

# Presuppositions of Commonality: An Indexical Relativist Account of Disagreement

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In some philosophically interesting cases—including future contingents, predicates of personal taste, evaluative predicates in general, epistemic modals, and knowledge attributions—there seem to be possible contrasting variations in judgments about an issue in the domain that do not seem to involve fault on the part of any of the participants.

According to *relativism*, these appearances of faultless disagreement are to be endorsed. According to *moderate* relativism, this can be done within the general Kaplan–Lewis–Stalnaker two-dimensional framework, in which the basic semantic notion is that of a sentence  $s$  being true at a context  $c$  at the index  $i$ : it may in effect be the case that  $s$  is true at  $c$  (at its index  $i_c$ ) but false at  $c^*$  (at  $i_{c^*}$ ). According to *indexical* (moderate) relativism, this is so in virtue of the *content* of sentence  $s$  at  $c$  being different from that of  $s$  at  $c^*$ .

Indexical relativism thus seems to account straightforwardly for the *faultlessness* of the judgments that could be expressed by using  $s$  at  $c$  but not at  $c^*$ . What about the facts involving intuitions of *disagreement*, as revealed in ordinary disputes in the domain?

In recent debates on these issues, most presuppose that indexical relativism simply cannot account for these facts, and is thereby to be rejected. The arguments from disagreement that some provide, however, only target particularly simple versions of indexical relativism. My aim here is to show that they do not affect more complex versions thereof—more in particular, that they do not affect the view I have defended elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> which exploits presuppositions of commonality to the effect that the addressee is relevantly like the speaker. There are versions of indexical relativism, therefore, in a good position to account for the envisaged intuitions concerning disagreement.

In what follows, I unpack and argue for all these claims, in that order.

<sup>1</sup> See (López de Sa, 2003a, 2003b, 2007a), which elaborate on a suggestion by (Lewis, 1989).

## 14.1 FAULTLESS DISAGREEMENT AND RELATIVISM(S)

In some philosophically interesting cases—including future contingents, predicates of personal taste, evaluative predicates in general, epistemic modals, and knowledge attributions—there seem to be possible contrasting variations in judgments about an issue in a domain that do not seem to involve fault on part of any of the participants.

Take one of the cases where such an appearance is strongest. It does seem that Hannah and her wife Sarah can have contrasting judgments as to whether Homer Simpson is funny. Hannah may have a judgment that she could naturally express in a normal conversation by uttering ‘Homer is funny’ whereas Sarah may have a contrasting one she could express by uttering ‘Homer is not funny.’ As things may be, this divergence can be irremovable, not imputable to any lack of relevant information, attention, or the like—rather, to use Wright’s apt phrase, they may have just reached a point where, one would feel, they should just ‘agree to differ,’ as it were, without imputation of fault on either side. For, it seems, both may be judging what is true—and still disagree as to whether Homer is funny.

It is a *datum*, I take it, that in a lot of situations in domains like those mentioned there *seems* to be such cases of *faultless disagreement*.<sup>2</sup> This is not to say that such appearances need be endorsed in all such cases—only that rejecting them would require some ‘explaining away.’ The prospects of such explaining away might easily be dissimilar across the cases: what may be wildly implausible with respect to Homer being funny might turn out to be quite sensible as to whether Hannah knows after all that the bank will be open.<sup>3</sup> Here I will not defend, with respect

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of any of the domains in question, that appearances of faultless disagreement should be endorsed. Rather, my aim is to dispel a worry that a certain kind of view is not capable of adequately endorsing them—*assuming* they are to be endorsed. For illustrative purposes, though, I will mainly focus in what I take to be the more favorable cases, such as those involving whether Homer is funny.

Following the lead of Crispin Wright (1992), one can conceive of *relativism* in general as this attempt to endorse appearances of faultless disagreement—for such need to involve, in one way or other, some relativity to contrasting features

<sup>2</sup> Some use ‘faultless disagreement’ in a more restricted sense, requiring that there be a single content or proposition which is contrastingly judged, see for instance (Kölbel, 2003). As we will see, according to this more restricted sense, it cannot just be taken as a *datum* for relativists and non-relativists alike that there are apparent faultless disagreements, nor do all versions of relativism endorse that there are in effect faultless disagreements in the relevant domains. These I take to favor my more liberal usage.

<sup>3</sup> Or it may be plausible in just some but not all of the cases in a given domain. Notice that it is sufficient for relativism that *some* of the appearances of faultless disagreement, in the domain in question, are to be endorsed. (Feldman, 2001) gives examples concerning ‘wrong’ where some alternative explaining away might be more plausible. This being so does not contradict relativism, see (Cohen, 2001). See also (Williamson, 2005) for further discussion of similar examples.

of the subjects in question. And the different sources the relativity might be held to have are what gives rise to the different relativisms.

## 14.2 MODERATE RELATIVISMS: INDEXICAL VS NON-INDEXICAL

According to *moderate* relativism, endorsing appearances of faultless disagreement can be done within the general Kaplan–Lewis–Stalnaker two-dimensional framework, in which the basic semantic notion is that of a sentence  $s$  being true at a context  $c$  at the index  $i$ : it may in effect be the case that  $s$  is true at  $c$  (at its index  $i_c$ ) but false at  $c^*$  (at  $i_{c^*}$ ).

The jargon I adopt is from (Lewis, 1980). A *context* is a location—time, place, and possible world, or *centered world* for short—where a sentence is said. It has countless features, determined by the character of the location. An *index* is an  $n$ -tuple of features of context, but not necessarily features that go together in any possible context. Thus an index might consist of a speaker, a time before his birth, a world where he never lived at all, and so on. The coordinates of an index are features that can be shifted independently, unlike those of a context, and thus serve to represent the contribution of sentences embedded under sentence operators, such as ‘possibly’ or, more controversially, ‘somewhen,’ ‘strictly speaking,’ and so on. Given a context  $c$ , however, there is *the index of* the context,  $i_c$ : that index having coordinates that match the appropriate features of  $c$ . Given this uniqueness, the basic two-dimensional relation can be abbreviated in this special case: sentence  $s$  is true at context  $c$  iff  $s$  is true at context  $c$  at index  $i_c$ .<sup>4</sup>

Moderate relativism—or *contextualism*, as it has also sometimes been labelled in recent debates<sup>5</sup>—contrasts with what I label *radical* relativism, characterized by a departure from this classical two-dimensional framework. Radical relativism has it that it could be that a sentence  $s$  at context  $c$  at index  $i$  is true *from a certain perspective* but false from another—where perspectives are to be thought of as the same sort of thing as contexts, but representing a location from where a sentence, as said in a (possibly different) location, is viewed or assessed.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Sentence  $s$  is here assumed to contain no ambiguous, vague expressions, and the like. Besides, unless otherwise specified I use ‘sentences’ for sentence-types, but ‘utterances’ for utterance-tokens.

<sup>5</sup> Although in some of these debates, particularly that concerning knowledge attributions, the label is some other times reserved for a more specific view, which has it that they are features of the attributor in contrast with those of the attributee that are relevant for the truth-value of the attribution.

<sup>6</sup> Radical relativists in this sense include MacFarlane (2003, 2005, *inter alia*) and Laserohn (2005). I propose to use ‘perspectives’ instead of MacFarlane’s ‘contexts of assessment,’ as I think it helps to avoid confusions with ‘context’ of use/utterance’ (‘context’ here) and, more importantly, with ‘circumstance/point of evaluation’ (‘index’ here).

But, moderate views have it, no such departure is required. Appearances of faultless disagreement can be endorsed, as I said, by its possibly being the case that in effect *s* is true at *c* (at its index  $i_c$ ) but false at  $c^*$  (at  $i_{c^*}$ ). According to *indexical* (moderate) relativism, this is so in virtue of the *content* of sentence *s* at *c* being different from that of *s* at  $c^*$ .

The *content* of sentence *s* at *c* is the function that assigns to each index *i* the value of *s* at *c* at *i*. These arguably model that with respect to which attitudes such as belief or desire are relations, and what sentences in context say, at least in one understanding of the locution. They can then be called *propositions*, although the term is also sometimes reserved for functions from *worlds* to truth-values. The two usages coincide if, but only if, worlds are the only coordinates of indices. This is indeed a possible view, but one on which I rather remain neutral—hence, following (Lewis, 1980) again, I opt for ‘contents.’

According to the alternative *non-indexical* (moderate) relativist view, the content of *s* at *c* is the same as at  $c^*$ , but it determines with respect to index  $i_c$  a different truth-value than with respect to the different index  $i_{c^*}$ . This requires that the relevant feature be a coordinate of indices, such as (uncontroversially enough) a possible world and (more controversially) a time, a standard of precision, and so on.

Quite frequently one finds a characterization of a view in terms of the contention that “propositional truth is relative,” in the sense that contents of sentences in context are true or false only relative to some non-standard feature (other than a world, time, standard of precision and so on).<sup>7</sup> By itself, the contention is neutral with respect to non-indexical (moderate) relativism and radical relativism. The view that contents’ truth-values are relative to, say, senses of humor or moral codes or bodies of knowledge or what-have-you is by itself neutral as to whether it is the context that determine the appropriate features of indices—so that one preserves that a sentence at a context is true just in case it is true at the context at the index of that context—or rather they are determined by the perspective from which the statements are assessed.<sup>8</sup> I suspect, however, in most cases, it is the former moderate view that would be intended, if distinguished from the latter radical one.<sup>9</sup>

For indexical relativism, however, the content of sentence *s* at *c* is different from that of *s* at  $c^*$ —hence that it may in effect be the case that *s* is true

<sup>7</sup> See for instance (Köelbel, 2004), (Stanley, 2005: ch. 7), and (Zimmerman 2007).

<sup>8</sup> The present point is also made in (MacFarlane, 2005: 323–38). In more recent, yet unpublished work, MacFarlane has emphasized that not only the alleged characterization, but also considerations (including some by himself) aiming to favor radical relativist views in contrast with contextualist ones, are in fact neutral between radical relativism proper and (his label) “non-indexical contextualist” positions of the sort considered in the text.

<sup>9</sup> The list of defenders of such non-indexical but moderate relativism might turn out to include also (Egan, Hawthorne, and Weatherson 2005) and (Egan, 2005). Further discussion of this, as well as a defense of the general taxonomy of relativist positions employed here, are included in my still in progress (López de Sa, 2007:b).

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at  $c$  (at its index  $i_c$ ) but false at  $c^*$  (at  $i_{c^*}$ ). Indexical relativism thus seems to straightforwardly account for the *faultlessness* of the judgments that could be expressed by using  $s$  at  $c$  but not at  $c^*$ . What about the facts involving intuitions of *disagreement*, as revealed in ordinary disputes in the domain?

### 14.3 DISAGREEMENTS REVEALED IN ORDINARY DISPUTES

In recent debates on these issues, most presuppose that indexical relativism simply cannot account for these facts, and is thereby to be rejected. Here is Wright's particularly vivid voicing of the worry:

If [indexical relativism] were right, there would be an analogy between disputes of inclinations and the 'dispute' between one who says 'I am tired' and her companion who replies, 'Well, I am not' (when what is at issue is one more museum visit). There are the materials here, perhaps, for a (further) disagreement but no disagreement has yet been expressed. But ordinary understanding already hears a disagreement between one who asserts that hurt-free infidelity is acceptable and one who asserts that it is not. (Wright, 2001: 451).

Essentially the same point is made in (Kölbel, 2004) and (Lasersohn, 2005). I think that this is one of the most serious charges that indexical relativism faces.<sup>10</sup> Actually, this seems to be a killer objection for particularly simple *individualistic* versions of indexical proposal. I illustrate this with a toy proposal. Take the view which is exhausted by:

- (0) For each context  $c$ , 'Homer Simpson is funny' has the content that is true (at index  $i$ ) iff (with respect to  $i$ ) the speaker of  $c$  is amused by Homer.<sup>11</sup>

So if  $c$  is the actual context centered at Hannah's actual location, and  $c^*$  the one at her wife Sarah's, then 'Homer Simpson is funny' at  $c$  has the content that is true with respect to the indices where Hannah is amused by Homer, but at  $c^*$  has the content that is true with respect to the indices where Sarah is amused by Homer. Thus 'Homer Simpson is funny' is true at  $c$  and false at  $c^*$ . But, insofar as (0) is concerned, this is so in as much and exactly the same sense in

<sup>10</sup> The other main one concerns facts involving intuitions about indirect attitude and speech reports, see for instance (Hawthorne, 2004). I will not be concerned with this—arguably related but—different objection here, see for further discussion (Ludlow, 2005) and (López de Sa, 2007?b).

<sup>11</sup> Of course, independently of the present issue about disagreement, this is merely a caricaturesque toy proposal. To begin with, things might be clearly funny even in situations where one is not amused by them, as a result of lack of attention, preoccupation, and so on—so that, at the very least, any remotely plausible proposal along these lines would replace *being amused* by *being disposed to be amused*, under certain specified conditions. In order to stress the relevant differences with respect to the involved subjects among the different proposals, I would abstract from these issues here, and stick to toy proposals such as (0).

which ‘I am tired’ is (we may suppose) true at  $c$  but false at  $c^*$ . However, as Wright observes, ordinary understanding would typically hear a disagreement in the former case but not in the latter, as Hannah and Sarah disagree as to whether Homer is funny, but not as to whether one of them is tired. I agree. Thus a proposal exhausted by something along the lines of (0) fails to capture our intuitions about disagreement.

#### 14.4 TWO COMMUNITARIAN INDEXICAL PROPOSALS

One response sometimes made on behalf of indexical relativism is that the considered problem arises due to the individualistic character of the simple versions of indexical relativism such as the one considered. Hence, the thought would go, one would avoid it by replacing in proposals such as (0) the individualistic mention of the speaker of the context by a reference to a community or group, salient in the conversation taking place at the context, to which the speaker of the context most plausibly belongs. This seems to be the proposal developed in (von Fintel and Gillies, 2005). To illustrate, consider:

- (1) For each context  $c$ , ‘Homer Simpson is funny’ has the content that is true (at index  $i$ ) iff (with respect to  $i$ ) the community conversationally salient in  $c$  is amused by Homer.

Unfortunately, this by itself does not seem to improve upon (0) regarding the account for intuitions concerning disagreement. For the community conversationally salient in the context of one participant in a conversation might be precisely relevantly different from the community conversationally salient in the context of another participant—and this might be the very topic of the conversation:

Argentinean Pablo: We greet colleagues by kissing them once.

British John: Oh, we don’t. We just shake hands.

Spanish Pedro: Well, we kiss them twice—unless the two of us are men, in which case we shake hands.

As in Wright’s previous case concerning ‘I am tired,’ there might be the materials here, perhaps, for a (further) disagreement, but ordinary understanding does not hear a disagreement has yet been expressed.

So, provided that the relevant communities salient at  $c$  and  $c^*$  are relevantly different, a proposal along the lines of (1) would indeed secure that ‘Homer Simpson is funny’ has at  $c$  and  $c^*$  appropriately different contents, and thus that ‘Homer Simpson is funny’ is true at  $c$  and false at  $c^*$ . But again, insofar as (1) is concerned, this is so in as much and exactly the same sense in which ‘We greet colleagues by kissing them once’ is (we may suppose) true at  $c$  but false at  $c^*$ . However, as observed, ordinary understanding would typically hear

a disagreement in the former case but not in the latter, as Hannah and Sarah disagree as to whether Homer is funny, but not as to whether they greet colleagues by kissing them once. Thus a proposal along the lines of (1) fails to capture our intuitions about disagreement.

The problem has been that the groups as well as the individuals salient in the different contexts involved in a given conversation might be relevantly *dissimilar*, which fits nicely with the indexical relativist account of the faultlessness of the judgments, but does not put indexical relativism in a position to account for intuitions of disagreement just by going communitarian instead of individualistic. This seems to be so, at least, unless one amends the proposal by *requiring* that the group salient in a context include all the participants of the conversation. This would give a proposal of the following kind:

1. For each context  $c$ , ‘Homer Simpson is funny’ has the content that is true (at index  $i$ ) iff (with respect to  $i$ ) the community conversationally salient in  $c$  includes the participants of the conversation and is amused by Homer.

This is in effect the kind of ‘Single Scoreboard Semantics’ view recently defended by DeRose (2004) in the domain of knowledge attributions.

I am ready to grant that this improves upon the rest of proposals considered so far regarding the account of intuitions of disagreement. But the main problem with it is that this is done at the cost of jeopardizing the indexical relativist account for intuitions of *faultlessness*, as presented above. For what if the participants in a given conversation are *not* relevantly alike? That is, what if there is no community conversationally salient in  $c$  and  $c^*$  which includes both Hannah and Sarah? It depends on the details of the proposal—and the semantics one favors for sentences containing singular definite descriptions with non-satisfied matrices. But in such a case either ‘Homer is funny’ is *false* in both  $c$  and  $c^*$ , or it *lacks a truth-value* in both  $c$  and  $c^*$ —the latter being the option favored by DeRose himself, hence his labeling it *the GAP view*. In either case, if Hannah were to utter ‘Homer is funny’ she would be thereby asserting something that is *not true*. As truth seems to be the weakest norm for assertion, it is very hard to see any sense in which Hannah’s is faultless.<sup>12</sup> Therefore this kind of proposal does not seem to account appropriately for faultlessness.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> In more recent, yet unpublished, work DeRose emphasizes the intuitions we have about cases in which the relevant subjects are not participants of one conversation—nor can (easily) become such. Although I think this emphasis is appropriate (see the discussion in Section 6), I understand that it does not suffice for vindicating our intuitions of faultlessness—as they seem to be present, and with equal strength, with respect to (actual or conceivable) cases where a conversation does take place.

<sup>13</sup> This seems not to be the only problem for such a proposal. It is (arguably) very implausible that the *truth-value* of my utterance of ‘Homer Simpson is funny,’ as opposed to (say) its felicity or appropriateness, is affected by a change in *your* sense of humor—even if we are talking together. For an elaboration of a criticism along these lines, see (Feldman, 2004).

## 14.5 THE PRESUPPOSITION OF COMMONALITY APPROACH

The worry concerning disagreement jeopardizes a particularly simple individualistic version of indexical relativism. I have just considered two proposals that try to overcome it by going communitarian, and found them faulty. I want to argue that a more complex—even if equally individualistic—version of indexical relativism is capable of neatly accounting for intuitions of disagreement as revealed by ordinary disputes on the matter. The main complexity comes from the fact that, unlike those considered, the proposal is not exhausted by a claim about the *content* of the sentences in question at the different contexts, but crucially also comprises another component, concerning the *presupposition* that some expression in it triggers. This *presupposition of commonality approach*, which I have also defended in other works,<sup>14</sup> elaborates on a suggestion due to David Lewis in his discussion of relativism about values, where he considers a similar objection from disagreement:

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Wouldn't you hear them saying 'value for me and my mates' or 'value for the likes of you'? Wouldn't you think they'd stop arguing after one speaker says X is a value and the other says it isn't?—Not necessarily. They might always presuppose, with more or less confidence (well-founded or otherwise), that whatever relativity there is won't matter in *this* conversation. (Lewis, 1989: 84)

As I just said, I propose to elaborate this suggestion *via* the contention that the relevant expression involved triggers a presupposition of commonality to the effect that the participants of the conversation are all alike in the relevant respects. To illustrate, consider:

- (3) (a) For each context *c*, 'Homer Simpson is funny' has the content that is true (at index *i*) iff (with respect to *i*) the speaker of *c* is amused by Homer.
- (b) 'is funny' triggers the presupposition that the participants in the conversation are similar with respect to humor.

I assume here Stalnaker's account of speaker presuppositions and the derived notion of expressions triggering presuppositions. Here is a recent statement of his views:

Acceptance . . . is a category of propositional attitudes and methodological stances towards a proposition, a category that includes belief, but also some attitudes (presumption, assumption, acceptance for the purposes of an argument or an inquiry) that contrasts

<sup>14</sup> In (López de Sa 2003a, 2003b, 2007a). See also (Egan 2005) for what seems to be a similar move—although it is not completely clear to me on behalf of exactly which position this is made, see (López de Sa, 2007b).

with belief, and with each other. To accept a proposition is to treat it as true for some reason. One ignores, at least temporally, and perhaps in a limited context, the possibility that it is false. It is common ground that  $\phi$  in a group if all members *accept* (for the purposes of the conversation) that  $\phi$ , and all *believe* that all accept  $\phi$ , and *believe* that all *believe* that all accept  $\phi$ , etc. The speaker presuppositions [are] the speaker's beliefs about the common ground. A *nondefective* [conversation] is a [conversation] in which the participants' beliefs about the common ground are all correct. Equivalently, a nondefective [conversation] is one in which all of the parties to the conversation presuppose the same things. (Stalnaker, 2002: 716–17)<sup>15</sup>

A given *expression* triggers a certain presupposition if an utterance of it would be infelicitous when the presupposition is not part of the common ground of the conversation—unless participants accommodate it by coming to presuppose it on the basis of the fact that the utterance has been produced.

Now consider Hannah and Sarah once again. The presupposition of commonality approach of (3) does not differ from the simple individualistic proposal of (0) with respect to the component about the content of the sentence at the different contexts. Hence the explanation of faultlessness is as straightforward as it was there—it can indeed be the case that ‘Homer Simpson is funny’ is true at  $c$  and false at  $c^*$ , and therefore that both Hannah and Sarah are (faultlessly) judging what is true. But, unlike the case of (0), the approach of (3) is not exhausted by the component about content. And this is what accounts for our intuitions about disagreement concerning the case. According to the approach, ‘is funny’ triggers a presupposition of commonality to the effect that both Hannah and Sarah are similar with respect to humor. Thus, in any non-defective conversation where Hannah uttered ‘Homer is funny’ and Sarah replied ‘No, it is not,’ it would indeed be common ground that Hannah and Sarah are relevantly alike, and thus that they are contradicting each other. After all, and provided they are alike, either both Hannah and Sarah are amused by Homer or they are not. Hence why, unlike in the case of ‘I am tired,’ ordinary understanding would indeed hear a disagreement as to whether Homer is funny.

Thus, I submit, the version of indexical relativism constituted by this presupposition of commonality approach seems to neatly account for both intuitions of faultlessness and intuitions of disagreement. I want to end by considering some objections that this is indeed so, which would clarify the prospects of the proposal further.

<sup>15</sup> In the last two sentences of the quotation, Stalnaker originally speaks of a conversation's ‘context’ (in earlier works, ‘context set’, as it can be seen (when non-defective) as the set of worlds in which the relevant presuppositions are indeed true). I have substituted ‘context’ by ‘conversation’ here, in order to avoid confusion with the Lewisian usage I am adopting, which reserves ‘context’ for worlds centered at spatiotemporal points representing locations where a sentence could be said. Thus one conversation (and its “context set”) involves—and indeed is determined by features of—many different contexts, corresponding to the locations of the different participants at the different stages of the conversation.

## 14.6 OBJECTIONS

- (A) *The presuppositional approach of (3) accounts merely for the appearance of disagreement, as opposed to genuine disagreement proper, in that it only explains why Hannah and Sarah would take themselves to disagree.*

Reply: Well, the proposal *does* account for intuitions of (“genuine”) disagreement (“proper”) as revealed in ordinary disputes, to the extent to which these are captured by something along the lines of the following:

DISAGREEMENT In any conversation, it will be common ground that utterances of (say) ‘Homer is funny’ and ‘Homer is not funny’ would contradict each other.<sup>16</sup>

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In any conversation where the presupposition of commonality is fulfilled, the utterances will in fact contradict each other. And in any non-defective conversation it is common ground that such a presupposition is in fact fulfilled. This seems to me to be much stronger than mere appearance of disagreement.

- (B) *Maybe so, but the intuitions of disagreement are anyway stronger than that. They are intuitions to the effect that in any conversation whatsoever any such pair would in fact contradict each other—regardless of what participants think about each other. And that is something that (3) does not account for.*

Reply: According to the objector here, an indexical relativist proposal such as (3) would violate the following:

CONTRADICTION In any conversation whatsoever, it will be the case that utterances of (say) ‘Homer is funny’ and ‘Homer is not funny’ would in fact contradict each other.

Of course, (3) does not respect *this*. But, unlike the intuitions of DISAGREEMENT, I think it is quite dubious that there exist the unrestricted intuitions of CONTRADICTION. Of course, the fact that CONTRADICTION cannot be motivated by appealing to the intuitions revealed by ordinary disputes on the matter does not generally guarantee that it cannot be motivated *in some other way*. But such an independent case is still to be provided, as the only argument from disagreement actually given against indexical relativism seems to be the one involving intuitions I have been considering in this paper. (Furthermore, as observed previously in connection with the norm for assertion, this case would then amount to a case against faultlessness. So if any such case could be substantiated—which I very much doubt, at least

<sup>16</sup> I take worlds containing the relevant non-defective conversations to be closer. If this is rejected, the subjunctive conditional should be amended by adding the qualification that the utterances be felicitous.

concerning cases like that of ‘the funny’—, then it is *relativism* in general, no matter whether radical or moderate, indexical or non-indexical, which would be—*would* be—in trouble.<sup>17</sup>)

- (C) *The problem with [a proposal along the lines of (3)—DLdS] is that it explains only intra-conversational disagreement, leaving inter-conversational disagreement unaccounted for. This is not a stable resting point. Once the importance of accounting for disagreement has been conceded, one cannot limit oneself to disagreement within conversations. . . . [W]hen I overhear a group of ten-year-olds chattering about how “funny” certain knock-knock jokes are, I may think that they are wrong. These jokes just aren’t that funny. But the kids certainly don’t think of themselves as involved in a conversation with me—they may not even know I’m there. Nor do I think of myself as conversing with them.* (MacFarlane, 2007)

Reply: I agree that ordinary understanding would hear a disagreement being present here (see below). I am also inclined to think that, in some such cases at least, one would also regard the relevant pair of unconditionalized utterances as contradicting each other, despite the fact that the subjects are not participating in any *actual* conversation. But, I submit, this can be accommodated within the framework of the presupposition of commonality approach, to the extent that these cases are those where there are *possible* (close, easily actualizable) conversations, which would involve the people in question. Thus, although not actually conversational partners, they could (easily) become such.<sup>18</sup> What the cases illustrate, then, is that the intuitions of DISAGREEMENT should not be understood as restricted to actual conversations.

- (D) *Surely there is an intuitive sense in which people disagree in the envisaged scenarios. And this sense is available even if, for whatever reason, participants do not presuppose that the others are alike—but may indeed come to presuppose otherwise.*

Reply: Agreed. Hannah and Sarah might disagree as to whether Homer is funny, and their respective distinctive senses of humor be perfectly apparent to them. But again I do not think this goes against the approach of (3)—rather it can be seen as precisely illustrating further the sense in which our intuitions support the appropriately weaker DISAGREEMENT as opposed to CONTRADICTION. Intuitively, I submit, the disagreement in our case is

<sup>17</sup> But isn’t precisely *radical* relativism different here, in that it can accommodate both CONTRADICTION and faultlessness? I don’t think so, but I will not try to defend my view here—see again (López de Sa, 2007:b). For responding to the objection, however, it is enough to realize that intuitions of disagreement as revealed by ordinary disputes in the domain only support something like DISAGREEMENT, and not CONTRADICTION.

<sup>18</sup> What about cases where a conversation is not only not actual, but simply cannot take place—or, at the very least, not easily? “When I was ten, I used to go around saying ‘fish sticks are delicious’ (and meaning it!). Now I say ‘fish sticks are not delicious.’ It seems to me that I disagree with my past self. But I am not involved in a *conversation* with my past self” (MacFarlane, 2007). *Imagined*, or easily imaginable, conversations might play in some such cases the envisaged role—but see the discussion below.

constituted by the contrastive features of Hannah's and Sarah's senses of humor (say). In non-defective conversations where they presuppose they are alike, this disagreement would be naturally expressible by the relevant pair of (unqualified) contrasting utterances, which would be regarded as contradicting each other—and would in fact contradict each other, provided the presupposition is fulfilled. But in equally non-defective conversations where they do not presuppose they are alike, but may indeed presuppose they are not, their disagreement exists all the same, but it need not be so expressible. Rather, the prediction is that they could naturally express it by utterances which conditionalize on them or their relevant feature, thus canceling the presupposition of commonality. They would not contradict each other—but felicitously express their disagreement as to whether Homer is funny all the same. And this is—or so it seems to me—quite plausible with respect to our case:

*Hannah: Oh, they're showing The Simpsons! Come and watch, Sarah! Homer is so funny!*

*Sarah: Funny for you, darling. You should remember that he doesn't amuse me at all.*

## CONCLUSION

In recent debates on these issues, most presuppose that indexical relativism simply cannot account for these facts, and is thereby to be rejected. The arguments from disagreement that some provide, however, only target particularly simple versions of indexical relativism. My aim here has been to show that they do not affect more complex versions thereof—more in particular, that they do not affect the view I have defended elsewhere, which exploits presuppositions of commonality to the effect that the addressee is relevantly like the speaker.

This, of course, does not amount to a full defense of the presupposition of commonality approach, nor of indexical relativism, in any of the domains mentioned. Realist or invariantist attempts to explain away the appearances of faultless disagreement have not been considered, no remotely plausible specific proposal concerning the content component has been mentioned, nor has the case for the presence of a further presuppositional element been substantiated.

These points notwithstanding, I hope I have made the case that there are versions of indexical relativism that are in a good position to account for the envisaged intuitions concerning disagreement.<sup>19</sup>

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