

Audience in Context

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Received: 3 August 2012 / Accepted: 17 May 2013
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Abstract In recent discussions on contextualism and relativism, some have suggested that audience-sensitivity motivates a content relativist version of radical relativism, according to which a sentence as said at a context can have different contents with respect to the different perspectives from where it is assessed. The first aim of this note is to illustrate how this is not so. According to Egan himself, the phenomenon motivates at least refinement of the characteristic moderate contention that features of a single context determine the appropriate truth-value of the sentence. The second aim of this note is to explore how this may not be so.

Let me start this by asking you to do something. Please touch your head. Thank you.

If you have been cooperative enough, you have followed a simple singular instruction involving yourself. And if you have not, you have failed to follow a simple singular instruction involving yourself, which works just as well for the sake of my illustration. This phenomenon is what Egan (2009) has called *audience-sensitivity*.

In recent discussions on contextualism and relativism, some have suggested that audience-sensitivity motivates a *content relativist* version of radical relativism, according to which a sentence as said at a context can have different contents with respect to the different perspectives from where it is assessed. The first aim of this note is to illustrate how this is not so. According to Egan himself, the phenomenon motivates at least a refinement of the characteristic moderate contention that features of a single context determine the appropriate truth-value of the sentence. The second aim of this note is to explore how this may not be so.

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1 Audience-Sensitivity versus Content (Radical) Relativism

1.1 Radical Relativism

Following Egan, the jargon I will adopt is Lewisian. According to Lewis (1980), the *semantic values* of sentences must determine both which sentences are true in which contexts, and how the truth of a sentence varies when certain features of contexts are shifted—so as to help determine the semantic values of longer sentences which have sentences as constituents. In order to do this, he distinguishes between *contexts* and *indices*.

A *context* is a particular concrete location—a spatiotemporally centered world—in which a sentence might be said. A context has countless features, determined by the character of the location. It thus encodes things such as the speaker of the context and the time and place of the context, but also things such as the body of knowledge or standard of taste that is made salient in the conversation that takes place around the center of the context and so on. This richness of contexts guarantees the availability of features on which the truth of sentences might turn out to depend, and thus supersedes attempts (including Lewis's own earlier one) to isolate tuples of features that are relevant for the truth of sentences.

An *index*, by contrast, is indeed a tuple of features of contexts, but not necessarily features that go together in any possible context. Thus, as Lewis says, an index might consist of a speaker, a time before her birth, a world where she never lived at all, and so on. Because of this, the coordinates of an index can be shifted independently, and can thus be used to systematize the contribution of sentences embedded under sentence operators, such as 'it is possible that' or, more controversially, 'somewhere,' 'strictly speaking,' and so on. In order to evaluate, for instance, 'It is possible that dodos are not extinct' at an actual context *c* one needs to find out the truth-value of 'Dodos are extinct' once the world feature of *c* has shifted to a merely possible world.

The reason why we need both contexts and indices, as introduced, is nicely summarized by Lewis himself:

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.

... An assignment of semantic values must give us the relation: sentence *s* is true at context *c* at index *i*, where *i* need not be the index that gives the features of context *c*. Fortunately, an index used together with a context in this way need not give all the relevant features of context; only the shiftable features, that are much fewer. (Lewis 1980, 21–22)

So the richness of contexts guarantees the availability of features on which the truth of sentences might turn out to depend, and the independent shiftable of the coordinates of indices qualifies them to account for the contribution of constituent sentences under operators of the language.

An assignment of semantic values should thus determine the general relation of a sentence s being true at context c at an arbitrary index i , where the coordinates of i need not go together in c —or in any possible context, for that matter. But each context c does determine one particular index: the index with coordinates that match the appropriate features of c . This is *the index of the context*, i_c .

Thus, a special case of the general relation of a sentence s being true at context c at an arbitrary index i gives rise to the characteristic moderate contention of the classical semantic framework, to the effect that they are features of the context where a sentence is said that determine its appropriate truth-value: sentence s is true at context c iff s is true at context c at its index i_c .

(It is important to emphasize that the features that are coordinates in i_c need not be *all* the features of c on which the truth of the sentence s depends, nor need they be the *only* features of c on which the truth of the sentence s depends. They are just the features that are shiftable by an operator of the language, possibly occurring in s . It is the richness of c alluded to above that guarantees that whichever features might turn out to be relevant for truth will be available by being determined by c 's character. As we will see, indices thus contrast with *circumstances of evaluation*, which are indeed tuples of features *relevant for truth* (of contents of sentences at contexts).)

According to *moderate relativism*, appearances of faultless disagreement in certain discourses can be endorsed within this general moderate semantic framework. It seems that Hannah and Sarah may disagree as to whether Homer Simpson is funny, without either of them being at fault, and indeed this can actually be so in virtue of some feature of Hannah's context (say, Hannah's sense of humor) making the sentence 'Homer Simpson is funny' true, while some feature of Sarah's context (say, Sarah's different sense of humor) makes the sentence 'Homer Simpson is funny' false. In general, according to moderate relativism, appearances of faultless disagreement are manifested by a certain sort of contextual variation of sentences' appropriate truth-values: it seems that sentence s can be true at a certain context c but false at another context c^* . These appearances can be endorsed while respecting the moderate characteristic contention, as 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^*}), in virtue of different features of c and c^* .

Recently, and partly motivated by the works of John MacFarlane, some people have been convinced that this framework is shown to be inappropriate by a special sort of variation in some philosophically interesting cases: a sentence s as said in a particular context c could still be 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. To illustrate, 'Homer Simpson is funny' as said at Hannah's context could still be true when viewed or assessed from the perspective of that very context, but false when viewed or assessed from another perspective, say that of Sarah's context. This certainly departs from the moderate semantic framework as characterized above. Within the framework, 'Homer Simpson is funny' as said at Hannah's context (with respect to the index that this determines) settles the appropriate truth-value, which is thus insensitive to the

perspective from where it can be viewed or assessed. The departure from the framework consisting in allowing the appropriate truth-value of a sentence as said in a context to be sensitive to the perspective from which it is assessed constitutes **radical relativism**. Radical relativists in this sense (with respect to some domains) include MacFarlane (2003, 2007 *inter alia*).¹

1.2 Content (Radical) Relativism

The distinction between moderate and radical relativism depends exclusively on claims concerning the appropriate truth-value of sentences at contexts, and not on claims involving the notion of the content of a sentence. If such a notion of the *content* or “*proposition*” of a sentence is introduced, two further distinctions become available.

Among moderate relativist positions, one can distinguish between *indexical* and *non-indexical* contextualism, in terms of whether the features of the different contexts determine *different contents* for the sentence, or whether these features determine different truth-values *for one and the same content*. More explicitly, appearances of faultless disagreement can be endorsed, according to moderate relativism, as we have seen, 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^*}). Now, according to **indexical contextualism**, this is so in virtue of the *content* of sentence *s* at *c* being different from that of *s* at c^* . According to **non-indexical contextualism**, by contrast, the content of *s* at *c* can be the same as at c^* , but the truth-value it receives with respect to the relevant features of *c* is different from the one it receives with respect to the relevant (different) features of c^* .

For our present purposes, one can conceive of **circumstances of evaluation** as the tuples of features of context to which the truth of contents is relativized. It is important to emphasize that although both indices and circumstances of evaluation are tuples of features of contexts, it cannot be assumed that the same kinds of feature would figure in both. A given feature would be a coordinate of indices if there is an operator in the language that shifts it, and need not be an element of circumstances of evaluation if the truth of contents is not relative to it. And conversely, the features that have to be specified in order for a content to acquire a truth-value would thereby enter the circumstances, but not necessarily the indices, unless they turn out to be shiftable by an operator of the language.²

According to radical relativism, a given sentence as said at a particular context can be true when viewed or assessed from a certain perspective but false when

¹ I propose to use ‘perspectives’ instead of MacFarlane’s ‘contexts of assessment.’ I think this terminology helps to avoid confusions with ‘context of use/utterance’ (‘context’ here) and with ‘circumstance of evaluation.’ The taxonomy of positions in recent debates on contextualism and relativism I am using is based on MacFarlane (2005, 2009), see for further discussion López de Sa (2011).

² As I argue in López de Sa (2012), attention to these two different roles that features of context can play may contribute to dissolving some recent apparent disputes as to which kind of consideration would motivate relativization of truth to a given sort of feature. The situation is complicated further by the fact that some authors, arguably including Kaplan (1989) and MacFarlane (2009), seem to use the expression ‘circumstance of evaluation’ for tuples comprising features that play one or the other of these two roles.

viewed or assessed from another. If the notion of the content or “proposition” of a sentence is introduced for radical relativism, it allows for a distinction that can be regarded as structurally analogous to that of indexical versus non-indexical contextualism within moderate relativism.

According to *content relativism*, a given sentence at a given context can be assigned different contents or “propositions” with respect to different perspectives. According to *truth relativism*, a given sentence at a given context is assigned just one content or “proposition”, but one that is evaluated differently with respect to different features of the different perspectives. (MacFarlane (2005, p. 312) used ‘expressive relativism’ and ‘propositional relativism’ for content relativism and truth relativism respectively, but more recently he has adopted the latter terminology, introduced by Egan et al. (2005).) Radical relativists with respect to a domain tend to be truth relativist, like MacFarlane himself, but Weatherson (2009) advances a content relativist version of radical relativism.

Notice that, in the moderate semantic framework, the circumstance of evaluation of a context is the tuple of features of that context with respect to which the content of a sentence at that context receives the appropriate truth-value. Once perspectives are relevantly in place, one can extend the notion, conceiving of circumstances of evaluation as the tuples of features of contexts *and perspectives* with respect to which the content of a sentence at that context as assessed from that perspective receives the appropriate truth-value. Thus—according to the more popular truth relativist version of radical relativism—the content of a sentence at a context assessed from a perspective may receive a truth-value relative to a circumstance of evaluation that contains features of that perspective rather than features of the context.

1.3 Audience-Sensitivity versus Content Relativism

Audience-sensitivity occurs when features of the audience are relevant for the truth or falsity, satisfaction or non-satisfaction, etc., of the relevant linguistic item—to the extent that different people can be audiences of the production of a token of a given sentence that can be true (satisfied, etc.) relative to some of them but false (non-satisfied, etc.) relative to others. So my initial request that you please touch your head may have been fulfilled by some of you but not by others, depending on your degree of cooperativeness.

Described at this level of generality, I take it that audience-sensitivity is just an indisputable linguistic phenomenon, clearly illustrated by this example—and the ones that follow. In recent discussions on contextualism and relativism, however, some have suggested that audience-sensitivity motivates a content relativist version of radical relativism, according to which a sentence as said at a context can have different contents with respect to the different perspectives from where it is assessed. This is not so. In order to see why, let me consider two further examples.

When considering recorded messages and the like, Kaplan says:

Donnellan has suggested that if there were typically a significant lag of time between our production of speech and its audition (for example, if sound travelled very very slowly), our language might contain two forms of ‘now:’

one for the time of production, another for the time of audition. (Kaplan 1989, fn. 12)

Suppose that ‘*now_{prod}*’ and ‘*now_{aud}*’ were such, and in particular that ‘*now_{aud}*’ was the form for the time of audition. ‘*now_{aud}*’ would give rise to further cases of audience-sensitivity. Suppose you say ‘it’s raining *now_{aud}*’ to both Anders and Dylan. Intuitively in this use the sentence should be true relative to Anders if it is raining at the time Anders hears it, whereas it should be true relative to Dylan if it is raining at the time Dylan hears it. Given the assumption about the significant lag between production and audition, it may well be that it is indeed raining at the time Anders hears it but not at the time Dylan does—even if, with some imagination, we fill in the details of the case so that both of them occupy the same place at different times (for more detailed related scenarios, see Parsons 2011). So the relevant linguistic item should be intuitively true with respect to Anders but false with respect to Dylan. As features of the different audiences such as the weather conditions at the surroundings at their (different) times of audition are relevant for the truth or falsity of the relevant linguistic item, we have a further possible example of the phenomenon of audience-sensitivity.

Now suppose one uses the notion of the content or “proposition” of a sentence. In that case, one possibility would be to hold that the content or “proposition” assigned to your use of ‘it’s raining *now_{aud}*’ relative to Anders is *that it is raining at the time Anders hears it*, whereas the content or “proposition” assigned to it relative to Dylan is *that it is raining at the time Dylan hears it*.³ But given that your use of the sentence receives a different content or “proposition” with respect to the different audiences, doesn’t this amount precisely to a case of content (radical) relativism? Isn’t this a case where a sentence as used in a context has a different content or “proposition” with respect to different perspectives from which it is assessed?

No, it is not. To see why, the crucial element is to pay due attention to the difference between *audience* and *assessment*. Suppose I am assessing your linguistic exchange with Dylan. From my perspective, it is still the case that the content or “proposition” assigned to your use of the sentence with respect to Dylan’s concerns *Dylan’s* time of audition, not *my time* of assessment. One can assess a linguistic exchange that has somebody else as the relevant audience. Features of that audience may be relevant for truth, if the case exhibits audience-sensitivity, as opposed to features of the assessor, as radical relativism would have it.

(Of course one can *also* assess a linguistic exchange that has *oneself* as the relevant audience. For suppose I am Anders. I would then assess the linguistic exchange with respect to me and the one with respect to Dylan in different ways, precisely in virtue of me and Dylan being different audiences of your use of the sentence, and even if I am the same assessor of both. Again: audience-sensitivity

³ Alternatively, one could hold that the content or “proposition” of your use of that sentence is the same to both Anders and Dylan, but it receives a different truth-value relative to the different circumstances of evaluation that include the different relevant features of the different auditions. For some misgivings regarding this alternative, see Egan (2009) and Parsons (2011).

without assessment-sensitivity—sensitivity to features of the perspective of assessment.)

The same seems to be true of Egan's example with 'you' as it is actually used in English, in cases like the one with which I began to motivate the existence of the phenomenon.

Horton produces a billboard on which is written the sentence, 'Jesus loves you.' ... So when Frank reads the billboard, 'you' picks out Frank, and when Daniel reads the billboard a bit later, 'you' picks out Daniel.

... Here is another case—a secular one, this time—of the same sort of phenomenon in spoken language: Tony Robbins says, in the course of a motivational seminar, 'You can take control of your life!' Suppose Frank and Daniel are both in attendance at the seminar. Once again, the natural thing to say is that what's conveyed to Frank is the singular proposition about Frank, and what's conveyed to Daniel is the singular proposition about Daniel. (Egan 2009, pp. 259 & 264)

As Egan himself observes later on, he is not arguing in favor of a content relativist version of radical relativism:

the sort of audience sensitivity that occurs here is different from the sort of assessment sensitivity MacFarlane discusses (Egan 2009, fn 29).

In effect: if 'you' were perspective-sensitive, and if I were to assess the complex linguistic exchange between Horton *and Frank*, the relevant factor would be whether Jesus loved *me*, not Frank. But it is not.

On the basis of similar examples, Parsons (2011) has recently contended that they establish the coherence, and indeed the plausibility, of the view that English contains "assessment-contextual indexicals"—expressions that would give rise to a content (radical) relativism in virtue of having different contents with respect to different perspectives or "contexts of assessment". It turns out, however, that this is due to Parsons' adopting MacFarlane's labels concerning '*assessment*' in a non-standard way—precisely for issues having to do with *audience*-sensitivity. This conflation is already present in his opening paragraph (and throughout the paper):

Traditionally, it has been supposed that each utterance of a natural language sentence expresses just one proposition—the same proposition to each person who *hears* it—and each proposition has just one truth value. Some recent work in the philosophy of language casts doubt on these assumptions. It has been suggested both that *assessment* (and not just utterance) makes a contribution to context (so that one utterance may express different propositions to different *hearers*) and that truth may be *assessment* relative (so that one proposition may have different truth values for different *hearers*) (Parsons 2011, 1, my emphases)

The paper contains an excellent discussion of *audience*-sensitivity, in my view. But as a result of this conflation between audience and assessment, it fails to engage appropriately with current debates about *assessment*-sensitivity—and in particular

the contention that the examples vindicate the coherence and indeed the plausibility of content (radical) relativism remains unsubstantiated.⁴

2 Contexts for Audience-Sensitivity

2.1 Extended Contexts as Locations

As we have seen, Egan is clear in acknowledging the fact that audience-sensitivity does not motivate a content relativist version of radical relativism—of the sort discussed (if not favored) by MacFarlane. According to Egan, however, the phenomenon motivates at least a refinement of the characteristic moderate contention that features *of a single context* determine the appropriate truth-value of the sentence. Audience-sensitivity, according to him, motivates the supplementation of the *speaker's* positional context by what he calls the *audience's* positional context.

The main reason for this, if I understand him correctly, is that according to him the notion of context as introduced by Lewis is “positional” in a sense that, Egan contends, by being centered on the speaker, does not determine the relevant features of the different audiences. So far I have been deliberately unspecific in making statements of the kind that audience-sensitivity occurs when features of the audience are relevant for the truth or falsity, satisfaction or non-satisfaction, etc., “*of the relevant linguistic item*”—so that, to the extent different people can be audiences “*of the production of a token of a given sentence*”, one’s “*use of a sentence*” could have different truth-values with respect to different audiences. According to Egan, however, in the presence of such audience-sensitivity, it turns out *not* to be the case that a sentence *and a context* (“of use”) determine the appropriate truth-value, given the way the notion of *context* has been introduced.⁵

Hence, according to Egan, the phenomenon of audience-sensitivity motivates at least a refinement of the characteristic moderate contention that features *of a single context* (“of use”) determine the appropriate truth-value of the sentence, motivating either a refinement of the notion of context involved or a refinement of the

⁴ Cappelen (2008) calls ‘content relativism’ a view according to which the content or “proposition” assigned to a sentence at a context (of utterance) varies between *contexts of interpretation*, where “a context of interpretation is just what you would think it is: a context from which an utterance is interpreted” (Cappelen 2008, fn. 8). It is not clear whether the “interpretation” alluded to here is the mechanism involved in the presence of audience-sensitive expression or that involving perspectives from which assessment takes place, which would exhibit a content relativist version of radical relativism, in the terms adopted here.

⁵ In such a situation (and if the notion of content or “proposition” is in place), one could use ‘utterance’ for something individuated at the level of sentences in context, and contend that one single utterance has different contents or “propositions” with respect to various audiences; or one could use ‘utterance’ for something at the level of sentences in context with respect to audiences, and contend that sentences in context are “utterance-bombs”, giving rise to different utterances with respect to different audiences, each expressing one single content or “proposition”. It is not clear to me that there is much of substance between these alternative terminological decisions—Egan himself seems partially sympathetic, see (Egan 2009, 270).

contention itself—and he offers some considerations in favor of the latter (see below).

In my view, the original notion of a context as introduced by Lewis is already rich enough to allow for the accommodation of the phenomenon of audience-sensitivity, so that no such refinements are required.

The key observation is that a *context*, as introduced by Lewis, is a particular *location*—a spatiotemporal region of a possible world—where a sentence could be said. In the kind of case under consideration, where a speaker could use a sentence with respect to different audiences, there will be *different*, partially overlapping *extended* locations where such a sentence could be said, and hence different, partially overlapping (Lewisian) contexts—sharing the speaker’s end and differing in the different audience’s ends, as it were.

2.2 The Lewisian Argument for Contexts as Locations

Although Egan seems to be willing to adopt this Lewisian notion of a context, he seems to add restrictions to it, which may be responsible for the impression that some refinement is needed. In the remainder of this note, I will argue that Egan’s restrictions are in tension with Lewis’s argument for his introduction of contexts as particular locations. If I am right, this would not only settle the partly exegetical question—as to whether *Lewis’s* notion of context is restricted in the way Egan envisages—but also the more substantive issue concerning the good standing of the characteristic moderate contention itself (once again, that features of a *single context* (“of use”) determine the appropriate truth-value of the sentence) in view of the phenomenon of audience-sensitivity. For, I will argue, if the Lewisian argument for the introduction of contexts as locations is correct, then the notion of context as location is indeed unrestricted, allowing for possibly partially overlapping contexts, and capable of accommodating audience-sensitivity in the moderate framework without refinement. And if, on the other hand, one had misgivings about this argument, then an alternative conception of contexts—as *tuples* of features that include those relevant for truth—would become available. And under this alternative conception, for the kind of case under consideration, clearly there could be different contexts as tuples, sharing the relevant parameters for the speaker, and differing in the relevant parameters for the different audiences—capable again of accommodating audience-sensitivity in the moderate framework without refinement.⁶

⁶ This alternative view of contexts as *tuples* of features is often associated with Kaplan. I tend to agree with Lewis (1980), however, that Kaplan’s contexts are, in fact, particular *locations*—see for instance what Kaplan says in ‘Afterthoughts:’

we should say that context *provides* whatever parameters are needed. [Footnote: This, rather than saying that context *is* the needed parameter, which seems more natural for the pretheoretical notion of a *context of use*, in which each parameter has an interpretation as a natural feature of a certain region of the world.] (p. 591, emphases in the original).

And, so far as I can tell, this interpretation seems to be, in any case, at least *consistent* with the formal system in “Demonstratives” (p. 543). For further discussion, see López de Sa (MS).

This is how Egan introduces contexts, by reference to Lewis (my emphases):

What's a *context*, exactly? One very natural thing to say is that "a context is a location—time, place, and possible world—where a sentence is said..." (Lewis 1980, p. 21). On this sort of picture, a context is something like a potential *point of origin* for an utterance—it's a position or situation in which an utterance does or could (in some suitably extended sense of 'could') occur. What we want a context to do is fix the semantically relevant properties *of the speaker*, or *of the speaker's* particular situation, position, or predicament. (Egan 2009, p. 252).

However, all the restrictions on the speaker and the origin of the particular linguistic exchange involving the relevant sentence seem absent in Lewis (1980). And for good reason. As I mentioned, the argument why we need contexts as locations is, in sum, this:

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.

Thus, as emphasized above, this Lewisian motivation for the introduction of contexts as locations is precisely that, so conceived, he holds, we have the *guarantee* that *whichever* feature turns out to be relevant for truth, the character of the contexts will be implicitly codifying it, as it were.

Whenever a sentence is said, it is said at some particular time, place, and world. The production of a token is located, both in physical space–time and in logical space. I call such a location a context.

That is not to say that the only features of context are time, place, and world. There are countless other features, but they do not vary independently. They are given by the intrinsic and relational character of the time, place, and world in question. The speaker of the context is the one who is speaking at that time, at that place, at that world. (There may be none; not every context is a context of utterance. I here ignore the possibility that more than one speaker might be speaking at the same time, place, and world.)⁷ The audience, the standards of precision, the salience relations, the presuppositions... of the context are given less directly. (Lewis 1980, pp. 28–29)

The features of locations that might turn out to be relevant for truth are indeed extremely variegated, and it is very implausible that one can identify them all, prior to inquiry—in any case, otherwise we could just list them all in appropriately rich indices, and then contexts as locations would not be needed (more on this below). Here are some examples by Lewis himself:

truth-in-English depends not only on what words are said and on the facts, but also on features of the situation in which the words are said. The dependence is surprisingly multifarious. If the words are 'Now I am hungry.' then some

⁷ If such a collocation of people were ultimately intelligible, that could indeed motivate a refinement of the notion of contexts: see Liao (2012) for a discussion.

facts about who is hungry when matter, but also it matters when the speech occurs and who is speaking. If the words are ‘France is hexagonal.’ of course the shape of France matters, but so do the aspects of previous discourse that raise or lower the standards of precision. Truth-in-English has been achieved if the last thing said before was ‘Italy is sort of boot-shaped.’ but not if the last thing said before was ‘Shapes in geometry are ever so much simpler than shapes in geography.’ If the words are ‘That one costs too much.’ of course the prices of certain things matter, and it matters which things are traversed by the line projected from the speaker’s pointing finger, but also the relations of comparative salience among these things matter. These relations in turn depend on various aspects of the situation, especially the previous discourse. If the words are ‘Fred came floating up through the hatch of the spaceship and turned left.’, then it matters what point of reference and what orientation we have established. Beware: these are established in a complicated way... They need not be the location and orientation of the speaker, or of the audience, or of Fred, either now or at the time under discussion. (Lewis 1980, 28)

Now, what the phenomenon of audience-sensitivity in examples like ours shows is a further way in which truth can depend on features of the audience—when various audiences exist in connection with the same linguistic token in the envisaged manner. Contexts as locations are introduced in virtue of having a nature that is rich enough to encode whichever feature turns out to be relevant for truth—and audience-sensitivity shows how some features of the audience turn out to be relevant for truth. So contexts as locations should encode those features, in such situations. And they *do* encode those features—in such situations, in virtue of there being different (large enough) partially overlapping locations, sharing the speaker and production end, and differing in the audiences and consumption ends, as we saw. Contexts as locations are introduced by Lewis in virtue of their claimed capacity to accommodate whichever phenomenon happens to exist, such as audience-sensitivity. So if there is audience-sensitivity, contexts as locations as introduced by Lewis should be in a position to accommodate it. And on the face of it, they *do*.

2.3 “Positional” Contexts as Locations

Egan considers such a position in a couple of occasions, acknowledging discussion with Carrie Jenkins. However, the reasons why he dismisses it are not clear to me:

If we make the locations *larger* than the speaker, we’re no longer working with a notion of context that’s *positional* in the intended sense. What makes a theory positional in the relevant sense isn’t just that its contexts make reference to some position, but that they be well-suited to capture the thought that a context is a potential point of origin for an utterance. (Egan 2009, p. 260, fn. 12)

Now two senses of a context being “positional” could be intended here. On one reading, contexts being “positional” means precisely that they are particular

locations where a sentence could be said—of such a rich nature that its character implicitly encodes whichever features may turn out to be relevant for truth. In this sense, contexts should be “positional”—and indeed they *are* “positional”: well-suited to capture the thought that a context *involves* a potential point of origin for an utterance, even if pairs of contexts may differ afterwards, *involving* different potential points of destination for an utterance, to follow Egan’s picture, in cases like ours that involve sensitivity to audiences.

In another, contrasting sense, “positional” could be used *restrictively* for contexts that are “speaker-only” centered—thus disqualifying the overlapping locations that we are considering, which account for audience-sensitivity. These considered contexts would not be “positional”, in this restricted sense. But, as I have been arguing, contexts as locations as introduced by Lewis are not required to be “positional”, in this restricted sense—and their introduction is motivated by an argument that actually *requires* them *not* to be “positional” in this restricted sense.

2.4 Alternative Contexts as Tuples

I am myself sympathetic to this argument of Lewis’s for his contexts as locations—we are unlikely to think of all the features that might turn out to be relevant for truth, and hence unlikely to construct adequately rich tuples thereof.⁸ But *suppose* that this were wrong; then we *would* be in a position to construct adequately rich tuples of the features that are relevant for truth. *Contexts as tuples* would just be included in these adequately rich indices—there would be no need for additional contexts as locations. Audience-sensitivity shows a way in which truth can depend on features of the audience—when various audiences exist in connection with the same linguistic token in the envisaged manner. So, under our supposition, these would just be parameters present in the adequately rich indices. (It is quite unlikely that we can think of all such cases in advance, Lewis would say, but never mind that—the current supposition is precisely that we *do*.) Then there will be different contexts as tuples, sharing the relevant parameters for the speaker, and differing in the relevant parameters for the different audiences. Different audiences, different contexts as tuples. But precisely for this reason, this alternative conception for contexts is again also capable of accommodating audience-sensitivity in the moderate framework without refinement: features *of a single context* determine the appropriate truth-value of the sentence.⁹

⁸ Actually, in my view this is one of the key—if perhaps underappreciated—lessons of his paper. For further discussion, see López de Sa (MS).

⁹ Notice that these contexts as tuples are not “positional” in either of the possible senses discussed: they are not particular locations, and they are not “speaker only”-centered in a way that excludes audience-sensitivity. Like the candidates Egan himself considers of refined, non-positional contexts, this conception respects the moderate contention that *single* contexts are involved. But furthermore, it also exhibits the feature that Egan claims in favor of his own alternative, involving *two* contexts as locations restricted to speaker and audience—namely, that “we can, for example, more easily isolate the different contributions made by the properties of the audience’s situation, and those made by the properties of the speaker’s” (Egan 2009, 273).

3 Conclusion

Audience-sensitivity is present when features of different audiences are relevant for the truth or otherwise of different linguistic exchanges with respect to them involving a single linguistic item in the envisaged way. *Assessors* of linguistic exchanges need not be the *audiences* of the exchanges they are assessing—hence audience-sensitivity does not motivate a content relativist version of radical relativism. Contexts as locations where a sentence could be said can partially overlap, sharing the speaker’s end but differing in the different audience ends in such cases—hence audience-sensitivity can be accommodated as a further way of the dependence of truth on contexts as locations. Audience-sensitivity does not motivate *rejection* of the characteristically moderate contention—that features of a single *context* (as opposed to *perspective*) determine the appropriate truth-value of sentences. Nor does it motivate *refinement* of the characteristically moderate contention that features of a *single* (as opposed to *double*) context determine the appropriate truth-value of sentences. Insofar as audience-sensitivity is concerned, everything looks good for moderation.

Acknowledgments Thanks to audiences in Barcelona, Buenos Aires, and Paris, and to Manuel García-Carpintero, Dirk Kindermann, John MacFarlane, Eleonora Orlando, François Recanatí, Elia Zardini, and, specially, Andy Egan. Thanks also to Michael Maudsley for the grammatical revision. Research has been partially funded by FFI2008-06153, FFI2012-35026, and CSD2009-0056 (Gobierno de España), 2009SGR-1077 (Generalitat de Catalunya), and ITN FP7-238128 (European Community).

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