposed it as a way to account for the behavior of sentences like "One day, all persons alive now will be dead", which they took to be doubly temporally indexed: two time parameters appear in the circumstances of evaluation, one rigidly picked up by "now", the other shiftable by tense operators. Kneer et al. (2017: 51), however, note a disanalogy between this case and that of multiperspectival sentences. When it comes to tense, the two time parameters have different, specific functions—one is shiftable, the other is not. In "The wine was delicious and the water slide was great fun", by contrast, the adults' taste standard and the children's taste standard seem to play exactly the same role. Something similar occurs in the case we are considering: there is no apparent difference between the role that Lois' mode of presentation for Lex Luthor plays and the one that her mode of presentation for Clark Kent plays.

These considerations notwithstanding, I would assign more plausibility to the multiindexed interpretation of these cases than to the paraphrased interpretation. It is true that there does not seem to be a division of labor between modes of presentation as the one we seem to have between time parameters. But this is only a minor concern when compared to the apparent impossibility to paraphrase opaque belief ascriptions featuring relations under the scope of the belief operator into monopresentational units. The fact that there are antecedents to multiindexing, even if there are disanalogies between our case and the historical ones, I take to be a weighty reason for applying this strategy here too.

Hence, what I would suggest for this kind of case is that what figures in the circumstances of evaluation is a *sequence* of modes of presentation, one for each proper name appearing under the scope of the belief operator. In this way, this

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[9]The crucial difference is that names are singular terms and perspective-dependent predicates are predicates, relations between singular terms being much more common than relations between predicates. However, it should be possible to build a context in which a sentence featured a relation between perspective-dependent predicates that determined different perspectives.

form of relativism would only add one parameter to the circumstances of evaluation, just like other forms of relativism do. The clause for ascriptions of opaque beliefs featuring relations would thus be like this:

(SBR) $[\![$"S believes that $A_1, \ldots, A_n$ are in relation R"$]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, \langle m_1, \ldots, m_n \rangle, a \rangle} = 1$ iff $\langle [\![S]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, \langle m_1, \ldots, m_n \rangle, a \rangle}, |$"$A_1, \ldots, A_n$ are in relation R"$|^a_c \rangle \in [\![$"believes"$]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, \langle m_1, \ldots, m_n \rangle, a \rangle}$, where w is a possible world, t is a time, $\langle m_1, \ldots, m_n \rangle$ is a sequence of modes of presentation, and a is an assignment of values to the variables.

Once (SBR) has been introduced, (SB) could be seen as a limiting case for it when R is monadic if the substitution of m_n for $\langle m_n \rangle$ is allowed. Alternatively, we can rephrase (SB) as follows:

(SB′) $[\![$"S believes that A is P"$]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, \langle m \rangle, a \rangle} = 1$ iff $\langle [\![S]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, \langle m \rangle, a \rangle}, |$"$R$ is P"$|^a_c \rangle \in [\![$"believes"$]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, \langle m \rangle, a \rangle}$, where w is a possible world, t is a time, $\langle m \rangle$ is a sequence of modes of presentation, and a is an assignment of values to the variables.

Analogous clauses should be available for cases in which e.g. quantifiers ("S believes that all Ps are Q") or intensional operators ("S believes that it used to be the case that A was P") appear under the scope of the belief operator, but it is not my aim here to give a detailed account—just to show what a nonindexical semantics for opaque belief ascriptions would look like.

These are the truth-conditions that a nonindexicalist semantics would predict for opaque belief ascriptions. These truth-conditions depend on the possible world, the time, a sequence of modes of presentation, and an assignment. Once values have been assigned to the variables in the sentences, we have a proposition. Again, if S is a sentence, let $|S|^c_a$ denote the proposition it expresses at context of utterance c under assignment a. Here, then, propositions are functions from tuples consisting of a world, a time, and a sequence of modes of presentation to truth-values (see section 2.3.3). Let us call these tuples "circumstances of evaluation". The proposition $|$"S believes that R is P"$|^c_a$ is then a function f from circumstances of evaluation to truth-values such that $f(\langle w, t, \langle m \rangle \rangle) =$

$[\![$"*S* believes that *R* is *P*"$]\!]^c_{\langle w,\,t,\,\langle m\rangle,\,a\rangle}$ $=$ 1 iff $\langle [\![S]\!]^c_{\langle w,\,t,\,\langle m\rangle,\,a\rangle}, |$"*R* is *P*"$|^a_c\rangle$ $\in$
$[\![$"believes"$]\!]^c_{\langle w,\,t,\,\langle m\rangle,\,a\rangle}$. This is the way in which I have formally implemented the idea that the propositions expressed by opaque belief ascriptions are only true or false with respect to a sequence of modes of presentation.

Making the truth-value of propositions expressed by opaque belief ascriptions depend on a sequence of modes of presentation allows us to grant identity of content between embedded anchors and their corresponding proforms, and a homogeneous treatment of belief iteration, while also allowing us to respect speakers' intuitions concerning truth-value. This is so because modes of presentation are not part of the proposition anymore, but they nevertheless have an impact on its truth-value. I explain this in detail, applying it to the problematic cases in section 4.2, in the next section.

4.4.   Nonindexical semantics and semantic innocence

In the previous section, I have characterized the first half of the account of opaque belief ascriptions that I am defending in this chapter—a nonindexical semantics for opaque belief ascriptions. It is now time to argue for it as lacking the problems that, in section 4.2, I attributed to Fregean theories.

What is important about the semantics offered in the previous section is that, according to it, the truth-value of propositions expressed by opaque belief ascriptions is relativized to a sequence of modes of presentation. With this in mind, I will only derive from (SB′) truth-conditions for *parts* of (15) and (17). It is the proposition expressed by these parts of the sentences that has to be relativized to account for sentential cross-attitudinal anaphora and for the transparency of iterated attitude ascriptions, and I will show that this follows from the derived truth-conditions.

4.4.1.   Cross-attitudinal anaphora

Remember (15):

(15)   Lois Lane indeed believes that Clark Kent has pink underwear,

> but Jonathan Kent wasn't supposed to know that, given the
> secret nature of their affair.

Both the hidden-indexical theorist and Recanati had a problem with this kind of sentence, since they would predict that the proposition expressed by the first half of the sentence contains Lois' mode of presentation for Superman (whether its appearance is triggered by a particular expression or not), while the prosentence "that" should refer to a proposition containing no such mode of presentation, since Jonathan has no access to it. He is, in fact, mistaken about Lois' modes of presentation, since he does not know that Superman's true identity is a secret.

How would a nonindexical semantics solve this problem? Let us take a look at the truth-conditions that our semantics would predict for the first half of (15):

(24)   Lois Lane indeed believes that Superman has pink underwear.

I will take "indeed" to have no effect on a sentence's truth-conditions, having a pragmatic effect instead. Thus, (24) will have the same truth-conditions as

(25)   Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent has pink underwear.

(25)'s truth-conditions would look like this:

(25′) $[\![$"Lois Lane believes that Superman has pink underwear"$]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, \langle m \rangle, a \rangle}$
       $= 1$ iff $\langle [\![$"Lois Lane"$]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, \langle m \rangle, a \rangle}, |$"Superman has pink underwear"$|^a_c \rangle$
       $\in [\![$"believes"$]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, \langle m \rangle, a \rangle}$, where w is a possible world, t is a time, $\langle m \rangle$
       is a sequence of modes of presentation, and a is an assignment of
       values to the variables.

In this case, the sequence $\langle m_1, \ldots, m_n \rangle$ would only comprise a mode of presentation—one that could be assigned to the pair consisting of Lois Lane and the name "Superman". I have called this mode of presentation "m". Remember that the proposition expressed by an opaque belief ascription is a function f from circumstances of evaluation to truth-values such that $f(\langle w, t, \langle m_1, \ldots, m_n \rangle \rangle) = [\![S]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, \langle m_1, \ldots, m_n \rangle, a \rangle}$. Thus, the proposition expressed by (15) is a function f from

circumstances of evaluation to truth-values such that $f(\langle w, t, \langle m \rangle \rangle) = [\![$"Lois Lane believes that Superman has pink underwear"$]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, \langle m \rangle, a \rangle}$ =   1   iff $\langle [\![$"Lois Lane"$]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, \langle m \rangle, a \rangle},$ |"Superman has pink underwear"$|^a_c \rangle$ $\in$ $[\![$"believes"$]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, \langle m \rangle, a \rangle}.$ Such proposition is, as can be seen, neutral with respect to the mode of presentation.

Hence, Lois' mode of presentation for Superman plays no role in the proposition that Jonathan is not supposed to know in order for (15) to be true. In this way, (24) and the prosentence "that" can refer to the same proposition, and the problem of dealing with cross-attitudinal anaphora at the sentential level disappears.

4.4.2.   Iterated attitude ascriptions

Now, remember (17):

(17)   Surprisingly, Jonathan Kent seems to believe that Lois Lane believes that Superman has pink underwear.

I argued in section 4.2 that no mode of presentation should be considered part of the proposition expressed by this sentence on two grounds. First, if Lois' mode of presentation for Superman were part of the proposition expressed by "Lois Lane believes that Superman has pink underwear", then it should be part of the proposition expressed by (17) as well, whereas Jonathan, who hardly knows Lois, has no access to her mode of presentation for Superman. Second, we are more proficient in understanding iterated belief ascriptions than in computing and eliminating the number of possibilities that open up when we associate one mode of presentation with each occurrence of a proper name.

Now, a nonindexical semantics about opaque belief ascriptions avoids the first problem by taking modes of presentation out of the proposition. Remember that nonindexical truth-conditions for

(25)   Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent has pink underwear.

would look like this:

(25') $[\![$"Lois Lane believes that Superman has pink underwear"$]\!]^c_{\langle w,\, t,\, \langle m \rangle,\, a \rangle}$

$= \;$ 1 iff $\langle [\![$"Lois Lane"$]\!]^c_{\langle w,\, t,\, \langle m \rangle,\, a \rangle},\, |$"Superman has pink underwear"$|^a_c \rangle$

$\in [\![$"believes"$]\!]^c_{\langle w,\, t,\, \langle m \rangle,\, a \rangle}$, where w is a possible world, t is a time, $\langle m \rangle$ is a sequence of modes of presentation, and a is an assignment of values to the variables.

Again, $\langle m_1, \dots, m_n \rangle$ contains only one mode of presentation here, and again, the proposition expressed by (25) is a function from tuples $\langle w, t, \langle m \rangle \rangle$ to truth-values, such that the function yields the value 1 for and just for the tuples with respect to which the sentence is true. Such proposition is neutral with respect to the time of presentation. Hence, even if Lois Lane appears in the sentence too, it is only Jonathan's mode of presentation that matters. His belief does not include a mode of presentation of a person he hardly knows, and we do not have to compute more possibilities than the ones associated with one mode of presentation.

I said in section 4.2 that, as belief operators are iterated, the adequacy of a transparent reading of the ascription (one in which no mode of presentation appears) increases. One could then ask how this is compatible with *words* triggering the appearance of modes of presentation. Within the nonindexical framework that I am proposing here, even if modes of presentation are determined by the words we use, this does not mean that they always come into play. This is avoided by posing a free process by which, in transparent contexts, belief ascriptions come to express propositions that *are* true or false *simpliciter*, regardless of modes of presentation. I follow here Recanati (2007: 73) on how global free enrichment can alter the circumstances of evaluation, and I extend the strategy to modes of presentation.

Thus, a nonindexical semantics for opaque belief ascriptions allows us to account both for sentential cross-attitudinal anaphora and for the transparency of iterated attitude ascriptions. Relativizing the propositions expressed by opaque belief ascriptions to modes of presentation, as a nonindexical semantics would do, allows us to claim that the proposition expressed by (25) contains no mode of presentation. This, in turn, makes it possible for "that" in (14) to refer to a proposition that contains no mode of presentation, as should be the case, and for the truth-

conditions of ([17](#)) to not contain Lois' mode of presentation for "Superman", as again should be the case. This is the semantics for opaque belief ascriptions that this chapter aims at offering. It is now time to look at the postsemantics of opaque belief ascriptions.

4.5.   The postsemantics of opaque belief ascriptions

In section [4.3](#), I characterized a semantics for opaque belief ascriptions. Such characterization worked in terms not of the context relevant for determining the truth-value of opaque belief ascriptions, but in terms of their contents. As I said in section [3.2](#), whether the value for a given parameter is part of the proposition expressed by a given sentence allows us to establish whether the theory at issue is indexical or nonindexical, but, contrarily to a certain tradition, it does not allow us to characterize the theory as relativist. Relativist theories, as defined in that same section, are those that relativize sentential truth-value to contexts of assessment. The characterization in section [3.2](#) makes the theory offered in section [4.3](#) a nonindexical theory, but this is compatible both with a nonindexical contextualism and with a nonindexical relativism. If the theory belonged to the former category, it would not be a variety of relativism in the sense adopted in this dissertation.

As I said in section [3.5](#), what makes nonindexical contextualism and nonindexical relativism different are their postsemantics. We should thus complete the theory here with a postsemantics for opaque belief ascriptions, and then answer the question whether this account of opaque belief ascriptions is really a relativism.

When deciding which postsemantics to use to explain the behavior of a given fragment of language, retraction (see subsection [2.4.1](#)) is a key phenomenon. If we consider retraction concerning that fragment to be a possibility, relativizing sentential truth to contexts of assessment seems like a good move. This move will be unwarranted, though, if it makes no sense to retract previous speech acts belonging to the fragment at issue. Hence, the justification of relativism about opaque belief ascriptions depends crucially on the behavior of the latter concerning re-

traction. The question is therefore this: does it make sense to retract a previous opaque belief ascription on the grounds that the present context of assessment determines a different mode of presentation?

Retraction concerns cases in which the relevant parameter differs between the context of utterance and the context of assessment. In the case of opaque belief ascriptions as I have conceived of them, the relevant parameter is a mode of presentation. Let us build a case in which the mode of presentation that is relevant at the context of utterance of an opaque belief ascription is different from the one relevant at the context of assessment. Consider again (11):

    (11)   Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent can fly.

Suppose that Jonathan Kent utters (11). He does so because he is unaware that Superman's real identity is a secret, so he thinks that Lois knows that Superman is Clark Kent in disguise. Thus, the context at which he utters (11) determines a mode of presentation that covers both Superman and Clark Kent.

Later, however, Jonathan discovers that Lois knows nothing about Clark Kent's secret identity. When he assesses the proposition he previously expressed, he finds out it is no longer true, since it is false relative to a mode of presentation that covers Clark Kent but not Superman. Should Jonathan Kent retract his previous assertion? My intuition is that he should. It does not matter whether the proposition was true relative to the mode of presentation that was relevant at the context of utterance, because it is the mode of presentation determined by the context of assessment that is relevant here.

Thus, we now want to complement the nonindexical semantics offered through clauses like (SB′) with a relativist postsemantics:

    (RPSB) A sentence of the form "S believes that $A_1, \ldots, A_n$ are in relation R" is true as used at a context c_1 and assessed from a context c_2 iff for all assignments a, $[\![$"S believes that $A_1, \ldots, A_n$ are in relation R"$]\!]^{c_1}_{\langle w_{c_1}, t_{c_1}, \langle m_1, \ldots, m_n \rangle_{c_2}, a \rangle} = 1$, where w_{c_1} is the world of c_1, t_{c_1} is the time of c_1, and m_n is the mode of presentation that c_2 determines

for $\langle [\![S]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, \langle m_1, \ldots, m_n \rangle, a \rangle}, A_n \rangle$.[10]

Again, opaque belief ascriptions of the form "*S* believes that *A* is *P*" can be seen just as limiting cases of opaque belief ascriptions featuring relations. Thus, we can first use (SB′) to predict (11)'s truth-conditions:

(11′) $[\![\text{"Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent can fly"}]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, \langle m \rangle, a \rangle} \quad = \quad 1 \quad$ iff $\langle [\![\text{"Lois Lane"}]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, \langle m \rangle, a \rangle}, |\text{"Clark Kent can fly"}|^a_c \rangle \quad\quad\quad \in$ $[\![\text{"believes"}]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, \langle m \rangle, a \rangle}$, where w is a possible world, t is a time, $\langle m \rangle$ is a sequence of modes of presentation, and a is an assignment of values to the variables.

and then use (RPSB) to predict (11)'s truth-value as used at a context c_1 and assessed from a context c_2:

(11″) "Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent can fly" is true as used at a context c_1 and assessed from a context c_2 iff for all assignments a, $[\![\text{"Lois believes that Clark Kent can fly"}]\!]^{c_1}_{\langle w_{c_1}, t_{c_1}, \langle m \rangle_{c_2}, a \rangle} = 1$, where w_{c_1} is the world of c_1, t_{c_1} is the time of c_1, and m is the mode of presentation that c_2 determines for $\langle [\![\text{"Lois Lane"}]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, \langle m \rangle, a \rangle}, \text{"Clark Kent"} \rangle$.

According to our relativist postsemantics, m would be the mode of presentation that the context of assessment, that is, Jonathan's *present* context, determines for $\langle [\![\text{"Lois"}]\!]^c_{\langle w, t, \langle m \rangle, a \rangle}, \text{"Clark Kent"} \rangle$. And this is a mode of presentation according to which Superman and Clark Kent are different people, not the mode of presentation that Jonathan initially attributed to Lois.

The intuition defended here recommends, as I advanced before, embracing nonindexical relativism about opaque belief ascriptions. If the context that determines the mode of presentation relative to which the proposition expressed is to be evaluated is the context of assessment, a relativist postsemantics for opaque belief ascriptions is the one to be adopted. This, together with considering modes

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[10]This is adapted from the postsemantics for "tasty" that MacFarlane's (2014: 151) proposes.

of presentation to be part of the circumstances of evaluation and not of the proposition itself, brings us a nonindexical relativism.

A natural objection would have it that Jonathan Kent was mistaken in asserting (11) in the first place. If this were so, this would not be the kind of case that speaks in favor of relativism. Relativism predicts that Jonathan is right in retracting his previous assertion, but also that such assertion was made in accordance with the norm of assertion. But, the objection would go on, Jonathan's assertion was not right to begin with. Thus, we do not need to account for the fact that Jonathan's original assertion was right at the context of utterance, but wrong when evaluated from the context of assessment, which is the whole reason for adopting relativism about this case.

My response to the objection is this. It sure was wrong for Jonathan to attribute to Lois a sequence of modes of presentation that identified Superman and Clark Kent, but, once this was the sequence of modes of presentation at play, it was perfectly right for him to assess the proposition that Lois believes that Clark Kent can fly as true. Jonathan was right in asserting (11) at his context, although it was a defective context in that it featured the wrong sequence of modes of presentation. Thus, we need to make sense of the idea that the proposition that Lois believes that Clark Kent can fly was true at the context at which (11) was uttered, but is false at the context from which Jonathan assesses such proposition and considers whether to retract the assertion of (11) through which he expressed it. Only a postsemantics according to which the context that determines the relevant sequence of modes of presentation is the context of assessment can afford this. And this is a relativist postsemantics.

4.6. Conclusion

We have seen how different proposals to solve Frege's puzzle end up either contradicting speakers' intuitions about the truth of what they say, or renouncing semantic innocence, even if only at the sentential level. I have introduced a nonindexical semantics about opaque belief ascriptions as a way out of Frege's puzzle that manages to avoid both undesirable consequences. Particularly, I have

showed how it can account for the phenomena that made us claim that some of its competitors abandon semantic innocence, namely sentential cross-attitudinal anaphora and iterated attitude ascriptions (see Table 4.1).[11] All this leads me to defend a nonindexical semantics as preferable to other approaches to opaque belief ascriptions.

	Subsentential cross-attitudinal anaphora	Sentential cross-attitudinal anaphora	Iterated attitude ascriptions	Respect for speakers' intuitions
Hidden-indexical theories	Yes	No	No	Yes
Recanati's theory	Yes	No	No	Yes
Non-truth-conditional contextualism	Yes	?	?	No
Nonindexical relativism	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 4.1: Contextualism, relativism, and opacity

Remember that Russellianism —that is, non-truth-conditional contextualism— had problems accounting for speakers' intuitions, and that Fregeanism —that is, hidden-indexical theories and Recanati's theory— failed to respect semantic innocence, at least at the sentential level. It seems that, to account for speakers' intuitions, we need modes of presentation to play a role in the ascription's truth-value, and to respect semantic innocence, we need to take them out of the proposition. I have aimed at showing that nonindexicalism allows us to do both things at once.

To end with, I have complemented the semantics offered with a postsemantics that makes the theory a variety of relativism in the sense proposed in chapter 3. Not only is it a nonindexical theory, but also a relativist theory in the sense that, according to it, the context of utterance is not enough to determine the circumstances of evaluation. I have used the behavior that opaque belief ascriptions exhibit in cases of retraction to argue for this postsemantics.

[11]It can be argued whether non-truth-conditional contextualism can account for sentential cross-attitudinal anaphora and for the transparency of iterated attitude ascriptions. However, whether it can is orthogonal to my aim here. Hence the question marks in the table.

Chapter 5

Relativism and expressivism

The conclusion of chapter 3 was that relativism, in the sense preferred in this dissertation, is relevantly different from contextualism. The relevance of the difference pointed out there will become apparent after chapter 6, where I will show that it is because of it that relativism can implement the kind of stance that makes it the kind of theory to adopt, while contextualism cannot. Another theory in the theoretical landscape drawn in chapter 2 is expressivism. Is expressivism able to implement the kind of stance we need? I will address this question in chapter 6 too, and the answer will be in the positive. However, we first need to become familiar with the aspects of expressivism that make it able to implement the stance. Discussing them is the aim of this chapter.

The outcome will be that the aspects that made us distinguish relativism from contextualism do not allow us to distinguish relativism from all versions of expressivism. However, relativism and expressivism have usually been taken to be contending theories. In particular, MacFarlane (2014: 172–175), on the one hand, and Frápolli & Villanueva (2015), on the other, have pointed out what they take to be insurmountable differences between the two theories. My point in this chapter is that what MacFarlane takes to be differences between relativism and expressivism are only so if we understand expressivism in a certain way, and what Frápolli and Villanueva take to be differences between relativism and expressivism are only so if we understand relativism in a certain way. I will defend

a way of understanding relativism and a way of understanding expressivism that make them compatible. At the end of the chapter, in fact, I will suggest how the two theories can be combined to yield a proposal that understands the individuation of meaning in expressivism terms, and at the same time, relativizes utterance truth.

MacFarlane claims that relativism and expressivism are different for two reasons. First, he says, expressivism cannot distinguish between thinking that licorice is tasty, on the one hand, and knowing licorice's taste first-hand and liking it, on the other. Relativism, by contrast, can do this. Second, expressivism cannot make sense of retraction, while relativism can. I will argue that the claims that expressivism cannot distinguish the two mental states above and that it cannot account for retraction depend on an *internalist* interpretation of expressivism, but do not survive a *noninternalist* interpretation, which is the one that I recommend.[1] Frápolli and Villanueva, for their part, claim that relativism and expressivism are different because the former features a bottom-up model for the individuation of content, while the latter features a top-down model. I will argue that, although MacFarlane is indeed committed to a bottom-up model for the individuation of content, this is not an essential component of relativism. Thus, we can have a relativism that is not different from expressivism in this sense.

In section 5.1, I offer a minimal characterization of expressivism[2] aimed at covering both MacFarlane's conception of it and the noninternalist one, and present Gibbard's proposal as a neutral illustration of how expressivism works. In section 5.2, I list the differences between relativism and expressivism that have been pointed out by MacFarlane himself and by Frápolli and Villanueva. In section 5.3, I characterize one way in which one may flesh out my minimal characterization of expressivism—internalist expressivism, and show that relativism and expressivism are different with respect to the aspects pointed out by MacFarlane only if we understand expressivism in this way. In section 5.4, I present the alternative to internalist expressivism, i.e., noninternalist expressivism, and show that, with this kind of expressivism in mind, such theory is no longer that far from

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[1]Frápolli (2019a), as I will say later, makes a distinction close to this one.

[2]This is the aim of Frápolli & Villanueva (2012) too.

relativism. In section 5.5, I contest Frápolli and Villanueva's claim that relativism and expressivism are different with respect to their model for the individuation of content by arguing that MacFarlane's bottom-up model is not an essential component of relativism. In section 5.6, finally, I sketch what a theory that combined relativism's and expressivism's key insights would look like. This theory would, on the one hand, understand meaning as expressivism does, and on the other, make use of the context of assessment.

5.1. Expressivism

In this section, I characterize expressivism so that we can compare it with relativism. The characterization, though, will not be as thorough as the one I offered for relativism in chapter 3. This is in part because it will aim at being a neutral characterization that can be implemented in different ways. In particular, I will show how it can be developed both into an internalist (section 5.3) and into a noninternalist (section 5.4) expressivism.

Expressivism seeks to explain the special character of normative and evaluative uses of language without introducing into our worldview elements that would defy a naturalist approach. Normative and evaluative uses of language have a special connection with action—while knowing that a certain policy will increase equality is a reason for implementing such policy only if we also know that equality should be increased, knowing that a certain policy ought to be implemented is enough reason to do so. This feature of normative and evaluative uses of language seems difficult to explain if we consider that terms such as "good" refer to properties that can be reduced to natural ones, since it seems strange that motivating properties can be reduced to nonmotivating ones. If, alternatively, we consider these properties to be irreducible, we find ourselves required to expand our ontology with "queer" properties that can motivate by themselves.[3] The ex-

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[3]Lewis' (1980b) proposal, according to which the functional role that characterizes mental states is occupied by neurophysiological states, can be seen as an attempt at making mental states able to motivate without unnecessarily expanding our ontology. Thanks to Nemesio García-Carril for pointing this out to me.

pressivist escapes this dilemma by rejecting what both options presuppose—that the terms involved in normative and evaluative uses of language are referential.

This assumption is naturally found in the company of representationalism, a view about the nature of meaning according to which linguistic expressions have semantic contents in virtue of representing something in the world. If we just drop referentialism about normative and evaluative uses of language but stick to representationalism, the resulting picture is one according to which normative and evaluative uses of language do not have semantic content. This might serve as a characterization of some of the first varieties of expressivism, according to which sentences such as "Sharing is morally good" do not express propositions (see Ayer 2001: 110). However, if we abandon representationalism together with referentialism about normative and evaluative uses of language, we will be able to still make sense of the idea that normative and evaluative uses of language have semantic contents. Note that representationalism is a *metasemantic* thesis, that is, a thesis about what we do when we assign semantic values to linguistic expressions, or in virtue of what linguistic expressions have the semantic values that they have. Expressivism, if it still wants to assign semantic values to normative uses of language, has to adopt an alternative metasemantics. Such metasemantics can be given in terms of what Gibbard calls "the oblique strategy":

> (W)hereas a straight analysis of a term offers a synonymous phrase, an expressivist's oblique explanation of a term explains the states of mind that the term serves to help express. (Gibbard 2012: 224)

Thus, expressivism's traditional answer to the question as to what it is to give the meaning of a linguistic expression is this: to specify the mental state that is conventionally expressed by uttering it. This is what following expressivism's oblique strategy amounts to. Normative and evaluative uses of language express mental states just like descriptive uses do, and in this way, they are meaningful too. The difference lies in what kind of mental state each kind of use expresses. It has been pretty much standard within expressivist positions to associate descriptive uses of language with mental states with a mind-to-world direction of fit, and normative and evaluative uses with mental states with a world-to-mind direction

of fit—paradigmatically, desires. Once the metasemantic thesis that follows from the oblique strategy is adopted, the thesis that normative and evaluative uses of language express a particular kind of mental state implies that they have a particular kind of semantic value. Thus, it implies a semantic claim, i.e., a claim about what kind of semantic values a class of linguistic expressions has.

Expressivism thus involves both a metasemantic and a semantic claim.[4] The metasemantic claim is that uses of language have meanings in virtue of expressing mental states. This claim is metasemantic in that it tells us what we do when we assign semantic values, that is, what we do when we do semantics. The semantic claim, which follows from the metasemantic claim together with the claim that normative and evaluative uses of language express a different kind of mental state than descriptive uses, is that normative and evaluative uses of language have a kind of meaning different from that of descriptive uses. This claim is semantic in that it tells us the particular kind of semantic values that should be assigned to a certain class of linguistic expressions.

Let us take Gibbard's (1990, 2003, 2012) theory as an updated, and at the same time quite standard illustration of what expressivism looks like. Let us begin by considering the traditional picture of propositions as sets of possible worlds. In this picture, possible worlds maximally describe a way reality could be—for each thing that may or may not be the case, a possible world will determine either that it is or that it is not the case. We approximate what world ours actually is through propositions, which are compatible with some worlds and not with others. In this

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[4]This talk of semantic and metasemantic claims is loosely based on Pérez Carballo (2014), and especially, on Charlow (2015), who distinguishes between expressivism's empirical, metasemantic, and semantic claims. The empirical claim is that the function of a given sentence is nonrepresentational; the metasemantic claim is that the state of mind constitutively involved in accepting that sentence is fundamental in thinking about its meaning, and the semantic claim, which follows from the empirical and metasemantic claims together, is that the sentence does not mean a proposition (Charlow 2015: 3). Our metasemantic claim is close to Charlow's, except that it applies to all sentences. The semantic claim here is less demanding than Charlow's—all we claim is that the meaning of the sentences at issue is different in kind from that of descriptive sentences. Whether this implies that the sentences at issue do not mean propositions depends on what we take "meaning a proposition" to mean.

sense, propositions describe a way reality could be, but not maximally, for they leave it undecided, for at least one thing that may or may not be the case, whether it is. Plans are in this sense analogous to propositions. For instance, if I have a plan for packing, I am decided about what to do in a certain range of situations, but my plan for packing does not include being decided about what to do in case World War III begins. The analog of a world, in the sense in which plans are the analogs of propositions, is what Gibbard (2003: 53–54) calls a *hyperplan*: the plan of a maximally opinionated agent who is decided about what to do in any possible situation. Just like propositions are sets of possible worlds, plans are sets of hyperplans, and the same plan can be compatible with different hyperplans that are by definition incompatible with each other.

Gibbard's move consists in taking the content of all declarative sentences to be a set of world-hyperplan pairs—the set of world-hyperplan pairs in which the sentence is true (Gibbard 2003: 58). A descriptive sentence will be true in some worlds and false in others, but, given the same world, the sentence's truth-value should not be affected by modifying the second member of the pair, i.e., the hyperplan. Descriptive sentences are not sensitive to hyperplans. "The table is square" may be true in this world and false in another, but it will be true in all the world-hyperplan pairs that have our world as their first member. If we take "I ought to pack" to be purely normative, by contrast, it may be true according to a hyperplan and false according to another, but, given the same hyperplan, it will be true or false no matter what the world is like. We can also have normative sentences that are not purely normative, that is, that can turn from true to false by shifting either the possible world or the hyperplan. These sentences can be said to have both descriptive and normative content.

Gibbard's theory posits a difference between descriptive uses of language, on the one hand, and normative and (arguably) evaluative ones, on the other. The difference is that descriptive uses are sensitive only to possible worlds, while normative and evaluative uses are sensitive to hyperplans (and possibly to worlds too). They thus have different kinds of contents, and, if we characterize the mental state that a use of language expresses by its content, they express different kinds of mental states. This is Gibbard's implementation of expressivism's se-

mantic claim. In particular, descriptive uses of language express pure beliefs, that is, mental states whose contents are sensitive only to possible worlds. Normative and evaluative uses, by contrast, express mental states whose contents are sensitive at least to hyperplans. While positing a difference between descriptive uses of language and normative and evaluative ones, Gibbard still assigns semantic values to the latter. In fact, he assigns the same kind of object to both uses, i.e., a world-hyperplan pair. How the use's truth-value behaves with respect to these pairs is what allows us to say that there is a difference in semantic value between the two kinds of uses, since their semantic values are the same kind of objects but still systematically different.

By rejecting representationalism, expressivists manage to escape the dilemma posed by natural properties while still being able to assign semantic values to normative and evaluative uses of language, something that puts them on the path to being able to deal with issues such as the Frege-Geach problem (see Geach 1960; Horwich 2005; Hom & Schwartz 2013; Charlow 2014). The Frege-Geach problem is that truth-functional expressions have to take something with truth-conditions as their arguments; if normative and evaluative uses of language lacked semantic values, sentences used in this way would not be able to be embedded under truth-conditional expressions. Whether the Frege-Geach problem is indeed solved depends on how the semantics is actually constructed, and on how we make one semantic value depend on another—on how we actually implement the semantic thesis. But, in order to do any of this, we first need to be able to say that a normative or evaluative use of language has a semantic value, and this is achieved by adopting the metasemantics provided by the oblique strategy (see Frápolli 2019b for a similar point).

Another way in which two expressivisms that commit both to the metasemantic and to the semantic claim may differ from each other is in how they implement the metasemantic claim. What the metasemantic claim says crucially depends on what we take "mental state" to mean, because, without a proper understanding of the expression "mental state", the metasemantic claim is vacuous. Crucially different expressivisms may result from different ways of understanding in what consists to express a mental state (or, for the matter, to be in a mental state).

Moreover, expressivism may find itself unable to deal with particular problems as the result of including an inadequate conception of mental states. As we will see later, this is the case with many standard versions of expressivism. In particular, we might distinguish between an internalist and a noninternalist conception of mental states. In the next section, I will point out several features of expressivism and relativism that allegedly distinguish them from each other; however, in section 5.3, I will argue that some of them stem from understanding expressivism as a position committed to an internalist conception of mental states. In section 5.4, I will present the alternative, noninternalist conception.

5.2. Relativism and expressivism

Expressivism and relativism have usually been taken to be competing theories. MacFarlane, for instance, lists expressivism as one of the existing theories against which he is going to introduce his assessor relativism (MacFarlane 2014: 15–21), and also devotes several pages of *Assessment Sensitivity* to contrasting his theory with Gibbard's expressivism (MacFarlane 2014: 167–175). In this section, I introduce the modified version of Gibbard's expressivism with which MacFarlane works. Then, I list the similarities and differences that MacFarlane and other authors, such as Frápolli & Villanueva (2015), find between the two theories.

The version of Gibbard's theory with which MacFarlane works is a somewhat modified one—it is an expressivist view of "tasty", a predicate that Gibbard himself does not take into account. According to such view, we evaluate sentences relative to world-taste pairs, and take the set of world-taste pairs on which a sentence obtains to be its content. He concedes that one might ask "whether there is any real difference between this purified, Gibbardian expressivist view (in contrast with a naive expressivism about "tasty") and the relativist view" (MacFarlane 2014: 172), since, according to MacFarlane, they seem to agree on the following issues:

1. They use the same compositional semantics;

2. The contents are in both theories sets of world-taste pairs;

3. They accept these contents as potential contents of beliefs;

4. They both hold that the truth of these contents is relative to tastes;

5. They both explain compatibility relations between beliefs in terms of compatibility relations between these contents, and

6. They both hold that a monadic truth predicate that can be predicated of these contents.

However, MacFarlane claims that expressivism and relativism differ on two aspects that he takes to be crucial. In the first place, MacFarlane takes the expressivist view to make it conceptually impossible to think that something whose taste one knows first-hand is tasty while not liking its taste, while he thinks that his own relativist view allows for someone to be in such state (MacFarlane 2014: 173–174). In the second place, MacFarlane thinks that his theory is capable to account for a phenomenon that expressivism is not able to explain, i.e., retraction (MacFarlane 2014: 175; see also section 2.5).

To explain the first alleged difference, MacFarlane tells us Alex's story:

> Alex might find herself unable to believe that licorice is tasty because she aspires to greatness and thinks (on the basis of reading) that only uneducated people think that licorice is tasty. Though she likes the taste of licorice, and hence has sufficient reason to conclude that it is tasty, she just can't bring herself to draw that conclusion. (MacFarlane 2014: 174)

It seems natural to say, in reporting this case, that Alex thinks that licorice is not tasty, but she likes it. For Gibbard (2003: 11), to wonder what one ought to do is nothing but to wonder what to do. In a parallel way, MacFarlane claims, to wonder whether something is tasty should be nothing, according to Gibbard, but to wonder whether one likes it. Consequently, an agent should not be able to think that licorice is not tasty without not liking its taste. MacFarlane, by contrast, thinks that "(g)etting into one state (liking licorice's taste) but not the other (thinking that licorice is tasty) *may be irrational, but it does not seem impossible*"

([MacFarlane 2014](#): 174, my emphasis). Hence, MacFarlane claims, Gibbard's view falls short of making room for some mental states that are intuitively possible.

According to MacFarlane, expressivists also have some problems to explain retraction. In parallel with the treatment given for disagreements, expressivism has to appeal to a conflict in attitudes, but in this case, a conflict between a speaker's past and present attitudes. However, as MacFarlane notes, this is not enough to account for the phenomenon of retraction. The appeal to a conflict in attitudes is one way to account for some kinds of disagreements, but it does not provide us with an explanation of all varieties of them. Conflicts in attitudes coincide with what MacFarlane calls "disagreement in terms of noncotenable attitudes". Following MacFarlane, two attitudes are noncotenable if agents who are in one of them cannot adopt the other one without changing their mind. But, as MacFarlane emphasizes, it seems that something more than "simply not still having the (earlier) attitude" ([MacFarlane 2014](#): 175) is necessary in order to explain retraction cases. Thus, MacFarlane maintains that expressivism cannot provide an explanation of the possibility of retraction.

Along with the two alleged differences between expressivism and relativism pointed out by MacFarlane, a third one has been advanced by [Frápolli & Villanueva](#) ([2015](#)). According to them, expressivism features a top-down model for the individuation of content, while relativism follows a bottom-up one. Bottom-up models for the individuation of content pose a step-by-step process of meaning construction that starts from the meanings associated with subsentential contents to arrive at the meaning of the whole sentence ([Frápolli & Villanueva 2015](#): 2). Top-down models, by contrast, take the sentence to be the basic unit of analysis ([Frápolli & Villanueva 2015](#): 3). They do so because, in these models, the basic unit of analysis has to be susceptible of being used to make a move in the conversational game, and the sentence is the minimal unit that has this power. Propositions are the contents of sentences, so these models are committed to what Frápolli and Villanueva call "the principle of propositional priority", according to which "(p)ropositions are the primary bearers of logical, semantic, and pragmatic properties" ([Frápolli & Villanueva 2015](#): 4).

Frápolli and Villanueva claim that a key component of expressivism is the

pragmatic insight that we should take as the basic unit of analysis one that allows us to account for how moves in the conversational game are made, and the commitment to the principle of propositional priority that comes with it (Frápolli & Villanueva 2015: 6). Thus, expressivism builds contents in a top-down way. MacFarlane's relativism, by contrast, is according to them committed to a bottom-up model for the individuation of content, since he admits the possibility that two analytically equivalent sentences express different contents. MacFarlane, they say, accepts that "I know licorice's taste first-hand and I like it" and "Licorice is tasty" are analytically equivalent, and still, one may entertain the state expressed by the first sentence without entertaining the one expressed by the second. Thus, MacFarlane is committed to a model for the individuation of content according to which a difference in the contents' constituents can tell them apart even if exactly the same things follow from both (Frápolli & Villanueva 2015: 7–8). Frápolli and Villanueva call this "the analytic equivalence test". Their response to MacFarlane is that, although the state of mind of a speaker who utters "I know licorice's taste first-hand and I like it" and that of a speaker who utters "Licorice is tasty" may be the same, these two sentences are not analytically equivalent, which means, given a top-down model for the individuation of content, that their contents are different. Although it might take the same situation for a speaker to be entitled to utter any of the two sentences, different things follow from them. In particular, it follows from "Licorice is tasty" that the hearer should share the speaker's judgement, while this is abstent from the meaning of "I know licorice's taste first-hand and I like it". Thus, for Frápolli and Villanueva it is important not only under what conditions a speaker is entitled to utter any of these sentences, but also what commitments the speaker undertakes in doing so.

The aim of this chapter is to defy the assumption that expressivism and relativism are competing theories by challenging each of the alleged differences postulated by MacFarlane and Frápolli and Villanueva. Note, however, that our side is populated too. One example is Field (2009, 2018), who claims that his theory, which he deems "evaluativism", could be seen both as a variety of expressivism and as a variety of relativism. In particular, he says that he prefers to see it implemented "along the lines of Gibbardian expressivism (...) or MacFarlane-style

assessor relativism, properly interpreted"[5] (Field 2018: 3).

Let us first see why Field's proposal could be seen as a variety of relativism. Field takes evaluative claims to involve a free parameter for a norm of assessment. However, this is compatible with the theory's being a variety of nonindexical contextualism, since sentences like "It is raining", Field says, also involve a free parameter, only one whose value is determined by the speaker's context. In evaluative claims, Field holds in contrast, "one doesn't intend to be making a claim about a specific norm (or a claim that is to be evaluated for correctness by looking at a specific norm that the speaker intends): a claim about what is *justified according to a specific norm* would be straightforwardly factual, with no evaluative force)" (Field 2009: 251–252, his emphasis). "Even if "It is raining now" expresses a proposition that is "incomplete" with respect to world and time, there is still a non-relative standard of objective correctness for the assertion of or belief in such a proposition on any given occasion: the assertion or belief is *(objectively) correct* if the proposition is true *with respect to the world in which it is located and the intended time*" (Field 2009: 273, his emphasis). That is, the context of utterance by itself does not determine the circumstances of evaluation. Thus, Field's claim that evaluative claims involve a free parameter amounts to nonindexicalism, and his claim that the speaker does not intend to speak about a specific norm amounts to relativism. Field himself says that MacFarlane's assessor relativism "seems at first blush to be just this sort of thing" (Field 2009: 252).

Second, Field's evaluativism could be seen as a form of expressivism because it claims that "an evaluative sentence expresses a mental state that is a resultant of norms and factual beliefs" (Field 2009: 252). Thus, in uttering an evaluative sentence, one does something different from merely describing the world, just like an expressivist would say.[6] (Field then goes on to say that his view can be

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[5]It is not clear what Field means by "properly interpreted". He seems to think that there are several possible ways of understanding MacFarlane's relativism, and that his evaluativism is akin to it under one interpretation, but not under a quite widespread one; however, he gives no clue as to what the two interpretations are. Maybe he cannot, for, as Kripke (1982: 62, n. 47) says, once one is committed to a certain philosophical position, it is impossible not to read the opponent's claims in such a way that one would be forced to agree with them. Hence, I will leave this issue aside here.

[6]In his (2018) paper, Field in fact rejects the label "expressivism" for two reasons. First, he says

seen as a mere notational variant of Gibbard's, which would thus be a variety of relativism too.)

Hence, Field's view can be used as an example of a proposal whose very author takes to be both a variety of relativism and a variety of expressivism. His position is in the minority, though. In this chapter, I try to argue in favor of this kind of view.

5.3.   Internalist expressivism

MacFarlane (2014: 173–175), on the one hand, and Frápolli & Villanueva (2015), on the other, claim that relativism and expressivism are relevantly different theories. However, I want to argue that their diagnoses are in one case due to the particular way in which MacFarlane understands expressivism, and in the other to the particular way in which Frápolli and Villanueva understand relativism. In this section, I contest MacFarlane's way of understanding expressivism, and argue that the differences between relativism and expressivism that he points out can be raised only if we understand expressivism in an internalist way. MacFarlane does so, but I think that there are better, noninternalist ways of implementing expressivism, which will be addressed in the next section. And once we pursue noninternalism, expressivism is no longer that far from relativism.

Expressivism's key move is to deny that certain areas of language are referential. However, many contemporary versions of expressivism, I claim, depend on understanding mental language as referential (see, for instance, Chrisman 2007; Schroeder 2008a, 2008b; Bar-On & Chrisman 2009; Bar-On & Sias 2013; Bar-On et al. 2014; Ridge 2014; Bar-On 2015). According to these versions of expressivism,

that "it has been used for a bewildering variety of views" (Field 2018: 3). Second, he considers the term "expressivism" to convey the idea that there is a close connection between the area of language at issue and desires or preferences, something that, although defeasibly, may sound reasonable for moral language but not so much for other areas to which expressivism is intended to apply. His label "evaluativism" is proposed as an alternative to "expressivism". It is one of the aims of this chapter to argue that one reason for seeing relativism and expressivism as incompatible is to understand expressivism as in Field's second argument. I will reject such a way of understanding expressivism, so I will keep the label and take Field's theory to fall under it.

in using language in a normative or evaluative way we are expressing mental states other than belief; however, mental states are internal states of the speaker, and expressing them amounts to giving voice to them, i.e., "taking them out" and sharing them with the world. For instance, Bar-On talks about "*show*(ing) expressers' states of mind to a suitable endowed audience" (Bar-On 2015: 14, her emphasis), and takes expressive communication to be an extension of natural expression, which "point(s) *inward*" (Bar-On 2015: 16, her emphasis). Once mental states are understood in this way, it is really easy to take the next step and assume mental vocabulary to be referential. Although in using language in a normative or evaluative way we would not be reporting to be in any mental state, but expressing it, in saying that someone is in any of these mental states we would still be describing a certain internal state in which that person is. If this state is reducible to a neurological one, it is again hard to explain the special connection with action that mental vocabulary has. If it is not, it is as spooky an entity as moral goodness is a queer property. Note that the problem is not individuating meanings in terms of mental states, but a particular conception of mental states that is naturally linked to a referential account of mental vocabulary.

In fact, the historical origins of expressivism can be traced back to authors who were mostly interested in mental vocabulary, and who made proposals to explain how such vocabulary works without committing to spooky entities. Two examples of this kind of view, which denies that mental vocabulary is referential, can be found in Wittgenstein (1975, 2009) and Ryle (2009). If we take a sentence such as "I believe that the door is closed" to be referential, we will take it to depend for its meaningfulness on the existence of a certain entity—a belief, which, as I said above, may correspond to a certain neurological state, or not be reducible to such physical entity. Beliefs, then, either are not especially connected with action, or if they are, are so at the cost of becoming spooky entities. One way not to need them in order to explain how mental vocabulary works is to reject the claim that such vocabulary is referential. If mental vocabulary does not describe the world, but does something else, we no longer need mental entities.

This does not mean that mental vocabulary is not meaningful. For other areas of language, we adopted expressivism's metasemantic claim that the semantic

value of an use of language is to be given in terms of the mental state it expresses. This seems at first sight difficult to apply to mental vocabulary—if we accept the metasemantic claim and hold that mental vocabulary expresses a special kind of mental state, we seem to arrive at something like the idea that mental vocabulary does not refer to mental states, but is used to express them, so we still need to attribute some substance to them. If we keep understanding mental states as internal states, we will still be committing to spooky entities. Many versions of expressivism have made for other expressions the move that proponents of historical antecedents of expressivism about mental vocabulary made, but once they have arrived at mental states, they have conceived of them in an internalist way, thus letting spooky entities reenter through the back door.

This is a kind of problem that internalist expressivism has, but it is not the only one, and in fact, it is not even the most relevant one when it comes to comparing it with relativism. Even if we accept to build an expressivism about other areas of language on the basis of a conception of mental vocabulary as referential, it will precisely because of this be vulnerable to MacFarlane's (2014) criticisms that I mentioned in the previous section.

Remember that MacFarlane claims that there are two differences between relativism and expressivism. The first one is that expressivism cannot distinguish between thinking that licorice is tasty, on the one hand, and knowing licorice's taste first-hand and liking it, on the other, while relativism can. The second one is that expressivism, unlike relativism, cannot make sense of retraction. Both sides of the claim presuppose an internalist interpretation of expressivism, as I aim at showing in what follows.

First, the claim that expressivism cannot distinguish between thinking that licorice is tasty, on the one hand, and knowing licorice's taste first-hand and liking it, on the other, presupposes an internalist interpretation of expressivism because it attributes to expressivism the idea that what determines the content of an assertion is the internal state that the speaker voices in making it. The state in which speakers have to be in order to be entitled to say "Licorice is tasty" is the same one in which they would have to be in order to be entitled to say "I know

licorice's taste first-hand and I like it".[7] Thus, MacFarlane would say, both assertions have the same content. In MacFarlane's conception of expressivism, one has to first be in a certain mental state and then express it in order for the content of the assertion to be that mental state. On this view, having the same conditions of assertability amounts to having the same content—if one has to be in the same mental state (understood in an internalist way) to make two different assertions, then those two assertions have the same content. This is too narrow a conception of what to be in a mental state is. In the next section, I will show that, with a different conception, the mental state expressed by "Licorice is tasty" is not the same as the one expressed by "I know licorice's taste first-hand and I like it".

Second, the claim that expressivism cannot make sense of retraction presupposes an internalist interpretation of expressivism because the claim that one cannot retract the expression of a mental state is only cogent if mental states are internal states in which one happens to find oneself. If by expressing a mental state one is just indicating that one is in that mental state, more or less like smoke indicates the presence of fire, one cannot just take back the expression, for doing so would amount to saying that one was not in the state to start with; but in an internalist expressivism, the expression of the mental state is too tightly connected to the mental state itself for this to be a possibility. Since speakers were not saying that they were in a certain mental state, but only expressing it, it is not possible for them to claim that they were wrong in their belief that they were in a certain mental state and should not have said such a thing, because they were not expressing a belief that they were in a certain mental state, but the mental state itself. The alternative conception of what expressing a mental state consists in that will be presented in the next section, by contrast, makes room for retraction.

Thus, what MacFarlane seems to have in mind when he lists the differences between relativism and expressivism is an internalist expressivism, i.e., an expres-

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[7]This, at least, is what MacFarlane assumes. The internalist expressivist could bypass this criticism by characterizing the mental states expressed by the two sentences so that they are different enough. However, I know of no version of internalist expressivism that does this, and even if there were any, it would still suffer from the rest of the problems for internalist expressivism highlighted throughout this chapter.

sivism that takes mental states to be internal states of the speaker. Such kind of expressivism will not be able to either distinguish the mental states that worry MacFarlane, nor to account for retraction. In the next section, I show that expressivism can be developed in a different direction that avoids these problems.

5.4.   Noninternalist expressivism

As the result of understanding mental vocabulary as referential, the brand of internalist expressivism depicted in the previous section is indeed different from relativism with respect to the aspects pointed out by MacFarlane. Moreover, inasmuch as we want our theory to distinguish between thinking that licorice is tasty and knowing licorice's taste first-hand and liking it, and to account for retraction, internalist expressivism is an unsatisfactory proposal. In this section, I present an alternative way of understanding expressivism that does not take mental vocabulary to be referential, and as the result of not doing so, is able to deal with these two problems in exactly the same way as relativism. In fact, this brand of expressivism can be taken to be equivalent to relativism for our purposes.

5.4.1.   An alternative conception of mental states

Noninternalist[8] expressivism still takes the meaning of an use of language to be determined by the mental state it expresses, but understands what it is to express a mental state in a different way. This makes expressivism itself noninternalist inasmuch as how we understand what it is to be in a mental state has an impact on what we do in assigning semantic values. In a noninternalist interpretation of expressivism, to be in a mental state does not amount to having a certain internal state that one then expresses. Instead, to be in a mental state consists in being someone about whom it makes sense to make certain statements, as well as being someone from whom certain courses of action can be expected. For instance, for me to believe that there is a table in the middle of the room is for me to be someone from whom it makes sense to expect not to try to cross the room through the middle. Gibbard (2003) can be read as saying something close to this,

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[8]A few qualifications are in order about the choice of the label "noninternalist" to characterize the brand of expressivism advanced here. This choice can be criticized on the grounds that it is too easy to assume it to be interchangeable with "externalist", a label that bears connotations that belong to a different debate. In the philosophy of language, externalism is most readily understood as a theory that takes factors external to the speaker, whether natural or social, to be essential in individuating meaning, as Kripke (1970), Putnam (1975), and Burge (1979, 1986) defend. I think these are still descriptivist views of meaning, and I would not want to see the position expounded here mistakenly classified along with them. I want to commit myself to the inference from "noninternalist" to "externalist" only as long as externalism is not understood as a variety of descriptivism, as I take the theories listed above to be.

An alternative to "noninternalist" would be "nonmentalistic", but I think there are reasons for rejecting the latter label that weight out those for rejecting the former. Deeming my view "nonmentalistic" would amount to accepting that mental states cannot be characterized in a way that allows them to play a role in the individuation of meaning, while it is the defining component of noninternalist expressivism that they can. Giving up using mental states in the individuation of meaning would amount to accepting that they can only be characterized in internalist terms, which is what would make them of no service for this kind of project. But, as I have argued in section 5.3, understanding mental states in an internalist way fits badly with the spirit behind expressivism. Once we understand mental states in a noninternalist way, there is no problem in talking about mental states and saying that it is in terms of them that we should individuate meaning. This is my reason for rejecting the label "nonmentalistic" and embracing "noninternalist", even if the latter comes at a cost too. I think it is worth paying given the drawbacks of its alternative.

even though the way in which he speaks reveals that he still accepts a sense of "mental state" in the vein of an internalist interpretation of expressivism. In particular, he says that to express a mental state does not require to be in that mental state, in the sense of having that internal state. All it requires is for speakers to take themselves to be in it: "When I say he "expresses" a belief, I don't mean he has that belief. *To express a state of mind, as I use the term, is to purport to have it, whether or not one does*" (Gibbard 2003: 77, my emphasis). Here, to express a mental state, one only needs to be in it in the sense of being someone about whom it makes sense to make certain statements, as well as being someone from whom to expect certain courses of action. For a noninternalist, as I said, there is nothing to being in a mental state beyond this. Thus, it is not possible for us even to state Gibbard's thesis,[9] since, although to express a mental state does not require to be in that mental state in an internalist sense, it does require to be in it in our sense. In fact, we individuate the mental states in which we are by establishing what statements it makes sense to make about us and what courses of action are to be expected from us on the basis of what we express.

Thus, I will take expressivism to give the meanings of uses of language in terms of what they serve to do, which, when we understand what it is to express a mental state in the way suggested above, is another way of putting the suggestion of giving the meanings of uses of language in terms of the mental states they express. This metasemantics can be fairly deemed "inferentialist" (see Brandom 1994, 2000).

5.4.2. Dynamic expressivism

One way of implementing expressivism's central idea is the one provided by dynamic semantics (see Nouwen et al. 2016), which understands pieces of discourse as instructions to update the conversational context with new information. A concrete implementation of this idea can be found in Dynamic Predicate Logic (PDL), which understands semantic values as actions that, as such, are to be individuated by their effects (Groenendijk & Stokhof 1991). Following this spirit,

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[9]See n. 5 in this chapter.

semantic values are modeled as functions from one context to another that has been updated with the information carried by the meaning—a context change potential (CCP), in Heim's (1983) words. A CCP would tell us how the context is affected by an utterance that has that CCP as its content, and it would do so by specifying, for each context that we can take as starting point, to what context the utterance takes us.

A central component in accounting for the conversational context is the *common ground*, which is the set of propositions that all the participants in the conversation share as commonly accepted. The notion of common ground is owed to Stalnaker (1978), who defined a speaker's presuppositions as what that speaker takes to be common ground of the participants in a conversation. If we represent a speaker's presuppositions as the set of possible worlds compatible with what is presupposed, we can characterize the common ground of a conversation as the set of possible worlds that the participants of the conversation take into account (Stalnaker 1978: 84–85). Accordingly, the basic model for updating the context is assertion, which is understood in this approach as a proposal to eliminate from the common ground those possible worlds that are incompatible with what is asserted. Assertions tell us that our world is not among those in which the asserted content does not hold, thus allowing us to reduce the number of possible worlds among which ours could be as we add more information to the common ground.

What presuppositions are at play is one of the factors that characterize the state of a conversation in a given moment, but not the only one. We can also say what the salient objects are, or what questions are the ones that the participants are trying to answer. These other features of the common ground can change too. For instance, we can understand the utterance of an indefinite description as introducing a new discourse referent in the common ground (Karttunen 1976), or a question as dividing the possible worlds in the common ground between those in which the answer to the question is in the positive and those in which it is in the negative, so that the speaker is asking the hearer to answer in such a way that our world gets located in one of these partitions (Hamblin 1958; Groenendijk & Stokhof 1984; Yalcin 2011). What questions are salient at each moment will depend on what partitions have been done. With the development of pragmatics,

the conversational context has been enriched until becoming a complex entity that can include not only a set of possible worlds, but also a list of referents, a to-do list for each participant in the conversation, and so on. Even if we stick to the set of possible worlds, eliminating some of them is not the only available operation—we can also order them, or, as we have proposed to characterize the effect of questions, classify them in a certain way. The list of possible operations on the conversational context grows longer (see, for instance, Baltag et al. 1999; Baltag & Moss 2004; van Benthem et al. 2006; Murray 2014).

Stalnaker was interested in pragmatics, so his proposal should be merely understood as a formalization of the effects of an utterance without consequences for the semantics by itself. The bridge between pragmatics and semantics is provided by dynamic semantics, which, as advanced above, identifies the semantic value of a linguistic expression in context with the impact that its utterance has on the conversational context. In this way, the semantic value of a sentence such as "The table is square", as uttered in the appropriate context, can be modeled in terms of the set of possible worlds that its utterance proposes to eliminate, whereas the semantic value of a question such as "Is the table square?" can be modeled in terms of the partition that its utterance effects on the common ground, dividing it between those worlds in which the table is square and those in which it is not. Finally, given an initial context, the utterance of a sentence that includes an indefinite description will take us to a context that is the same as the initial one in all respects except for the addition of an element to the list of discourse referents. The function that goes from one context to the other —a CCP— will be the semantic value of the sentence in the initial context.

If we model semantic values in terms of impact on the conversational context, the expressivist proposal can be fleshed out by saying that through normative and evaluative uses of language we do not propose to eliminate possible worlds from the common ground, but to carry out some other kind of operation. Hence, the semantic value of sentences used in a normative or evaluative way is of a different kind from that of descriptively used sentences. There are different kinds of semantic values that we can assign to normative and evaluative uses of language while still following this guide. A possibility is to propose that normative and

evaluative uses of language do not eliminate possible worlds, but order them (see Stanley 2015: 144). To implement this, we need to enrich the conversational context with a partial order over the set of possible worlds. The CCP of a sentence used in a normative or evaluative way will then be a function from a context to another that will differ from the first one at least as regards the order of the worlds. This CCP will be the semantic value of the sentence in context.

The point of a dynamic expressivism can be put in terms of the distinction between locational and orientational information, which Charlow (2014) borrows from Lewis (1979). Locational information, on the one hand, allows us to place ourselves in logical space, by reducing the set of possible worlds in which we possibly are. Orientational information, on the other hand, serves other purposes— for instance, making certain partitions on the logical space, or ordering the worlds in it according to how preferable they are. The expressivist thesis can be rendered as stating that the sentences on which expressivists focus their attention do not convey locational information, but orientational information. An expressivism implemented in such a way does not imply any commitment to an internal state's being voiced when one says e.g. "Sharing is morally good".

Note that expressivism, thus understood, again involves both a semantic and a metasemantic claim. The metasemantic claim, which concerns what we do in assigning semantic values, invites us to understand what it is to give the meaning of an use of language in terms of what it serves to do. The semantic claim, which concerns the actual semantic values that are assigned, then tells us that some sentences that look like descriptions are actually used to do something else, and thus mean something different.

Note also that giving the meaning of a sentence in terms of what it is used to do is an alternative to a model for the individuation of content in which we first have the contents of subsentential expressions and then combine them to obtain the sentence's content, i.e., a bottom-up model for the individuation of content (see section 5.2). In this expressivism, the meanings of sentences are not structured, in the sense in which a rule for eliminating or ordering possible worlds is not structured. First, we have the meaning of a sentence —its impact on the conversational context—, and then we can manipulate that meaning to obtain the

meaning of the sentence's components, which will be their systematic contribution to the CCPs of that and other sentences. Thus, this expressivism features a top-down model for the individuation of content. In the next subsection, I review some proposals that can be seen as suggesting something along these lines.

5.4.3.   Some recent expressivisms

Proposals such as Charlow's (2015), Starr's (2016), Willer's (2017), Chrisman's (2018), or Yalcin's (2018) can be seen as going somewhere near the way of understanding expressivism suggested here, although they differ from it with respect to different aspects. In what follows, I discuss two of these proposals: Willer's and Yalcin's.

Willer aims at synthesizing insights from both modern-day metaethical expressivism and early noncognitivism in a dynamic semantics. In such view, coordination would be the starting point for semantic theorizing. The conclusion would be that we should model "the semantic value of a sentence in terms of its role in coordinating states of mind, that is, in terms of the *changes* that the sentence is designed to induce in the recipient's attitudes" (Willer 2017: 2, his emphasis). The semantic value of a sentence would thus be something really similar to a CCP: a function from the states of mind that hearers can have before accepting the sentence to the states of mind that they will have after accepting it. What will allow us to distinguish between kinds of sentences is that the utterance of some will induce beliefs on the hearer, while others will induce desire-like states.

Willer's expressivism is a dynamic theory, i.e., a theory according to which the semantic values of sentences are functions from an input context to an output context. However, the way in which he understands these contexts (as mental states of *individuals*) makes him fall short of offering an expressivism that fulfills our requirements. Willer's expressivism is still an internalist expressivism. The expressivism characterized here, by contrast, is noninternalist in that it builds contexts as structures that involve a community, even if only formed by those who participate in the conversation. Moreover, desire-like states seem unable to fit with many varieties of nondescriptive discourse (e.g. that involving modals),

and coordination has proven unsuccessful for explaining what we do through nondescriptive discourse (or descriptive discourse, for the matter).

Yalcin suggests not to think of expressivism as a semantic theory, but "as a view in pragmatics, or at the semantics-pragmatics interface" (Yalcin 2018: 416). However, he does so after devoting a number of pages to the question as to what semantic value we should assign to a given declarative sentence. There are two paths that one could follow, he says, in answering this question: a *static* expressivist path, and a *dynamic* expressivist path like the one suggested here. If we follow a static expressivist path, on the one hand, we will take the semantic values of declarative sentences to be functions from tuples that include hyperplans to truth-values. If we follow a dynamic expressivist path, on the other hand, we will take the semantic values of declarative sentences to be functions from conversational states into conversational states, i.e., CCPs (Yalcin 2018: 413–416). In both cases, it is part of Yalcin's view that declarative sentences have a certain semantic value. Why, then, does he claim that his expressivism is not a semantic theory?

The answer is that, even if declarative sentences are given a certain semantic value in his theory, and this is part of what distinguishes his theory from others, it is not what makes it an *expressivist* theory. What makes a theory expressivist is that it makes some distinction between descriptive uses of language and normative and evaluative ones. Yalcin's view would be a semantic expressivism if it placed the difference between descriptive uses and normative and evaluative ones in their semantic values. But it rather places it in the relation between such semantic values and the dynamic force of descriptive uses and normative and evaluative ones. As such, Yalcin's expressivism is not a semantic theory, but a view at the semantics-pragmatics interface. Yalcin's theory involves both semantic proposals and proposals at the semantics-pragmatics interface, and only the latter allow us to make a distinction between descriptive uses of language and normative and evaluative ones. This is the sense in which Yalcin says that his expressivism is not semantic, the sense in which "one cannot necessarily read an expressivist view directly off of a compositional semantic theory" (Yalcin 2018: 416).

However, if we follow a dynamic expressivist path, the semantic values that

we assign to descriptive sentences and the semantic values that we assign to other kinds of sentences will be different in kind. This is so because, in dynamic expressivism, we not only assign descriptive sentences and other kinds of sentences different kinds of CCPs, but take those CCPs to be the semantic values of those sentences.

5.4.4. The advantages of noninternalist expressivism

Willer's and Yalcin's are only two among the recent proposals that to different extents incorporate the insights of a noninternalist expressivism. Remember, on the one hand, the problem that internalist expressivism had when trying to distinguish the content of "Licorice is tasty" from that of "I know licorice's taste first-hand and I like it". If we take the content of an assertion to be the internal state in which one has to be in order to make the assertion, we will not be able to distinguish one content from the other. Expressivism, however, ceases to identify the contents of the two assertions as soon as we understand it in a noninternalist way, and make contents depend on factors beyond an internal state that expressivism should regard as dubious anyway. A noninternalist expressivism should focus on the impact on the common ground that each assertion has. The impact of "Licorice is tasty" is different from that of "I know licorice's taste first-hand and I like it"—while the latter does not invite the hearer to share the speaker's taste, the former does. Once this much is recognized, expressivism can make perfect sense of the fact that "Licorice is tasty" and "I know licorice's taste first-hand and I like it" differ in content. We are not first in a certain state and then give voice to it by making the assertion. Instead, a speaker does certain things by making the assertion, and we characterize the speaker who does these things as being in a certain mental state. Since we do different things by uttering "Licorice is tasty" and by uttering "I know licorice's taste first-hand and I like it", they express different mental states, and in doing so, they have different contents.

On the other hand, if expressing a mental state is, as a noninternalist expressivist would say, to place oneself as someone about whom it makes sense to expect certain courses of action, it is reasonable to retract the expression of a mental state

like the one expressed by "Licorice is tasty" when one no longer wants to license such expectations. The effect of retraction, as MacFarlane himself puts it, "is to "undo" the normative changes effected by the original speech act" (MacFarlane 2014: 108). In his example, if one retracts a previous, felicitous question, one cancels the responsibility of one's hearers for answering to it. Similarly, in retracting an assertion of "Licorice is tasty", we cancel our hearers' right to expect us to choose licorice over other things when given the choice (just like they would expect if we had asserted "I know licorice's taste first-hand and I like it"), but also the proposal for them to adopt our same taste. Thus, expressivism, if fleshed out in a noninternalist way, has no problem with retraction. In section 5.6, I will suggest to combine relativism and expressivism by individuating meanings in terms of mental states and giving the context of assessment a role in the determination of the circumstances of evaluation. Combining relativism and expressivism in this way allows us, on the one hand, to correctly understand what retraction does, and on the other, to correctly predict when it makes sense to retract, i.e., when the asserted proposition is not true with respect to the circumstances of evaluation determined by the context of assessment. If the chosen brand of expressivism is an internalist one, of course, it will not make much sense to retract normative or evaluative claims, and we will have a problem. But, if we adopt a noninternalist expressivism, it will make as much sense to retract claims like "Licorice is tasty" as it does to retract descriptive ones.

This is my answer to the differences between relativism and expressivism that MacFarlane points out. There remains the difference pointed out by Frápolli and Villanueva, which concerns how content is individuated: according to Frápolli and Villanueva, relativism features a bottom-up model for the individuation of content, while expressivism features a top-down model. In the next section, I develop what adopting each of these models implies and argue that relativism is not *per se* incompatible with a top-down model for the individuation of content.

5.5.   Relativism and the individuation of content

I have answered to MacFarlane's arguments for distinguishing relativism from expressivism by offering an alternative to MacFarlane's way of understanding expressivism. In this section, I answer to Frápolli and Villanueva's argument to the same effect by showing that the difference between relativism and expressivism that they point out is not a difference between expressivism and relativism in general, but only between expressivism and MacFarlane's particular implementation of relativism.

The idea that is behind my response to Frápolli and Villanueva is that, although MacFarlane himself indeed individuates contents in a bottom-up way, this is not an essential feature of his theory. MacFarlane is a nonindexical relativist *and* a bottom-up theorist, but it does not follow from this that nonindexical relativism implies a commitment to a bottom-up model for the individuation of content. MacFarlane tries at some points to deny that his work has any implications regarding how we should think of propositions, other than their truth-relative character. "I will remain neutral", he says in particular, "about whether propositions are structured or unstructured" (MacFarlane 2014: 72). As Frápolli and Villanueva show, he does not remain neutral after all, and his book exhibits a commitment to the structured character of propositions inasmuch as he fails the "analytic equivalence test", i.e., he admits the possibility that two different propositions are expressed by analytically equivalent sentences (see section 5.2). However, he does not fail because of his relativism, but because of the conception of propositions with which he complements it. My point is that we can be nonindexical relativists and comply with the analytic equivalence test, thus becoming top-down theorists.

One could also say that MacFarlane is committed to a bottom-up model for the individuation of content inasmuch as he offers a compositional semantics for assessment-sensitive expressions. However, compositionality is just a feature that we ask of our semantics for it to work. It does not presuppose anything about how we individuate content, and in particular, it does not presuppose that the meanings of subsentential expressions have priority over the meanings of sentences.

What the principle of compositionality tells us is that the meanings of sentences are functions of the meanings of their components, which is the natural result when we individuate the meanings of subsentential expressions starting from the meanings of sentences.

At any rate, and in spite of his promises, MacFarlane is attached to a certain way of understanding propositions, not because of his involvement with compositional semantics, but because of his failing the analytic equivalence test. For Mac-Farlane, knowing licorice's taste first-hand and liking it is different from thinking that licorice is tasty, but "I know licorice's taste first-hand and I like it" has the same truth-conditions as "Licorice is tasty", and consequently, means the same thing. Thus, according to MacFarlane, two sentences can mean the same thing even if different things follow from each of them, while this possibility would be left out by expressivism, according to which, if the sentences have different impacts on the conversational context, they mean different things.

Is this, though, an essential component of MacFarlane's theory? Would he be less of a relativist if he embraced the analytic equivalence test? I do not think so. I think, in fact, that he rejects the analytic equivalence test only to draw distances between his theory and Gibbard's. But I think that these two theories are not that different. I believe that one can be a relativist and an expressivist at the same time, and that the theory that one should adopt if decided to be both at once would be close both to MacFarlane's theory and to Gibbard's. It should be possible to drop the bottom-up component of MacFarlane's proposal, for he himself recognizes that, other than that, nothing distinguishes his theory from expressivism. But also, according to the kind of expressivism that a nonindexical relativist can accept, sentences like "Sharing is morally good" express propositions. The aim of the next section is to explore what these propositions would look like, once we have become nonindexical relativists as well.

5.6.   The resulting picture

In this section, I sketch what a proposition would look like in a theory that is a variety both of nonindexical relativism and of noninternalist expressivism. On

the one hand, the crucial feature of noninternalist expressivism is that, according to it, propositions are unstructured, that is, propositions are not the result of a bottom-up construction of meaning out of preexistent subsentential meanings. In this picture, meaning is individuated according to a top-down model. First, we have propositions understood as the meanings of sentences, individuated by the way in which such sentences are used, their connections with other sentences, the conditions under which speakers are allowed to utter them, the kinds of things that they license the hearer to expect, etc. Only once we have propositions can we segment them to obtain the meaning of the components of the sentences that express such propositions. This segmenting can be done in different ways, so propositions do not have fixed parts.

What a nonindexical relativist would claim, on the other hand, is that some propositions do not have their truth-value *simpliciter*, but only relative to parameters in the circumstances of evaluation that are determined by the context of assessment. Consider what some theories that have standardly been deemed expressivist say. Gibbard's (1990, 2003, 2012) core move can be understood as the *relativization* of propositions to either norms or hyperplans. Yalcin's (2007, 2011) is to *relativize* propositions to informational states. Of course, this does not by itself lead to relativism, because relativism in the sense used here requires relativizing propositional truth beyond contexts of utterance, and it is not clear that either Gibbard or Yalcin do so. But it seems clear that neither Gibbard nor Yalcin select the context of utterance as the one that should determine the proposition's circumstances of evaluation. This leaves the possibility open that they allow for the proposition to be evaluated relative to the circumstances of evaluation determined by each context of assessment, depending on the kind of phenomenon that they are interested in explaining.

But can an unstructured proposition be truth-relative? It can, if we break the usually assumed link between a proposition's being e.g. time-neutral and its lacking a time component. It is tempting to understand the debate as to whether propositions should contain all the information needed to deem them true or false in terms of whether they should contain this or that component. When, for instance, temporalists and eternalists discuss whether time should be part of the

proposition or part of the circumstances of evaluation, it is only natural to assume that they both take propositions to be structured entities that can feature or lack a time-component. It is natural to think that unstructured propositions in the way in which they are usually conceived of —as sets of possible world— cannot include or fail to include a time. However, talk of propositions' containing more or less information is compatible with conceiving of them as unstructured entities, as I will show next.

To say that a proposition contains a certain amount of information is to say that such information does not belong to the circumstances of evaluation. For instance, to say that a proposition contains information about time, or that it contains a time for short, is to say that such information does not belong to the circumstances of evaluation, and this just means that the proposition's truth-value is not relative to time. Suppose that there is a ball that is red at t_1 but green at t_2, after we have given it a coat of paint. The proposition that the ball is red at t_1 contains more information than the proposition that the ball is red because, while the former is compatible with all times, the latter is only compatible with those at which the ball is red—if the ball is red at t_1, it will be true at t_2 that the ball is red at t_1, and it will also be true at any other time. To say that the proposition that the ball is red at t_1 contains more information than the proposition that the ball is red is not to say that t_1 is among the components of the former, but just to say that, while the truth-value of the latter proposition still varies from t_1 to t_2, the former's does not. This can be replicated for all other parameters of which we may think; in all cases, to ask whether a proposition contains a given parameter will just amount to asking whether the proposition's truth-value remains constant as the value for that parameter shifts, that is, whether the proposition is neutral with respect to that parameter.

This conception of what containing a certain amount of information means conflicts with another, natural one, according to which to say that a proposition contains a certain amount of information is to say that it allows us to distinguish among a certain number of possibilities. In this sense, the proposition that the ball is red contains more information than the proposition that the ball is colored because it leaves out a higher number of possibilities—if the ball is green, we will

know the former proposition, but not the latter, to be false. Conversely, if we know that the ball is red, we will know that it is not green, while we will not know if it is if we only know that the ball is colored. Talk of possibilities like these can be put in terms of possible worlds: the proposition that the ball is red contains more information than the proposition that the ball is colored because it is incompatible with a higher number of worlds, that is, not only those in which the ball is not colored, but also those in which the ball is colored but of a color other than red. If we follow this path, a proposition contains more information if its truth-value varies than if it does not, which is exactly the opposite of what follows from the notion of information used in this section. However, it is not my aim here to argue for any particular notion of information. Both can be kept as helping to elucidate different senses of "containing information".

A structured proposition that does not include a time will necessarily be time-neutral, but we can have a time-neutral proposition that neither includes nor fails to include a time—that is, if such proposition is unstructured. If we e.g. understand propositions as sets of sequences of all the parameters to which their truth-value is relative (for instance, a world, a time, and a personal taste standard), we will have nonindexicalism without structure. Thus, the crucial feature of the kind of expressivism for which I have argued (the unstructured character of propositions) is compatible with nonindexicalism. What remains to have nonindexical relativism is the postsemantic thesis that the context that is relevant for determining the parameters relative to which the (unstructured) proposition is to be evaluated is the context of assessment. But this being a postsemantic thesis, it can unproblematically be combined with the semantic thesis that propositions lack structure. This is the picture that follows from combining relativism and expressivism, in the way characterized here, into a single theory.

5.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have compared relativism and expressivism. I have argued that the differences between the two theories pointed out by MacFarlane are only differences between relativism and *internalist* expressivism, and that the differ-

ence pointed out by Frápolli and Villanueva is only a difference between expressivism and MacFarlane's particular implementation of relativism. The argument of this dissertation is that we should adopt relativism because it implements the kind of stance that we ought to embrace if we want to act in accordance with certain values. In the next chapter, I will argue that, because of the differences pointed out by MacFarlane, an internalist expressivism is unable to implement such stance; however, a noninternalist expressivism can. This is only natural if we take into the account the conclusion of this chapter that, when understood in a certain way, relativism and noninternalist expressivism are equivalent to each other in the aspects that have been relevant throughout this chapter.

Chapter 6

The relativist stance

In chapter 3, I proposed a characterization of relativism that distinguishes it from contextualism. What makes the kind of theory in which I am interested here a variety of relativism, I claimed, is that it relativizes utterance truth. In chapter 5, for its part, I argued that expressivism will be compatible with relativism as long as it allows for doing this. However, the fact that a theory relativizes utterance truth does not in itself constitute an argument for that theory. In this chapter, I provide the reader with what is left in order to have such an argument. In particular, I say, any theory that relativizes utterance truth will be able to do a certain thing. This thing is implementing the *relativist stance*, the kind of stance that we ought to adopt if we want to act in accordance with values that democratic societies consider worth pursuing. This is an argument for any relativist theory, including theories that relativize utterance truth but also incorporate expressivism's key insights. What I do in this chapter is thus to present the relativist stance, argue for it, and link it to relativism and (noninternalist) expressivism.

As I said in the introduction to this dissertation (see especially section 1.4), this strategy departs from standard, well-established ways of arguing for relativism. Confronted with the terrifying picture that is usually given of relativism, relativists in the philosophy of language usually try to separate their work from this kind of thought. They tend to see their own contributions as a mere technical device that accounts for the behavior of certain linguistic expressions with no ide-

ological implications. My point, by contrast, is that relativism is not an innocent formal theory, nor is it completely unconnected from what has traditionally been called "relativism"; but also, that what has traditionally been called "relativism" has been mischaracterized in order to construct an easy dialectical enemy. The real relativist tradition is worth vindicating, and contemporary relativism in the philosophy of language supplies it with analytic tools that can help it make its points in a clearer and more useful way.

My argument can be seen as the step to take after arguing for relativism in the traditional way. Once it is settled that relativism explains how language works, we might want to explore other ways in which it could do so. My point in this chapter is that embracing any of these models would lead us to contradiction with some values that we might want to promote, such as tolerance and progress. Thus, we better embrace relativism if we want to accommodate these values.

The structure of the chapter is the following. In section 6.1, I review the families of theories that have appeared throughout this dissertation and summarize the conclusions that I have reached with respect to their compatibility with the relativization of utterance truth. In section 6.2, I revisit the antirelativist trend, sketched in the introduction to this dissertation, that can be found in contemporary thought. In section 6.3, I present the relativist stance and contrast it with what I will call the *absolutist stance*. In section 6.4, I argue in favor of the relativist stance as the one that we should adopt if we are to promote values such as the ones mentioned above. In section 6.5, I connect relativism, the way it was characterized in chapter 3, with the relativist stance. I also show that contextualism and internalist expressivism, as should be expected, fail to implement this stance, but noninternalist expressivism just puts it in different terms. Section 6.6, finally, is devoted to other arguments for relativism that deviate from standard strategies. In particular, I discuss the chapter in MacFarlane's (2014) book in which he explores arguments for the rationality of relativism.

6.1. The positions so far

Before considering the argument for relativism based on its capacity to implement the relativist stance, let us take stock of the similarities and differences between relativism and the other theoretical positions discussed so far in this dissertation. These similarities and differences will be relevant in determining whether these proposals are able to implement the relativist stance too.

The families of theories that have been mentioned throughout this dissertation are the following: invariantism, indexical contextualism, nonindexical contextualism, indexical relativism, nonindexical relativism, internalist expressivism, and noninternalist expressivism. This dissertation is devoted to defending one of these proposals—nonindexical relativism. What will make any theory able to implement the relativist stance is the fact that it relativizes utterance truth, or at least is compatible with doing so. Thus, the aim of this section is to establish, for each of the families of theories listed above, whether it follows from what has been said in the previous chapters that it is compatible with relativizing utterance truth, or instead, it is committed to what in section 3.4 I called "absolutism".

Invariantism does not relativize utterance truth. In invariantism, a sentence uniquely determines a proposition, which in turn uniquely determines a truth-value. An utterance can be characterized by saying what sentence is uttered at what context. Thus, since the sentence is actually enough to determine a proposition, and along with it, a truth-value, the utterance as a whole determines that truth-value as well. Invariantism is, as was natural to expect, committed to absolutism about utterance truth.

The context of utterance plays in both indexical and nonindexical contextualism the role it does not play in invariantism. Thus, it is the sentence together with the context of utterance that determines a truth-value; in indexical contextualism, the context of utterance has an impact on what the expressed proposition is, while in nonindexical contextualism, it provides us with the circumstances of evaluation of the proposition. But in both cases, once we have a sentence and a context of utterance, we have a truth-value. That is, neither indexical nor nonindexical contextualism relativize utterance truth. They belong to the absolutist

side.

Of course, relativism, whether indexical or nonindexical, does relativize utterance truth. This is in fact what I used in section 3.2 to establish what theories should be deemed relativist. Given that a sentence together with a context of utterance is not enough to determine a truth-value (a context of assessment is needed as well), utterances do not by themselves determine truth-values, which amounts to relativizing utterance truth. This is true both of indexical and of nonindexical relativism, but this dissertation, as I said, is devoted to defending only nonindexical relativism. This is because, in spite of relativizing utterance truth, indexical relativism, as argued in section 3.3, leads to some counterintuitive consequences regarding reporting practices that make it a nonstarter.

Finally, the question whether expressivism is compatible with relativizing utterance truth does not have a straightforward answer—it depends on which kind of expressivism we are talking about. By giving too much weight to the speaker's internal states, internalist expressivism makes the context of utterance play such a role that truth can no longer depend on anything beyond what is uttered and at what context. Internalist expressivism is thus as absolutist as contextualism is. Noninternalist expressivism, by contrast, is compatible with relativizing utterance truth, since it makes no special commitments as regards this issue. In fact, it was the aim of section 5.6 to show that we can develop a theory that can be considered a variety of both relativism and noninternalist expressivism, in that it shares noninternalist expressivism's core commitments while relativizing utterance truth.

Indexical relativism aside, nonindexical relativism and noninternalist expressivism are the two families of theories among the ones listed above that are compatible with relativizing utterance truth. Nonindexical relativism, in fact, is required to do so in order to count as a variety of relativism. This is what will make these two theories able to implement the relativist stance, a key component of the argument of this dissertation. I will show how they do so in section 6.5, where I will also explain why the commitment to absolutism of the rest of the theories under discussion makes them unable to implement this stance.

6.2. The case against relativism

In this section, I illustrate the ferocity of criticisms of relativism, both from (analytic) philosophy and from theology, and try to reconstruct the reasons why critics find it so dangerous. In the following sections, I will reject such criticisms as misguided; but first, we must know them.

From the intellectual sphere, philosophers and theologians alike alert against the rise of relativism as a danger that may put civilization into serious threat—a "vile doctrine (...) reprehensible, mistaken, and even incoherent" (Prinz 2007: 137). The case against relativism becomes especially virulent in Blackburn's (2002, 2005) prose. As advanced in the first pages of this dissertation, he deems relativism a "perversion", and relativists "abusers of their own minds and enemies to ours" (Blackburn 2005: 139); he puts relativism on a par with cynicism (Blackburn 2005: xiii), calls it "dehumanizing" (Blackburn 2005: 69), and claims that "the relativist, at first blush a tolerant, relaxed, laid-back, pluralistic kind of person, can suddenly seem to be a kind of monster" (Blackburn 2005: 68). For Blackburn, the "demeaning and impoverished" relativist stance is "the stance of someone above the fray, someone who has seen through the debates and engagements of ordinary participants" (Blackburn 2002). Thus, relativism stems not from humility but from arrogance. "Today's relativists", Blackburn says, "believe what they like with as much conviction and force as they like. (...) (They) feed and flourish on the desecrated corpse of reason" (Blackburn 2005: xiv). This is an example from philosophy. But remember also how the soon-to-be Pope Benedict XVI denounced the "dictatorship of relativism" that he took to be the sign of our times (Ratzinger 2005).

In the introduction to this dissertation, I also pointed out the tension under which, while relativism has considerable bad press, especially among analytic philosophers, some analytic philosophers of language call themselves relativists. In Blackburn's view, however, relativism has at first blush nothing to do with analytic philosophy:

> Analytical philosophers are apt to suppose that the wild writings and
> licentious thinking of relativism and postmodernism have nothing

to do with them. We like to think that these perversions are the pre-
serve of a "Continental" tradition where strange cults grow up around
strange names. ([Blackburn 2005](#): 139)

However, he claims, this might have been so at some point, but we analytic
philosophers are no longer safe, for relativism has entered analytic philosophy
too. Blackburn warns that "almost all the trends in the last generation of seri-
ous philosophy lent aid and comfort to the 'anything goes' climate" ([Blackburn
2005](#): 139), and cites Wittgenstein, Quine, Sellars, Kuhn, Davidson, and Rorty as
examples. Analytic philosophy is thus no shelter unless we go back to a "par-
adise whose last members were (perhaps) the logical positivists of the nineteen-
twenties and thirties" ([Blackburn 2005](#): 140).

Another thing that I highlighted in the introduction to this dissertation is that
contemporary relativists in the philosophy of language often care to separate their
project from the kind of relativism that has the bad press. It seems that Blackburn,
however, would consider their projects to deviate from what should be the spirit
of analytic philosophy too—anything that deviates from logical positivism, in fact,
is just not what analytic philosophy should be. The position adopted in this dis-
sertation is that both the general relativism that Blackburn opposes and the recent
theories in the philosophy of language are part of a same spirit that should be vin-
dicated. If, in deviating from logical positivism, this is not analytic philosophy,
then analytic philosophy has been dead for a long time, and this is just how it
should be. But I think analytic philosophy has always had the margin to evolve,
so relativism in the philosophy of language is just the result of putting this style
of doing philosophy at the service of our practices.

According to its critics, relativism is incompatible with both science and
democracy. Relativism means the end of any pursuit of truth, and amounts to any
intellectual enterprise giving up to emotions and settling for anything that seems
to work. Under such assumptions, of course, science cannot progress. Once we
have rejected that there is anything like absolute knowledge, there is no use in
trying to find out what the world is like, since it is just like each of us wants it
to be. But relativism's alleged incompatibility with democracy is perhaps more

important. Deliberation is usually taken to be a key component of democracy. In this sense, democracy is not just a system in which whatever proposal gets the majority of votes gets implemented, but a system in which public policies are subjected to debate with the aim of implementing the best possible one. This characterization of democracy seems to presuppose that some policies can objectively be deemed better than others. If relativism is committed to the idea that anything goes, the argument follows, democracy is undermined. Even worse, if we think that all opinions are at the same level, we end up thinking that slavery is tolerable, or at least that nothing can be said against those who consider it so. Everything is relative, so if some people see slavery as OK, it is OK for them (see Prinz 2007: 205–206).

Thus, relativism is considered a threat to both science and democracy. It is a threat to science because, in order to progress, science needs objectivity, which relativism rejects; and it is a threat to democracy because it precludes deliberation, which is a key component of democratic systems that requires the possibility of comparing different options.

This is what critics say that follows from relativism. However, it is far from clear that this is a fair characterization. As Kusch says:

> The disputes are strikingly one-sided in that the critics of relativism vastly outnumber its proponents. Relativism is "refuted" over and over again, but only rarely defended. (…) The critics regularly link relativism to various social and political ills, for instance, to climate-change skepticism or Holocaust denials, to "post-truth politics" or the "Taliban". Relativists are portrayed as opening the floodgates to irrationality, while the critics fashion themselves as noble fighters for decency and reason. (Kusch 2019c: 271–272)

In the next section, I address the question as to whether relativism really commits us to what its critics say. In particular, my aim is to characterize the stance that lies behind relativist positions and contrast it with what I will call "the absolutist stance".

6.3.   The relativist stance and the absolutist stance

In the previous section, we have seen that many contemporary thinkers see relativism as a threat to both science and democracy. But what do relativists really say? Little of what antirelativists have attributed to them, that is for sure. In this section, I try to establish which stance lies behind relativist positions, as well as to characterize the opposite stance and discuss whether there is room for an attitude in between.

6.3.1.   The two stances

The relativist position has been caricatured to such an extreme that it is difficult to find thinkers who apply the label to themselves. In fact, some think that there is not much content to the term "relativism" beyond its use as a weapon. According to Steizinger (2019: 240), for instance, "relativism" has been used as a pejorative term that encompasses what are taken to be negative consequences of modern thinking. Using the term in this way has allowed philosophers to reinforce their political authority. In other words, the pejorative use of the term "relativism" comes to life with the democratization of the access to public debate. As soon as more people have the chance to contribute to public space, and in particular, as points of view that have not been previously taken into consideration become available (see Williams 2006: 159), the relativist charges appear. When the fact that traditional contributions were almost unanimously made from a certain point of view is highlighted, there come the accusations of relativism. The claim is then that these new contributors do not care about truth (the much more novel term "post-truth" plays a similar role to that of "relativism"), but only about feelings, emotions, etc. People who know —philosophers, in Steizinger's claim— are the only ones who care about truth, or this is what they imply when they despise new views as relativism. Thus, in using the term "relativism" in a pejorative way, philosophers and intellectuals in general try to position themselves as experts, as opposed to other contributors to public debate.

It might be that "relativism" is just a negative tag with no content. I nonetheless think that there is another sense of "relativism", so this term does not have

to be reduced to its pejorative use. We have characterized relativism as the thesis that utterance truth is relative. Now, I want to establish which stance imbues this thesis. The relation between theses and stances is not straightforward. One of the most thorough discussions of what a stance is, in fact, characterizes them as opposed to theses. This is van Fraassen's (2002) discussion on empiricism, which he defends should not be characterized as a doctrine (van Fraassen's term for "thesis"), but rather as a stance. To be an empiricist, he says, is not to believe in certain things, but to have a certain attitude (van Fraassen 2002: 47). Stances may involve or presuppose beliefs, but cannot be reduced to them (van Fraassen 2002: 48). Van Fraassen's characterization of empiricism as a stance is the result of an unfruitful attempt at finding a belief that all empiricists, past and present, share (van Fraassen 2002: 38–46).

A natural reaction to the heterogeneity between positions that have been deemed "relativism", such as the one we found in chapter 2, would be to defend that relativism is badly characterized as a doctrine, and should rather be considered a stance (Kusch 2019a,d). However, whether we keep the catch-it-all characterization from chapter 3 and take all the theories in 2 to be varieties of relativism, or opt for the strict characterization and reserve the label only for some of them, we have ways of characterizing relativism, so there is no reason to think that it cannot be thought of as a doctrine. But this should not drive us to consider that relativism is a doctrine and not a stance, even if van Fraassen introduces both ways of characterizing a position in opposition to each other. There is both a relativist doctrine and a relativist stance, and the latter presupposes the former, in accordance with Van Fraassen's claim that stances can presuppose beliefs. The relativist doctrine (or thesis, as we might be more comfortable saying) to which chapters 2–5 were devoted implements the relativist stance, which is the topic of this chapter.

Van Fraassen says: "I remain convinced that genuine, conscious reflection on alternative beliefs, orientations, values —in *an open and undogmatic spirit*— (...) does not automatically undermine one's own commitments" (van Fraassen 2002: 156, my emphasis). This "open and undogmatic spirit" is the relativist stance. Whatever the particular ways in which relativism in the philosophy of language

is implemented are, the spirit behind relativism in general is this. First, each of us stands in a particular position and assesses the world from that position, no matter how badly we aspire to overcome our limitations and achieve an absolute point of view. In other words, we cannot jump over our own standards. Second, nothing is true or false once and forever. People who deny the first point tend to think not only that there is a privileged point of view, but also that they have been graced with it, which is highly unlikely. Of course, they do not claim to be infallible. But once they come to something that they assess as true, they hold it to be absolutely true, independently of their standards, thus going against the second point implied by the relativist stance.

So first, there is no such thing as the best point of view. It should be noted, however, that this does not mean that we cannot talk about *better* points of view, an idea to which relativism is routinely taken to be committed by its critics (see e.g. Boghossian 2006; Williamson 2015; Baghramian 2019). Actual relativists, by contrast, tend to reject the commitment that all points of view are equally valid (see e.g. Herbert 2001; Field 2009; Bloor 2011; see also Kusch 2019b). It is possible to compare points of view, and to deem one better than another. We do not need for a point of view to be the *best* one in order to do this (see Field 2009: 256–257). One might say, of course, that we compare things by checking how close they stand in relation to a certain standard, which would be the neutral standpoint in this case. But this analogy is misleading here. There are lots of dimensions along which we can discuss matters. When we argue whether black pudding is tasty, we may bring into consideration issues such as whether it is salty, how strong its flavor is, whether it is too close to tastes that we find unappealing, etc. We resort to a heterogeneous class of reasons. We do not check where black pudding's taste stands in the scale of closeness to the Tastiest Thing by Our Standards. After all, it seems hard to imagine what it could be that all tasty things (at least by our standards) had in common, other than being tasty for us. The same goes for cases in which we try to establish what the moral option is—that is, given two courses of action, which one is morally better than the other. Whichever it is, it will always be better *according to certain standards*, which will in turn be susceptible of being discussed and rejected as worse than others.

Thus, relativism in the sense used here (which is the sense in which actual people have called themselves relativists) does not amount to an "anything goes" view. It holds that all claims in given fields are done and assessed from a certain standpoint, and that no standpoint is privileged. But at the same time, it allows for some standpoints to be deemed better than others on the basis of rational argumentation. Once we take this into account, the accusation that relativism is a danger to science and democracy loses a great part of its strength.

The second idea that the relativist stance encompasses is that nothing can be said to be true or false once and forever. This is a straightforward result of the fact that there is no privileged point of view. It is highly implausible that we humans have come up with a concept that we can never apply in a totally certain way, but is out there somehow. No—we have developed the concept of truth with a certain purpose. We deem true those propositions to which we want to commit ourselves, and do so always from our own point of view. To suppose that there is a property —the truth property— that all and only true sentences share, and to pretend that there is a list of true sentences out there, is simply delusional. We conceptualize reality in a certain way, partition it into propositions, and then use the truth predicate to commit to some of those propositions in ways in which merely having names for them (i.e., sentences) happens to be insufficient. This is the kind of concept of truth that, in section 7.3, I will recommend as the one that suits relativism best.

If the relativist stance is that according to which there is no privileged point of view, and nothing is true or false once and forever, we can define the absolutist stance as the opposite attitude. Supporters of this stance would claim, first, that there is such a thing as a privileged point of view, or alternatively, that at least some things we can do from no point of view at all. Whether something is done from a privileged point of view or from no point of view at all I will take to be alternative formulations of the same idea. Second, the absolutist stance would lead us to act as if at least some things could be true or false once and forever. In particular, these would be the things that are true or false from the privileged point of view.

6.3.2.   A middle ground between stances?

I have contrasted the relativist stance with the absolutist stance. A reasonable worry is that we can reject relativism without being absolutists. In this subsection, I address this worry, and claim that any position that takes some things to be true or false once and forever is a form of absolutism. In particular, I will argue this about contextualism and internalist expressivism in section 6.5. For now, I would like to comment on some remarks by Bloor (2007) in which he defends the relativist stance. Bloor states that the only honest way of opposing relativism is through theology. Philosophers who see relativism as a social threat and expect their contributions to be taken as part of a secular intellectual enterprise, such as Blackburn in the quotes in section 6.1, are only deluding themselves, Bloor says (Bloor 2007: 250–251).

Like I do, Bloor contrasts relativism with absolutism, and claims that relativism and absolutism are mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive (Bloor 2007: 252). This means that, if you are not a relativist, you have no choice but being an absolutist—there are no third options. They are of course logically possible given that the distinction between relativism and absolutism is itself relative to our actual context, but we cannot escape this context. However, secular antirelativists seem to think that it is possible to do so, and adhere to third ways that are only an actual option if the debate is turned into one between absolutism and an "anything goes" view. But, as I said in the previous subsection, relativism is not committed to any such idea. Hence, secular rejections of relativism are driven in a dishonest way, something that cannot be said about theological rejections of relativism. Theologians, according to Bloor, have no problem in embracing absolutism (Bloor 2007: 254–256). Now, Bloor says, this correctly represents the debate at stake.

Although highly sympathetic to Bloor's view, I do not completely comply with it. I am not comfortable with granting theologians the credit that Bloor gives them, but this is not my main issue with his position. My reserve stems from the way in which he characterizes the relation between relativism and naturalism. In characterizing it, he says:

> For the relativist, all our beliefs are the product of, and are relative to,

> the limits of human nature and our status as human, social animals. Knowledge and morality are grounded in the human predicament. They cannot transcend the machinery of our brains and the deliverances of our sense organs, the culture we occupy and the traditions on which we depend. (Bloor 2007: 251)

I have some reservations about talk of "the limits of human nature". I think that human nature can only be characterized as limited in relation to something else. Of course, our physical capacities, for instance, are limited when compared with those of other animals—we are outrun by lots of species after all. But, when it comes to knowledge, this something else with which we compare ourselves would have to be unlimited, and this again leads us to theology. Human knowledge is not limited, it is just what it is. If any, we could say, borrowing a term from the philosophy of mathematics, that human knowledge, although not limited, is finite. The concept of knowledge has been developed to be applied to humans, like I will argue in section 7.3 for the concept of truth. So, naturalism is respected when we see truth and knowledge as concepts that respond to the needs of the kinds of animals we are, but not when we see ourselves as "limited" beings.

But no talk of the limits of human nature is needed to reject the idea that there might be a middle ground between the relativist stance and the absolutist stance. This will be seen in section 6.5, in which I will show that all of the theories reviewed in chapter 2 can be said to implement either one or the other, but not both at the same time. Thus, I think there are reasons to keep the relativist stance and the absolutist stance apart. In the next section, I argue for the former and against the latter.

6.4.   In favor of the relativist stance

The relativist stance, as characterized in the previous section, has little to do with the kind of view of which contemporary thinkers were presented as afraid in section 6.1. However, one might still wonder whether this kind of stance is the one to adopt. In this section, I argue for the relativist stance as the kind of stance that

one should embrace, at least if one is seeking an attitude that leads one to act in accordance with democratic values such as tolerance and progress. In particular, my point is that by adopting the relativist stance we promote tolerance in a more natural way than by adopting the absolutist stance, and also that, contrarily to what some argue, the relativist stance allows us to make more sense of progress than the absolutist stance does.

6.4.1.   The relativist stance and tolerance

The relativist stance fits better with tolerance than the absolutist stance does. The absolutist stance, according to which there is a privileged point of view and some things can be deemed true or false once and forever, can lead us to adopt an attitude that we could deem "colonialist", that is, an attitude that makes us intolerant with respect to other points of view and moves us to impose our own over them. Of course, there is also room for an "open-minded" absolutist. This kind of absolutist would take whatever is true or false to be so once and forever, but, since human nature is limited in such a way that we can never be certain what is true or false, would recommend to be tolerant with respect to what other people think (see Rachels 1986: chapter 2).

Whereas the absolutist stance may result in colonialism, the relativist idea that what other people think, even if wrong by our standards, may be correct by theirs can naturally move us to accept opinions different from our own. As Prinz (2007: 208) says, relativism does not entail tolerance, but makes intolerance psychologically difficult to sustain. It is easier to be intolerant if you think that you have the only correct standard, something that is more readily available for people who act in accordance with the absolutist stance than for people who act in accordance with the relativist stance. We can then try to change the other person's standards, but this lacks the arrogance of deeming what other people think wrong once and forever, as the colonialist absolutist would do. Tolerance is, of course, one of the values upon which democracy is built. We have to allow for different approaches to the same problem if we want to work as a democratic society, and the only way to honestly do so is by accepting that all approaches are

right in some sense, and then defending our sense as the one to use. The absolutist stance, by contrast, fits badly with democracy because it has it that whatever is true is so once and forever, which can lead to a colonialist attitude.

As I said before, confronted with this situation, the absolutist also has the option of going open-minded and accepting other points of view on the basis of the limits of human nature. As Prinz (2007: 208) notes, the reasons for accepting other points of view already mark a great difference between relativists and absolutists. Absolutists do so because they contemplate the possibility that they might be mistaken, whereas relativists are tolerant because they are certain that all views have an equal claim to be the correct one. In other words, absolutist tolerance is epistemically motivated, while relativist tolerance is semantically motivated. In fact, Prinz says, relativists can be tolerant without doubting about their own views, while absolutists can be so only as long as they are not sure about what they think: "(R)elativism offers a more satisfying form of tolerance, because it does not force a choice between debilitating self-doubt and arrogant self-assurance" (Prinz 2007: 208).

What is more, I think that the second horn of this dilemma imposes an unsustainable conception of truth. The open-minded absolutist is forced to claim that the concept of truth can never be applied with total certainty. As I said in section 6.3, this would make truth a really special concept,[1] and make how we have come to develop it mysterious. Relativism, by contrast, is compatible with a concept of truth that is not as theoretically charged and fits more smoothly with our actual practices.

One might think that, if tolerance gets vindicated in the way that follows from the relativist stance, disagreement will become nonsensical—why disagree with points of view that we tolerate? An argument against this objection can be found in MacFarlane (2007). There, MacFarlane replies to the worry that relativism makes disagreement nonsensical, since there is no absolute truth on which

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[1]Not that it is not an established position in the history of philosophy to take truth to be a special, *regulative* concept. Kant, Pierce, and Popper, for instance, understand truth in this way. However, even if these philosophers take themselves to be naturalists, I think that this conception of truth is at odds with naturalism.

both parties can converge. He does so by saying that, when we disagree, we understand that each party's position follows from the context at which they find themselves. Thus, what we do is try to change this context (MacFarlane 2007: 30). The reason why he thinks that we might try to change the other party's context, however, seems unsatisfactory to me. He says that we try to do so because we find controversy uncomfortable, and this is a brute fact for which, following Gibbard (1990: 217), he suggests an evolutionary explanation. Perhaps, he says, we do not pursue disagreement because we find controversy uncomfortable. Rather, we find controversy uncomfortable because by feeling so we are motivated to pursue agreement, and anything that motivates us to pursue agreement has been evolutionarily favored, since coordination is evolutionarily advantageous. This explanation may seem plausible, and it is perhaps correct in the essential, but it feels quite speculative. I do not think that philosophical theories have any obligation to give evolutionary explanations. I think that such explanations, if able to be confirmed or disproved (which seems unlikely, as I will claim in subsection 6.6.2), can be so only on empirical grounds, and as such, should be left for the sciences.

6.4.2.   The relativist stance and progress

It is frequent to find criticisms of the relativist stance that deem it incompatible with progress. If there is no such thing as absolute truth, these criticisms go, there is nothing at which progress could be aimed. But in fact, adopting the relativist stance is a natural way of making sense of the notion of progress. If truth is absolute, we will only be able to deem something true if we take it to be absolutely true, that is, true forevermore. From this starting point, again, we can follow two different paths. For the colonialist absolutist, the absoluteness of truth will preclude us from conceiving of the possibility that at some point in the future we find out that we were wrong. For the open-minded absolutist, we can conceive of progress only as long as we are not convinced of what we presently think.

By acknowledging that what we hold true is only so from our present standpoint, by contrast, we make room for the possibility that our future point of view makes us reject what we now accept without relaxing our convictions. Thus, rela-

tivism is not only capable of accounting for progress—it is the only way to account for it in a sensible way, since absolutism seems incompatible with progress, unless, again, we sacrifice our convictions to make sense of it. As noted in section 6.3, we do not need for anything to be the *best* in order to be able to say that something is *better* than another; in fact, thinking that there is such thing as the best precludes us in many cases from aiming at enhancing what we already have (see Field 2009: 256–257).

There is a sense in which relativists reject progress, but it is a different one. The idea that there has been progress in certain fields is relative to what we consider to be progress. When it is said that modern European history is a history of progress, relativists may retort that this is a claim whose truth-value depends on which point of view we are taking into consideration. This way of understanding progress goes hand in hand with the variety of absolutism that I have called "colonialist"; as such, it can be expected from relativists to oppose it. One option would be to reject the idea of progress altogether, and claim that its only purpose is to legitimize the imposition of privileged points of view. However, this does not amount to denying that there can be progress with respect to our opinions, at least at a smaller scale than is required to talk about modern European history as a history of progress.

MacFarlane too seems to defend relativism from the accusation that it cannot make sense of progress when it comes to personal taste standards, that is, that we cannot make sense of the idea that some tastes are better than our own (MacFarlane 2014: 147–148). He does so by rejecting the view that relativism should commit to the idea that all tastes are on a par. Of course, he says, if "better" means "more likely to favor flavors that are actually tasty", then relativists can make no sense of other people's tastes' being better than theirs, for it is the relativist's context that determines what is actually tasty. But MacFarlane recognizes a number of other senses in which we may deem another taste better than our own: "It may be that people with more refined tastes derive more pleasure from food, care more about food, are more intellectually stimulated by food, and have better lives as a result" (MacFarlane 2014: 147). Then, he goes on to say that we may recognize that others' tastes are better than our own along these dimensions, and aspire to

have them, while still calling things "tasty" only if they are pleasing to our own taste (MacFarlane 2014: 148). Moreover, he says, being an absolutist about "tasty" is incompatible with how we actually use the term: we would have to refrain from applying the word to anything before we had reached the best taste, and this is simply not how "tasty" works (MacFarlane 2014: 148). Remember that I rejected the idea of a best standard in general because it would make all our evaluations provisional. This is the same argument that MacFarlane uses for personal taste standards in particular.

I have defended the relativist stance as the one to adopt, at least if we want to act in accordance with values such as tolerance and progress. The relativist stance is the one that best implements these values—moreover, the absolutist stance, despite the usual claims, is actually unable to make sense of the idea of progress, or to be adopted without making our compliance with tolerance the result of uncertainty. In the next section, I explore the connection of the relativist stance with relativism, on the one hand, and contextualism and expressivism, on the other.

6.5.   Relativism, contextualism, expressivism, and the relativist stance

In section 6.3, I characterized the relativist stance as a stance according to which there is no privileged point of view, so that everything that we now consider true might turn out to be false. How does this connect with the field to which this dissertation belongs, that is, philosophy of language? This is the question that this section aims at answering. In particular, I explore how the relativist stance matches with relativism, but also with contextualism and expressivism.

The relativist stance, as presented in the previous section, has implications regarding how we assess our utterances. We have to be somewhere to carry out an action, so utterances always need a context to be made. But they also need a context to be assessed, since the relativist stance has it that we necessarily carry out evaluations from one point of view or another. This is precisely what relativism defends. Moreover, it also follows from the relativist stance that none of these points of view is privileged. The consequence is that utterance truth is

not absolute. This means that, once we have made an utterance, its truth-value is not fixed once and forever. This, again, is to what relativism, the theory that relativizes utterance truth, makes us commit.

In contextualism, there is still a privileged point of view when it comes to assessing the truth of utterances concerning taste, for instance. It is the point of view of the speaker. If we want to know whether what a person said is true or false, we have to assess it with respect to that person's context, which is to be preferred to any other context. Once we have fixed the conditions under which the utterance was made, it will uniquely determine a truth-value once and for-ever. This is not in accordance with the relativist stance, which, in not selecting a specific point of view as privileged, tells us not to assess what is said with respect to the speaker's context, but with respect to our own. Given the contextualist picture, we can have settled truths just by knowing what the context of utterance is. It is thus very easy for the contextualist to slip again into eternal truths and, in this way, embrace the absolutist stance. In giving the speaker's context a decisive weight in determining the truth-value of an utterance, internalist expressivism falls on the side of the absolutist stance too.

It is natural, after all, that the relativist stance requires us to relativize utter-ance truth and not merely propositional truth. The relativist stance concerns how we interact with each other and how we assess each other's behavior. What it requires of us is, consequently, that we allow for the possibility that a person's behavior is appropriate when assessed from one context and inappropriate when assessed from another context. In particular, we want to allow for the possibility that the same speech *act* of assertion can be deemed as conveying truth or falsity depending on the context from which we assess it. If we relativize propositional truth but make it depend on the context of utterance, propositional truth will be relative, but the speech act will be that of expressing a true or false proposition once and forever. The result is that only the truth-value of a theoretical entity —propositions— is relativized, while we still agree with the absolutist on the idea that people are right or wrong in saying what they say once and forever.

It might also be reasonable to see things in the exactly opposite way, and ar-gue that it is contextualism that is most suited to implement the relativist stance.

After all, the argument would go, in assessing what another person says, relativism tells us to take into consideration only our own point of view, while contextualism encourages us to use each speaker's standpoint in assessing what is said. It is in the latter way that a value that we deemed relativist, such as tolerance, is promoted. Relativism, by contrast, is still committed to the idea of a privileged point of view, i.e., that of the assessor. Note again, however, that the context that is attached to a given utterance is only one, so that, once an utterance has been made, contextualism makes what is said true or false once and forever. Contexts of assessment, however, are potentially infinite even for the same utterance, so it is relativism that best implements the insight that there are no settled truths. Moreover, remember that the circumstances of evaluation determined by the context of assessment do not necessarily correspond to the index of that context (see subsection 2.3.2). For instance, the context of assessment may determine a personal taste standard that is not that of the assessor, but only the one relevant in assessing the truth of the proposition expressed. Thus, there is no privileged point of view in relativism—not even the assessor's.

Thus, the kind of stance that I described in the previous section is implemented only by the kind of theory in the philosophy of language that in section 3.2 I labeled "relativism", and not, in particular, by the theories that I labeled "contextualism". The relativist insight that there is no privileged point of view fits well within noninternalist expressivism too. One of the main ideas that followed from the implementation of expressivism that I recommended in chapter 5 is that what things are good is not a part of our world. That freedom is better than slavery is not anything that distinguishes our world from other possible worlds. This means that, if freedom is better than slavery, it will be so in all worlds, and if it is not, it will be not in all worlds (see Gibbard 2003: 57–58). Thus, just like would follow from the relativist stance, there is no scale out there to which we can refer when we claim that freedom is better than slavery. When we say this, we are not saying anything about which world we are in, but about which world we want to turn ours into. We are saying that worlds in which there is no slavery are preferable in a particular respect to those in which there is, and that we better make our world one of the former. Normative talk is not in the business of eliminating possible

worlds so that we can eventually end up with just one world, i.e., ours. Its purpose is not to help us locate ourselves within logical space. The business of normative talk is instead that of helping us to orientate ourselves within logical space, and tell us where to go (see Lewis 1979; Charlow 2014; see also subsection 5.4.2). Possible worlds are not closed entities. We are not mere spectators of the world. Of course, many things about our world are fixed, and we can just try to figure out whether they are fixed in such a way that water is H_2O, or in such a way that water is XYZ. But we can change many other things about our world, such as whether there is slavery or not. By saying that freedom is better than slavery, we indirectly contribute to eliminating some possible worlds from the common ground—not those in which slavery is better than freedom, but those in which there is slavery, if we get to convince our interlocutors and, through our actions, we end up in a world in which there is no slavery.

Thus, expressivism implements the relativist stance inasmuch as it denies that evaluative and normative language is in the business of telling us what world we inhabit, thus eliminating the possibility of a privileged point of view. This same connection between relativism and expressivism can be found in Field (2018):

> Whereas one world is metaphysically privileged (it represents reality), there is no obvious reason to think of one norm (or hyper-plan) as metaphysically privileged. Indeed, it is metaphysically privileged only if the worlds contain "normative facts" that make the norms "correct", and presumably the Gibbardian idea was that there is no need for that. (Field 2018: 14)

No norm that puts freedom over slavery is part of our world, so whether freedom is better than slavery does not allow us to distinguish our world from others. Field's evaluativism can be seen both as a variety of relativism and as a variety of expressivism, and what makes it a variety of each is in both cases an implementation of the relativist idea that there is no privileged point of view, which its expressivist formulation puts in terms of what forms part of the world.

In this section, I have connected the relativist stance to the kind of theory in the philosophy of language that is defended in this dissertation. I have also shown

both that such stance is not implemented by contextualism, and that it can be put in expressivist terms too. Thus, relativism should be vindicated as implementing the kind of stance that fits best with democratic values.

6.6.   Relativism and rationality

The argument of this dissertation, only completed in the previous section, is this: relativism is the theory that implements the relativist stance, and the relativist stance is the one to adopt if we want to act in accordance with values that democratic societies see as worth promoting; thus, we should become relativists. This would be so even if relativism did not describe how language actually works. Luckily, it does, so we do not find ourselves committed to an error theory. Although most arguments for relativism have been arguments as to how language actually works, the one here is not the only one that follows a different path. In this section, I review another such argument—the one advanced by MacFarlane in the final chapter of *Assessment Sensitivity*.

MacFarlane's argument can be seen, just like this dissertation's, as an argument that it is desirable that relativism is the theory that best describes how language works. In particular, he discusses whether it would be rational for language to be assessment-sensitive. If it is rational for language to be assessment-sensitive, then language should be so, and relativism, being the theory that predicts that language should work this way, is the theory that best describes how language should work.

MacFarlane accepts that he still needs to defend the rationality of relativism after he has showed that part of our language is assessment-sensitive. After all, he says, one could argue that the fact that part of our language is assessment-sensitive does not imply that it should be so—it might be irrational for us to talk the way we do, and maybe we should just reform our language. In particular, one might wonder "how could it be rational to make an assertion one will be obliged to retract when one comes to occupy a relevantly different context" (MacFarlane 2014: 305). MacFarlane addresses this worry in two steps: first, he argues that there is no good general argument against the rationality of assessment-

sensitivity, and second, he argues that it is rational for the parts of our language that he takes to be assessment-sensitive to be so. He focuses on knowledge attributions, but takes his arguments in this area to be reproducible for the rest of the parts of language under discussion.

6.6.1. The coherence of relativism

Assessment-sensitivity would be necessarily irrational if it went against the norms that govern assertion. But, MacFarlane says, no assertion rule designed to exclude assessment-sensitivity can at the same time be designed not to exclude other phenomena as well. The most reasonable assertion rule excluding assessment-sensitivity that he can find is Reflection-Assertion II:

> **Reflection-Assertion II:** One cannot rationally assert that p now if it is generally expected that one will later acquire good grounds for retracting this assertion. (MacFarlane 2014: 307)

But, he says, one can rationally assert something that is generally expected to be proven false later. For instance, it would be rational to make an unlikely prophecy if the rewards, if it turns out to be true, vastly outweigh the damage to one's reputation if it turns out to be false. If assessment-sensitivity goes against any rule, then, it must be a rule governing not assertion but belief. However, MacFarlane has previously argued that there is no practical difference between relativism and nonindexical contextualism at the level of belief (MacFarlane 2014: 114). What distinguishes relativism and nonindexical contextualism is retraction, a phenomenon that concerns only assertions. The only belief rule to which, according to MacFarlane, the relativist is committed is Reflection-Belief III:

> **Reflection-Belief III:** One cannot rationally believe p in a context c if one expects that one will later acquire good grounds for thinking that one did this contrary to the norm against forming untrue beliefs. (MacFarlane 2014: 309)

The relativist's truth norm for belief is Truth Norm for Belief R:

Truth Norm for Belief R: One ought not believe that p at a context c unless p is true as used at and assessed from c. (MacFarlane 2014: 309)

But what would be irrational is to commit to Reflection-Belief II(b):

Reflection-Belief II(b): One cannot rationally believe p in a context c if one expects that one will later (in some context c') acquire good grounds for thinking that p was not true as used at c and assessed from c'. (MacFarlane 2014: 309)

However, Reflection-Belief II(b) does not follow from Reflection-Belief III plus Truth Norm for Belief R—they are, in fact, incompatible. Thus, relativism does not go against any sensible rule governing either assertion or belief.

6.6.2.   The rationality of relativism

The outcome of the previous subsection shows that there is nothing structurally incoherent in adopting assessment-sensitivity, but still leaves it open whether it is a sensible move. To establish this, we would have to check whether the assessment-sensitive parts of our language fulfill their purpose as they stand better than if we dispensed with assessment-sensitivity. MacFarlane aims at accomplishing this task by applying what he calls an "engineering approach" to the relevant parts of our language (MacFarlane 2014: 310). Although he applies this approach to knowledge attributions, he takes it to be adaptable to other parts of our language. Thus, I will explain MacFarlane's argument through opaque belief ascriptions, the phenomenon that in chapter 4 allowed me to motivate and explain nonindexical relativism in detail.

The first thing that engineers need to know is what the device that they are building is for. What purpose do belief ascriptions serve? A plausible answer is that belief ascriptions allow us to justify people's behavior as rational. We see people's behavior as rational by default, and expect them to behave in accordance with our shared norms. When they deviate from what our norms would make us expect them to do, however, we introduce their beliefs to show that they were still

being rational after all (see Fernández Castro 2017a,b, 2019). This is what having the concept of belief allows us to do.

If this is the purpose of ascribing beliefs, it seems reasonable to expect context to play a role in the determination of whether someone believes something or not. We might be generous in attributing rationality to agents in a certain context, but take more precautions when the stakes are higher. I might grant that Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent can fly if what is important at the present context is that Lois attributes the ability to fly to the person to which "Clark Kent" refers, independently of whether she knows that "Clark Kent" refers to that person or not. In a different context, the fact that Lois is unaware of this might be sufficient reason to reject the belief ascription.

Thus, when designing a device for justifying people's behavior as rational even when they fail to act in accordance with our shared norms it would be appropriate for the device to be contextually sensitive. But sensitive to what context? Remember that, if we are nonindexical relativists about opaque belief ascriptions, past ascriptions should be retracted if they are false with respect to the mode of presentation that is relevant at the present context, while, if we are nonindexical contextualists, we will be able to stand by them as long as they were true with respect to the mode of presentation that was relevant back when they were made. In parallel with MacFarlane's considerations regarding knowledge attributions, we can say that the nonindexical contextualist proposal has the advantage that no information is lost, while the nonindexical relativist proposal has the advantage of requiring less cognitive capacity. Contextualism about knowledge attributions, he says, "requires us to keep track of the epistemic standards that were in place when each of the past knowledge attributions was made. And this requires more memory and an explicit way of representing epistemic standards" (MacFarlane 2014: 312). In contextualism about opaque belief ascriptions, we would need to have the capacity to keep track of past modes of presentation, which would require more memory, and in some cases, explicit representations for them.

We might now ask which of these options serves our purposes better. When trying to determine whether it is true that someone believes something, all we care about is the modes of presentation that are currently relevant. All the in-

formation stored by the contextualist is of no use, and as such, a waste of space. Thus, from an engineering perspective, relativism allows us to better accomplish the task that belief ascriptions aim at fulfilling.

One objection, modeled on an objection to relativism about knowledge attribution considered by MacFarlane (2014: 314), could be this. Perhaps it is useful to store which belief ascriptions were true with respect to past modes of presentation, since this information can tell us something about which ascriptions are true with respect to the currently relevant ones. For instance, suppose that Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent can fly, not because she has found out that Clark Kent is Superman, but because she has seen Clark Kent fly while remaining unaware that Superman and Clark Kent are the same person. If Lois believes that Clark Kent can fly even with respect to the mode of presentation for "Clark Kent" that this context determines for her (a mode of presentation under which Superman and Clark Kent are different persons), we can be sure that she will believe it with respect to a mode of presentation that identifies Clark Kent with Superman. Thus, keeping track of the truth of the ascription with respect to the past mode of presentation gives us information about its truth with respect to the current one.

However, keeping track of more than a few modes of presentation soon becomes an unattainable task. As argued in chapter 4, computing iterated modes of presentation comes at a high cognitive cost. We are much more proficient in understanding iterated belief ascriptions than we are in processing what one person's mode of presentation for another person's mode of presentation is, so relativism is more efficient in this sense.

Another objection considered by MacFarlane (2014: 315) suggests that we may want to keep track of how often people know, in order to determine whether they are reliable, and then decide to trust them, or not. But, he replies, it is enough in order to do this to store a percentage of true knowledge attributions that gets updated with each new evaluation. In a parallel way, we might want to keep track of how many of our past belief ascriptions were true in order to assess how rational a person is. But again, we can do this just by storing a percentage of true belief ascriptions that gets updated with each new evaluation.

Some versions of contextualism, moreover, require us not only to store more

information than relativism does, but also to represent modes of presentation in a way that allows us to compare them with each other, as MacFarlane (2014: 315) argues about epistemic standards. Representations do not need to have an inferential character in order to count as such—sometimes, it is enough for them to be causally connected in the appropriate way. Representations of modes of presentation in relativism may play the role we ask of them without being complex (and cognitively demanding) enough to be used in inferences.

The fact that the relativist way of using language is the most rational one for speakers does not by itself provide us with an explanation as to why language behaves in a relativist way. As MacFarlane says, "(g)ood things can happen fortuitously, for reasons unrelated to their goodness" (MacFarlane 2014: 317). To get the desired explanation, we would have to know about the actual historical evolution of language in this respect. Since we lack data about this, all we can do is to speculate about it. This is the last thing that MacFarlane does in *Assessment Sensitivity* (MacFarlane 2014: 317–319). In particular, he considers two possible histories that language could have followed to become assessment-sensitive. The first one, which he calls "the upward path", makes assessment-sensitive language evolve from language that obeyed a contextualist picture (MacFarlane 2014: 317–318). According to this possible history, speakers would have started using the context of utterance to determine whether they should retract their previous assertions or not, but would have progressively abandoned this practice as they became aware that this is impractical. The second possible history considered by MacFarlane follows what he calls "the downward path", and it makes assessment-sensitive language evolve from invariantist expressions (MacFarlane 2014: 318–319). Here, introducing the context of assessment is the response to life becoming more complex. When things are simpler, we can do with a single parameter according to which we can evaluate all assertions, thus making them invariantly true or false (see Williams 2006: 159).

MacFarlane's history is a history of "knows", and it is easy to relate the appearance of different epistemic standards to the introduction of the division of labor and the emergence of experts who are authoritative to different extents about different fields. If we go back to the phenomenon that I am using as an example

in this section, that is, opaque belief ascriptions, things seem a little harder to connect. The purpose that belief ascriptions (at least in the third person) serve is probably as old as humanity, and probably nothing related to it has changed over time.[2] There is no reason to suspect that it involves factors that have become more complex. Thus, the downward path seems a less plausible history for assessment-sensitive belief ascriptions than it is for assessment-sensitive knowledge attributions. However, MacFarlane's two histories are highly speculative, as he himself acknowledges. Like him, I do not think that we can explain the emergence of assessment-sensitive language in an empirical way. It is hard to imagine to what kind of evidence we should have access in order to confirm or disprove a hypothesis of this kind, even if it belongs to the empirical realm. Inasmuch as this serves as a basis for an argument that parts of our language are assessment-sensitive, the argument will not work. But I am not seeking to prove that parts of our language are assessment-sensitive in this way. I think that we have enough with the arguments that our language works this way based on our intuitions regarding retraction, and I have presented other arguments in this chapter that this is how we should understand the workings of language if we want to promote certain values.

6.7.   Conclusion

This chapter completes the argument for relativism that lends structure to this dissertation. This argument, unlike standard defenses of relativism in the philosophy of language, accepts relativism's ideological commitments and offers reasons to embrace them. This is quite a risky move, as the moody landscape drawn in section 6.2 shows—the relativist stance is usually prejudged as dangerous nonsense, and not worth discussing. What the relativist stance consists in has been depicted in section 6.3, and in section 6.4 I have offered some arguments for it. One of them had as its conclusion that the relativist stance is able to accommodate tolerance in

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[2]As Wierzbicka (2006: 213–220) argues, practices involving the epistemic phrase "I believe" can be traced back to modern times, but she does not take her conclusion to apply to third-person belief ascriptions.

a more natural way than the absolutist stance is. The other argument was built as the specular image of some classical antirelativist arguments that deem relativism incompatible with progress. What I have claimed is that, in fact, it is the absolutist stance that is incompatible with progress, and the relativist stance is the only one that allows us to make sense of it in a sensible way. I have also exposed in section 6.5 the chain that links the stance to theories such as MacFarlane's (2014), and discussed in section 6.6 his arguments for the rationality of relativism.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

This is the end of the journey. My argument for relativism has been based on its capacity to implement the relativist stance, and I have claimed that this is the kind of stance that ought to be adopted if we want to promote democratic values such as tolerance and progress. This, moreover, should speak for other theories as long as they are similar to relativism in the respects that make it able to implement the stance. We have seen that invariantism, contextualism, and internalist expressivism deviate from relativism in these respects, but noninternalist expressivism does not. In this final chapter, I want to address what might seem like loose ends of this dissertation.

After summarizing the conclusions reached throughout these pages in section 7.1, I devote section 7.2 to revisiting the approach to opaque belief ascriptions offered in chapter 4. This account seems to depict belief as a robust relation between an agent and a proposition, something that looks at odds with the claim in chapter 5 that the uses of language that are of interest for the relativist do not serve to describe the world. Although the relational approach to belief made it easier to introduce relativism about opaque belief ascriptions, I will use this section to show that a semantics more in the spirit of expressivism can be enriched with assessment-sensitivity too. This semantics is Hintikka's (1962), who proposes to model belief not as a relation, but as an operator.

Finally, one might wonder of what use is truth if it can be relative. I address

this question in section 7.3, where I show that relativism fits smoothly with a prosentential conception of truth, such as the one defended by Frápolli (2013). It is one thing to take truth to be relative and another to ask what truth is, but in this section I explore the connection between these two issues and argue that, while relativism does not require a particular conception of truth, it is better suited by a prosentential one.

7.1. What we have achieved

In this section, I summarize the main conclusions at which we have arrived throughout the chapters that make up this dissertation. In chapter 2, I surveyed the different families of theories that have at some point been deemed relativist. To do so, I presented three phenomena and motivated each family as the result of trying to account for one of them while still retaining what the previous version of relativism had achieved. The first phenomenon was the faultlessness of faultless disagreement, and the corresponding family of theories was indexical contextualism, which, for instance, takes the proposition expressed by a sentence featuring "tasty" to contain a personal taste standard. These theories, however, were unable to make sense of the second phenomenon—the speakers' intuition that they are engaging in an actual dispute. Nonindexical contextualism aimed at respecting this intuition while retaining faultlessness by moving the personal taste standard to the circumstances of evaluation. However, nonindexical contextualism was unable to account for the third phenomenon, i.e., retraction. Assessor relativism was motivated as the solution to this problem. In particular, it proposed to make the circumstances of evaluation determined not by the context of utterance, but by the context of assessment. I closed chapter 2 by introducing the two other theories that have played a role in this dissertation: invariantism and expressivism.

In chapter 3, I offered two characterizations of relativism. The first, catch-it-all characterization took all the so-called varieties of relativism reviewed in chapter 2 to be worth the name inasmuch as they all challenge what I called "the Fregean picture". The second, strict characterization only deemed "relativism" those theories that challenge the Fregean picture in such a way that utterance truth is

relativized. This strict characterization was accompanied by a classification that divided theories into indexical contextualism, nonindexical contextualism, indexical relativism, and nonindexical relativism. Indexical theories take the parameter at issue to be part of the proposition expressed, while nonindexical theories take it to belong to the circumstances of evaluation; and contextualist theories have it that the relevant context to determine the parameter is the context of utterance, while relativist theories have it that it is the context of assessment. I argued for the strict characterization and proved its power by showing how it can be applied.

In chapter 4, I provided the reader with an example of the traditional form that arguments for relativism have taken. In particular, I proposed a nonindexical relativism about opaque belief ascriptions. I defended the nonindexical component of the theory by claiming that it allows us to solve Frege's puzzle, that is, to account for the speakers' intuitions concerning the truth of what they say while keeping semantic innocence, even at the sentential level. After this, I defended the relativist component by showing that it makes it possible to account for the behavior that opaque belief ascriptions exhibit with respect to retraction.

In chapter 5, I explored the connection between relativism and expressivism, two theories that have traditionally been taken to be incompatible. I showed that there are two ways in which we can implement expressivism's metasemantic claim that we should individuate meaning in terms of mental states, depending on how we understand what mental states are. On the one hand, if we understand them in an internalist way, mental states will be internal states of speakers that they "take out" when expressing them. Understood in this way, expressivism will be incompatible with relativism, and the latter will be preferable inasmuch as it makes us able to account for retraction and for utterances like "Licorice isn't tasty, but I like it". A noninternalist expressivism, on the other hand, will have it that, in expressing a mental state, one is just proposing oneself as someone from whom some courses of action can be expected. If we opt for a noninternalist reading of "mental state", we will be able to combine relativism and expressivism by individuating meaning in terms of mental states while taking the context of assessment to play a role in determining the circumstances of evaluation of some propositions.

In chapter 6, finally, I completed the argument of this dissertation by showing that the fact that relativism relativizes utterance truth, as the strict characterization defended in chapter 3 requires, makes it able to implement a certain kind of stance that we should adopt if we want to act in a certain way. This is the relativist stance, according to which there is no privileged point of view, and nothing can be deemed true or false once and forever. The relativist stance is the one to adopt because it makes us act in accordance with values, such as tolerance and progress, that democratic societies see as worth pursuing. Since contextualism and internalist expressivism do not relativize utterance truth, they are unable to implement this kind of stance. In this sense, contextualism and internalist expressivism are still absolutist proposals. Noninternalist expressivism, however, will be vindicated by the argument as long as it is combined with relativism, something that is not precluded by the theory itself.

7.2.   Expressivist semantics for belief

In chapter 5, I argued for combining relativism with expressivism, a view according to which at least some areas of language do not serve to describe. An expressivism about belief ascriptions (see e.g. Pérez-Navarro et al. 2019), in particular, would claim that belief ascriptions do not have a descriptive function. In chapter 4, however, I proposed a semantics for opaque belief ascriptions that treated belief as a relation, and as such, would take belief ascriptions to describe something in the world. These two points are in conflict. In this section, I propose to introduce assessment sensitivity, rather than in a relational approach to belief, in an approach to belief as a modal operator, which fits better with expressivism. This way, expressivism and relativism about belief ascriptions are no longer in conflict.

The idea of treating "believes that" as a modal operator goes back to Hintikka (1962), who proposed to take "S believes that p" as true if and only if p is true in all possible worlds compatible with what S believes. This is fleshed out by introducing an accesibility relation, R_B, that holds between worlds w_1 and w_2 whenever w_2 is compatible with what S believes in w_1. If W is the set of possible

worlds and V is a valuation function that assigns to each proposition the subset of W in which it is true, we can build a model $\mathcal{M} = \langle W, R_B, V \rangle$ that represents S's notional world. If @ is the actual world, "S believes that p" will be true in $\mathcal{M}$ if and only if, for all w in W such that $@R_B w$, p is true in w.

If we understand belief in this way, as e.g. [Frápolli & Villanueva](2012) do, "believes that" will no longer represent anything. To establish whether S believes that p, we will not look at the world to see if a certain relation holds between a subject and a proposition. "Believes that" does not supply any ingredient of a proposition, but rather tells us what to do with a proposition that is left untouched. What people believe, in terms of section [5.4], is not something that allows us to distinguish between two possible worlds. In this sense, the account of belief as a modal operator can be seen as a technical implementation of an expressivist approach to belief ascription. At least, it fits with expressivism much better than the relational account of belief to which I added assessment sensitivity in chapter [4].

In this section, as I said, I want to explore the possibility that we can add assessment sensitivity to the account of belief as a modal operator too. If the belief operator shifts the world-parameter in the circumstances of evaluation, it does not take too much to make propositional truth-value relative not only to the possible world, but also to a sequence of modes of presentation, and make the belief operator shift this parameter too. Propositions would still be unstructured (we would take them to be sets of world-sequence of modes of presentation pairs), and the function of "believes that" would not be to represent a relation in the world but to tell us what to do with such propositions. We would have to enrich $\mathcal{M}$ with a set M of modes of presentation and make R_B relate worlds with sequences of modes of presentation too. Once we had done this, "S believes that p" would be true in $\mathcal{M}$ if and only if, for all w in W such that $@R_B w$ and all $\langle m_1, \ldots, m_n \rangle$ (where $m_1, \ldots, m_n \in M$) such that $@R_B \langle m_1, \ldots, m_n \rangle$, p is true in w with respect to $\langle m_1, \ldots, m_n \rangle$.

This is a toy example in which the only relativity beyond possible worlds is assumed to be the one introduced by the belief operator. Of course, the example can be enriched so as to make room for the kinds of relativity introduced by tense,

personal taste predicates, etc. The result would be that propositions are sets of tuples as rich as we need them to be. Even with this, they would be unstructured entities.

In section 5.6, we saw that modes of presentation could belong to the circumstances of evaluation without assuming propositions to be structured entities. But, as I have insisted throughout this dissertation, the fact that some parameters belong to the circumstances of evaluation amounts to nonindexicalism, not to relativism. The picture above is still compatible with a kind of contextualism—nonindexical contextualism, for the sequence of modes of presentation in the circumstances of evaluation could be determined by the context of utterance. What we need for our expressivist theory to turn into a variety of (nonindexical) relativism is for the sequence of modes of presentation to be determined not by the context of utterance, but by the context of assessment. As should be apparent, there is nothing in the theory that precludes us from doing this. We just need to complement it with a postsemantic thesis about what the relevant context in determining the circumstances of evaluation is.

This is how we can combine relativism and expressivism about belief ascriptions without having to renounce any of the commitments that they carry with them. Propositions are still unstructured entities, and belief ascriptions still serve to do something other than describing the world, but the context that determines the sequence of modes of presentation in the circumstances of evaluation is the context of assessment.

7.3.   The concept of truth

Relativism is the view that the truth of some propositions is relative to circumstances of evaluation determined by a context of assessment. The reader might recall that, in the introduction to this dissertation, I defined several notions involved in this characterization: proposition, context, and circumstance of evaluation. However, a notion was left unexplained, i.e., truth. This was intended, for I take my proposal to be independent from any particular understanding of this notion. In fact, whereas "proposition", "context", and "circumstance of evaluation"

are all technical terms, we deem things true or false in ordinary discourse too. My point in this dissertation should be compatible with many different conceptions of what we do when we say things like these. Nonetheless, I think my proposal fits especially well with a particular conception of truth, one that we could call "prosentential". In this section, I introduce it and connect it with relativism.

7.3.1. **Prosentential truth**

We might want to ask not to what property "true" refers, but what we do when we use the word "true". As I will explain shortly, we seem to use this word to adopt commitments in ways that would be unavailable to us if we lacked it. For instance, introducing the word "true" into our vocabulary allows us to say things such as "Everything this book says is true" without having to actually list all the sentences in the book. This is the kind of observation that supports the prosentential notion of truth. A particular way of implementing this conception of truth can be found in Frápolli (2013). Frápolli (2013: 29) claims that what truth is and whether it is relative are two independent issues, and they are. However, I want to devote this section to exploring the connection between Frápolli's conception of truth and relativism. What I argue is that, although the latter does not necessarily follow from the former, conceiving of truth as a tool to express commitments makes it natural to see it as relative.

According to a prosentential view of truth, truth is nothing like the mysterious property that all true sentences share and that some philosophers have tried to identify. Truth, on the contrary, is a concept, like those of knowledge and belief, that allows us humans to do some things that would be unavailable to us if we lacked it. When we say "It is true that Paris is the capital of France", we are adopting the commitment that Paris is the capital of France, something that we could have also done just by saying "Paris is the capital of France". The content of our assertion, the proposition to which we are committing in making it, is just the same—the truth predicate does not add anything to it. But "It is true that Paris is the capital of France" may not always play the same pragmatic role as "Paris is the capital of France" does, for it may be our purpose in choosing

these particular words to emphasize our commitment to the proposition that Paris is the capital of France. This can be particularly useful in contrast with other propositions that may seem to go on a par with this one but from which we want to distance ourselves. For instance, it may be natural to say "It is true that Paris is the capital of France, but that doesn't necessarily make it the place to go if you want to enjoy some true French culture".

The truth predicate also allows us to adopt blind commitments ([Frápolli 2013](): 58). If you want to adopt the commitment that Paris is the capital of France and do not need to do it in a particularly emphatic way, you may just as well say "Paris is the capital of France". But you do not always know to which proposition you want to commit, or maybe it is just too complicated to make explicit what that proposition is. You may be committed to all propositions in the *Tractatus*, but you cannot recall all of them literally, and even if you could, you would not want to spend a couple of hours reciting them one after another—not to think of the probability that you had to make your point more than once during the same conversation! It is thus really convenient to have something that allows us to say things like "All the *Tractatus* says is true", and this is another role that the truth predicate plays. You can also express your trust in a person's credibility by saying "All she says is true". Of course, the universal quantifier is usually contextually restricted, but, even if this is so, it will include things that the person is yet to say. In this case, it is not only inconvenient, but in fact impossible, to enumerate all the commitments that one is undertaking in saying "All she says is true". One cannot know what another person will say in the future, but one can accept whatever that person will say. We can express such disposition by saying "All she says is true". This is another thing that the truth predicate allows us to do that would be unattainable without it.

This is the function of the truth predicate. A prosentential explanation of the meaning of "true" would consider such meaning to be exhausted by such function—"true" is a former of prosentences, i.e., it allows us to restore sentencehood. Thus, we would be right not to look for a property that all and only the things we deem true share, for the meaning of "true" gets explained just by pointing out that we deem true those propositions to which we want to commit, and

do so when we want to emphasize our commitment, or when we cannot or do not want to make explicit the propositions at issue. Truth ascriptions serve this purpose by working as proforms, and the truth predicate is a former of complex sentential variables.

7.3.2.   Relativism and prosententialism about truth

Frápolli's approach is compatible with a broad range of accounts of the meanings of other expressions, but it requires giving up descriptivism and representationalism (Frápolli 2013: 7–8). Descriptivism, on the one hand, is the view that all declarative sentences say how things are, whereas "true" does not have this function according to Frápolli's account of the truth predicate. Representationalism, on the other hand, is the view that linguistic expressions are meaningful in virtue of their standing for objects in the world. The prosentential notion of truth, by contrast, will require that not all words signify in the same way, and in particular, not all words refer to objects in the world. This is so because "true" will be one of these words that do not refer to extralinguistic entities. Truth will in this approach be a second-order concept, that is, a concept that does not take singular entities, but concepts or propositions, as its arguments.

There is more than one proposal as to how to individuate meaning that is compatible with antirepresentationalism. One way in which the approach could be extended in a smooth way is by complementing it with an inferentialism about truth, which would identify its meaning with the inferential relations established between it and other concepts (Frápolli 2013: 9). Doing so would not preclude that part of the meaning of some concepts depends on their relations with extralinguistic entities. But it would require that, even for these concepts, their being concepts consists in their being in inferential relations.

Frápolli takes the debate about the relativity of truth to be orthogonal to the question as to what truth means (Frápolli 2013: 29). This is a consequence of her distinction between that for which speakers use truth ascriptions (which, from a pragmatist point of view, amounts to what truth means) and how they use the truth predicate, that is, as a monadic or as an *n*-adic predicate (Frápolli 2013:

29–30). However, I want to make the case for the connection between these two issues. I think, in particular, that the kind of philosophical motivation that may lead one to embrace Frápolli's approach to truth ascriptions leads naturally to relativism.

Once we have adopted a prosentential view about truth, we shall see it as a concept that has developed to fulfill a certain purpose. We will apply it in certain cases and not in others in accordance with its function. Under this light, it seems weird that a human concept, such as truth, should only be properly applied in cases that are beyond our reach, so that things that fall within this concept do so from "God's point of view", which we can never attain, and the things that we classify under the concept we classify only provisionally so, and always will. This does not seem practical at all for a concept that should be useful if it has survived for such a long time. It seems more convenient to take things to be true or false from our perspective, and consider such perspective as susceptible of change, as the relativist stance would recommend. This is how the prosentential conception of truth connects with relativism.

The conception of truth held throughout this dissertation sees it as a tool to express our commitments. When I say "It is true that Paris is the capital of France", I am not ascribing a property to anything beyond Paris. All I am doing is expressing my commitment to the proposition that Paris is the capital of France. It is then natural to say that the same proposition can be true for one person and false for another, depending on the commitments of each of them. This view of what "true" means fits badly with absolutism and well with relativism. If truth were a property in any substantial sense, it would not be odd to say that some propositions have it and others do not, and that they do so independently from anything else. But if we talk about truth only to make our commitments explicit, how is it that we commit from our specific standpoints and yet utterances are true or false *simpliciter*? The prosentential view of the meaning of "true" is more easily accommodated by relativizing utterance truth, just like relativism does. Of course, we could go searching for the truth property once we have relativized it. Nonetheless, once the property for which we are looking is the one that some propositions have relative to certain contexts, we better just accept that truth-talk is only a way

of making each speaker's commitments explicit. Thus, although relativism does not strictly follow from the conception of truth held here, it fits nicely with it.

7.4. Ways of living

Relativism is one of the most vilified positions throughout history. It is in part because its commitments have been misrepresented, but also because these commitments, properly understood, are hard to swallow for people not willing to consider the possibility that their point of view is only one among many. Relativism is the idea that we all have a point of view, and that no point of view should be privileged. This is hard to accept when one's standpoint has been systematically favored, to such an extent that one's claims and evaluations seem to be made out of no point of view, or at least from the only correct one.

Should we be happy with the idea that there is a privileged point of view, and that it is just a fortunate coincidence that it systematically coincides with that of those who are also privileged in the rest of aspects of their lives? Is it not a more parsimonious explanation to assume that those who are antecedently privileged, some of them working in analytic philosophy, will also manage to make their point of view appear as the one that should be adopted by everyone else? Of course, the privileged will always have the handful explanation that privilege makes available resources that allow one to get closer to absolute truth. But those in power, as Medina (2013) shows, are less in need of taking into account points of view different from their own, and it should never be preferable to stick to one's perspective. The ideal of absolute truth makes it harder for us to consider different ways of living. Relativism, by contrast, through its insistence that everything we do we do from a certain standpoint, opens the field for different possibilities. And having different options, besides being an essential requirement in democratic societies, is what allows them to progress. Making room for different ways of living is what makes it possible for us to improve.

Conclusiones

A continuación, resumo las principales conclusiones a las que hemos llegado a lo largo de los capítulos que componen esta tesis. En el capítulo 2, revisé las distintas familias de teorías a las que en algún momento se ha llamado relativistas. Para hacer esto, presenté tres fenómenos y motivé cada familia como el resultado de tratar de dar cuenta de uno de ellos manteniendo al mismo tiempo lo que la versión anterior del relativismo había conseguido. El primer fenómeno fue el hecho de que el desacuerdo sin falta fuera sin falta, y la teoría de familias correspondiente fue el contextualismo deíctico, según el cual, por ejemplo, la proposición expresada por una oración que contiene "está rico" involucra un estándar de gusto personal. Estas teorías, sin embargo, eran incapaces de dar cuenta del segundo fenómeno: la intuición de ambas partes de que están de hecho participando en una disputa. El contextualismo no deíctico pretendía respetar esta intuición conservando el hecho de que el desacuerdo fuera sin falta trasladando el estándar de gusto personal a las circunstancias de evaluación. Sin embargo, el contextualismo no deíctico era incapaz de dar cuenta del tercer fenómeno, esto es, la retractación. El relativismo del valorador se motivó como la solución a este problema. En particular, proponía hacer que las circunstancias de evaluación estuvieran determinadas no por el contexto de proferencia, sino por el de valoración. Cerré el capítulo 2 presentando las otras dos teorías que han jugado un papel en esta tesis: el invariantismo y el expresivismo.

En el capítulo 3, ofrecí dos caracterizaciones del relativismo. La primera caracterización, una caracterización general, consideraba todas las presuntas variedades de relativismo discutidas en el capítulo 2 dignas del nombre en la medida en

que desafían lo que llamé "la imagen fregeana". La segunda caracterización, una caracterización estricta, solo llamaba "relativismo" a aquellas teorías que sacrifican la imagen fregeana de tal forma que relativizan la verdad de las proferencias. Esta caracterización estricta venía acompañada de una clasificación que dividía las teorías en contextualismo deíctico, contextualismo no deíctico, relativismo deíctico y relativismo no deíctico. Las teorías deícticas consideran el parámetro en cuestión parte de la proposición expresada, mientras que las teorías no deícticas lo consideran parte de las circunstancias de evaluación; y, según las teorías contextualistas, el contexto relevante a la hora de determinar el parámetro es el contexto de proferencia, mientras que, según las teorías relativistas, es el de valoración. Argumenté a favor de la caracterización estricta y probé su potencia mostrando cómo puede aplicarse.

En el capítulo 4, proporcioné un ejemplo de la forma tradicional que han tomado los argumentos a favor del relativismo. En particular, propuse un relativismo no deíctico con respecto a las atribuciones opacas de creencia. Defendí el componente no deíctico de la teoría argumentando que nos permite resolver el puzzle de Frege, esto es, dar cuenta de las intuiciones de quienes hablan con respecto a la verdad de lo que dicen conservando al mismo tiempo la inocencia semántica, incluso al nivel de las oraciones. Después, defendí el componente relativista mostrando que hace posible dar cuenta del comportamiento de las atribuciones opacas de creencia con respecto a la retractación.

En el capítulo 5, exploré la conexión entre el relativismo y el expresivismo, dos teorías que tradicionalmente se han considerado incompatibles. Mostré que hay dos modos en que podemos implementar la afirmación metasemántica del expresivismo de que debemos individuar el significado en términos de estados mentales, según qué entendamos que son los estados mentales. Por un lado, si los entendemos de forma internista, los estados mentales serán estados internos de las personas hablantes que estas "sacan a la luz" cuando los expresan. Entendido de esta manera, el expresivismo será incompatible con el relativismo, y este último será preferible en la medida en que permite dar cuenta de la retractación y de proferencias como "El regaliz no está bueno, pero me gusta". Un expresivismo no internista, por otro lado, sostendrá que, al expresar un estado mental,

estamos simplemente proponiéndonos como alguien de quien se pueden esperar ciertos cursos de acción. Si nos decantamos por una lectura no internista de "estado mental", podremos combinar el relativismo y el expresivismo individuando el significado en términos de estados mentales al mismo tiempo que asignamos al contexto de valoración un papel a la hora de determinar las circunstancias de evaluación de ciertas proposiciones.

En el capítulo 6, finalmente, completé el argumento de esta tesis mostrando que el hecho de que el relativismo relativice la verdad de las proferencias, como exige la caracterización estricta defendida en el capítulo 3, lo hace capaz de implementar un cierto tipo de actitud que debemos adoptar si queremos actuar de cierta forma. Esta es la actitud relativista, de acuerdo con la cual no hay un punto de vista privilegiado y no puede decirse de nada que sea verdadero o falso de una vez y para siempre. Debemos adoptar la actitud relativista porque es la que nos lleva a actuar de acuerdo con valores, tales como la tolerancia y el progreso, que las sociedades democráticas consideran dignos de perseguir. Puesto que el contextualismo y el expresivismo internista no relativizan la verdad de las proferencias, son incapaces de implementar este tipo de actitud. En este sentido, el contextualismo y el expresivismo internista siguen siendo propuestas absolutistas. El argumento apoyará el expresivismo no internista, sin embargo, en la medida en que se combine con el relativismo, algo que la teoría misma no descarta.

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