Affecting meaning: Subjectivity and evaluativity in gradable adjectives
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Chapter 3
Theories on gradability and on PPTs

Our research question is crossed by two orthogonal debates. On the one hand, there is the discussion of how to model adjectival gradability. In section 3.1 we consider two central positions: degree-based vs. delineation-based approaches. On the other hand, there is the debate on how to model the subjectivity of predicates of personal taste (PPTs, for short). In section 3.2 we examine some of the main approaches: contextualism, relativism, absolutism and expressivism. In section 3.3 we give a more comprehensive philosophical argument for why the semantic approaches to gradability and to PPTs reviewed here are not best suited to accommodate subjectivity. When subjectivity is conceived as judge-dependence, one loses grip on intersubjective understanding. Subjectivity is profiled under a truth-conditional approach to natural language meaning becomes objectivised.

3.1 Main approaches to gradability

Semanticists have proposed different theories concerning gradability in the adjectival domain and beyond. We start with a few interesting observations of early works in the semantics of gradable adjectives in subsection 3.1.1. Then we focus on the main conceptual features of two dominant trends, and on examples of how they propose to handle PPTs. We sketch the core of degree-based accounts in subsection 3.1.2 and of delineation-based accounts in subsection 3.1.3 and we offer critical observations on how each of these perspectives purports to handle subjectivity. Some of our observations are specific for each of these approaches, others are common to both.

1The arguments against the degree-based view had their first elaboration in Crespo 2010.
2Gradability is actually a broader phenomenon going beyond the adjectival domain.
3These are not the only semantic approaches to gradability, of course. See for instance a trope-based approach in Moltmann 2009 and a probabilistic approach in Egré 2011, Egré and Barberousse 2014, and Lassiter 2011. We do not include them in the review offered in this chapter only for reasons of space.
3.1.1 Early works

Our goal is not to give an exhaustive genealogy of adjectival gradability in semantics, but just to give a short reference to a few observations from early works that are relevant for the issues we will discuss later on.

In his seminal work on grading in semantics, Sapir claims that “grading as a psychological process [...] precedes measurement and counting [...] [J]udgments of quantity in terms of units of measure or in terms of number always presuppose, explicitly or implicitly, preliminary judgments of grading.” In this sense, he can be seen as standing against those claiming that gradable adjectives denote measure functions.

Interestingly as well, Sapir relates grading to directionality that has an impact on a “latent affect of approval or disapproval” that certain grading items bring with them, where, e.g., a few is thought to have a disapproval ring due to its downward directionality, whereas an expression like more than comes with an approval ring due to its upward directionality. This seems to relate to the idea of evaluativity as valence in attitude we referred to in chapter 2, subsection 2.2.3.

A basic distinction made by Cruse that will come to be relevant for PPTs later on in this chapter is that between propositional and expressive meaning. Example (1) is given to make this contrast clear.

(1) a. I just felt a sudden sharp pain.
   b. Ouch!

Case (1-a) illustrates what Cruse calls propositional meaning which determines truth-conditions while case (1-b) does not. While these two semantic modes may co-occur, for instance in Arthur has lost the blasted key as opposed to Arthur has lost the key, expressive meaning does not play a role in determining a statement’s truth-conditions. A similar claim will be made by expressivist positions on PPTs presented in subsection 3.2.4 below.

We now turn our attention to two different approaches to gradability: degree-based and delineation-based. The first of this claims, contra Sapir, that measurement is the very backbone of gradability.

\[\text{\[Sapir\ 1944\], p. 93.}\]
\[\text{\[Sapir\ 1944\], p. 108.}\]
\[\text{\[From Cruse\ 1986\], p. 271.}\]
\[\text{\[Partly due to the non-displaceability of expressive meaning. In Cruse’s own words, a “characteristic distinguishing expressive meaning from propositional meaning is that it is valid only for the utterer, at the time and place of utterance. This limitation it shares with, for instance, a smile, a frown, a gesture of impatience.” (Cruse\ 1986, p. 272) This explains why an example like (1-b) cannot (outside of direct quotation) be used to report on past events, attitudes, or conjectures.}\]

\[\text{\[An adjective like blasted is also known as an expressive, usually grouped with epithets, interjections, derogatory words, etc. We will say more about expressives and their relation to PPTs in subsection 3.2.4 below.}\]
3.1. Main approaches to gradability

3.1.2 Degree-based approaches

“Measure what is measurable, and make measurable what is not so.”

Galileo Galilei

Degree-based views have become widely popular in linguistics, and a variety of theories has been developed in the literature. Here we present a relatively standard sample theory, where details concerning, e.g., syntax and contrasts between absolute vs. relative gradable adjectives will be put aside for these will not be crucial for the purposes of our discussion.

Degree-based approaches analyse gradable adjectives as relations between individuals in a domain and degrees. Degrees are abstract representations of measurements of a property, which come organised in ordered sets called scales. All degrees on the same scale can be compared. For instance, an adjective like tall is associated with the scale of degrees ordered with respect to the dimension of height, so that tall(x) measures the degree to which x possesses the property of tallness. The truth conditions of sentences involving gradable adjectives are stated in terms of degrees. In the case of the comparative form, e.g., Alf is taller than Bea, we compare measures of particular objects. In the positive form, e.g., Alf is tall, we compare our measurement of Alf’s height with a standard provided by a comparison class, a set of people whose height we compare to Alf’s. This standard is thought to give a cut-off point in the denotation of the adjective tall, a crisp limit between its extension and its antiextension.

In recent formulations of this view, gradable adjectives denote measure func-

9Early works putting forward this view are found, for instance, in Bartsch and Vennemann [1975]. They took gradable adjectives to denote measure functions which determine the degree of the manifestation of a property in a given individual with reference to an average value provided by a comparison class. A sentence like Alf is tall amounts to the assertion that Alf is (significantly) taller than an average height set by context. A comparative sentence like Alf is taller than Bea is true if and only if the degree to which Alf is tall is greater than the degree to which Bea is tall. This simple approach quickly runs into trouble, for instance, when you consider a set of sticks whose height is not uniformly distributed. Suppose most sticks are short, and only one is very long. After you take the average, you would then be forced to say that some of the clearly short sticks are in the extension of tall. Cresswell [1976] also offers a degree-based theory, but constructs degrees from equivalence classes of individuals rather than from abstract measurements. For instance, the degree to which Alf is tall is given by the equivalence class consisting of all things which are neither less tall nor more tall than Alf. Cresswell assumes that the positive form contains a null degree morpheme pos (for “positive form”) whose function is to relate the degree argument of the adjective to a contextually given standard of comparison. So actually the positive form is a covert comparative and the comparative form is basic. Other early analyses of gradability in terms of scales are found in Horn [1972], Seuren [1973], Gazdar [1979], von Stechow [1984], Heim [1985]. We do not review them here for reasons of space and because we focus on a few core ideas in this approach rather than on the subtleties of different formalisations.

10The core of this view can be identified with von Stechow [1984] and Heim [1985]. Nowadays it is most often associated with the more recent formulations in Kennedy and McNally [2005] and Kennedy [2007].
tions determining the degree of the manifestation of a property in a given individual. A scale is given by a set of degrees defining a dimension which is provided by the lexical semantics of the adjective. Measure functions are converted into properties of individuals by degree morphology. The positive form is actually a concealed comparative: roughly, the meaning of *Alf is tall* requires that we relate the degree argument of the adjective as applied to Alf to an appropriate standard of comparison set by the comparison class to which Alf belongs. Basically, the idea is this: *Alf is tall for a Dutch man* is true iff $\text{degree}(\text{tall})(\text{Alf}) > \text{standard}(\text{tall})(\text{Dutch men})$. Important for us is that for this view, relative gradable adjectives (RGAs hereafter) associate with open scales (i.e., scales which do not include their endpoints) and the standard is contextually set, meaning that they are not easily retrievable out of context as the standard for saying that, e.g., a door is closed.\(^{11}\) Comparative degree modifiers like *more, less, as* simply compare the ordering of two or more degrees: whether one is above, below, or equally situated in the scale.

\(^{11}\)Lots of the leverage of degree-based views like those in [Kennedy and McNally 2005] and [Kennedy 2007] reside in the idea that delineation-based accounts of gradability as we shall see in the next subsection are ill-suited to achieve an encompassing theory covering both relative and absolute gradable adjectives. Note that delineation-based views developed by [Van Rooij 2011b] and [Burnett 2012] address precisely of this problem, thus showing that the choice over a degree- vs. a delineation-based view on gradability should not be based on this idea. [Kennedy and McNally 2005] argue that the difference between relative and absolute gradable adjectives is due to the interaction between the kind of scale underlying the adjective and the kind of standard. RGAs associate with open scales and the standard is contextually set. Absolute ones associate with with upper, lower-, or totally closed scales, and standards are usually given by minimal or maximal scale values. Standards are minimal when truthful applications of the adjective entails having the property in question to a minimal degree, as in the case of *wet* (e.g., a towel is wet iff it is minimally wet), and they are maximal when the corresponding entailments are maximal, as for *dry* (e.g., a towel is dry iff it is maximally dry). Evidence for this typology partly comes from the distribution of adverbs such as *slightly, completely, perfectly, almost, etc.*, which select different points on the scale. See mainly [Rotstein and Winter 2004]. But as [McNally 2011] observes, this account makes little room for uses of absolute adjectives in which context seems to take precedence over the nature of the underlying scales. For instance, we say that a glass of wine is full even if it is not filled to its maximal capacity. So even if the underlying scale of *full* is closed, we need not always require that a wine is completely full in order for it to be considered full. McNally thus proposes to account for the relative vs. absolute distinction by inquiring into the nature of the properties that adjectives. Taking up rule- vs. similarity-based classification from [Hahn and Chater 1998], She argues that absolute gradable adjectives denote properties which are established on the basis of a rule. In rule-based classification, we require a strict matching of specific criteria and the relevant properties of the object. This is different from classification by similarity, where only a partial matching of our representation of the properties of two individuals. RGAs involve this kind of classification. These different classification strategies are responsible for the difference in inferences and acceptable patterns we see for relative vs. absolute gradable adjective. It is remarkable how McNally’s idea of absolute gradable adjectives resembles [Bierwisch 1989]’s characterisation of evaluative adjectives. However, McNally does not explicitly endorse Bierwisch, so it is actually an open question whether she would see a difference between Bierwisch’s idea of how *lazy vs. industrious* work and how McNally considers that *full vs. empty* work.
3.1. Main approaches to gradability

As advanced in chapter Bierwisch [1989] suggests that RGAs can be further divided into two subclasses: dimensional and evaluative gradable adjectives. Here we put the typology in the context of the degree-based view underlying this distinction. For Bierwisch, this typology basically relates to differences in how dimensional and evaluative adjectives refer to their underlying scales. For dimensional adjectives like *long vs. short*, *young vs. old*, *heavy vs. light*, members in these pairs operate on the same scale, so that antonymous pairs of adjectives like *long vs. short* are seen as duals on a single scale. Evaluative adjectives like *industrious vs. lazy*, *pretty vs. ugly*, however, are not associated with a scale and do not have units of measurement. Antonyms are not duals, for when we say that someone is lazy, we do not mean that this person has a certain degree of industriousness. So one can derive that *A is more industrious than B* implies that *A and B are industrious*. Bierwisch claims that evaluative adjectives are underlyingly not gradable, though they can used as gradable by forming degrees through equivalence relations given by the indistinguishability of two elements regarding how they instantiate the property of, e.g., industriousness. Dimensional adjectives can have a secondary interpretation as evaluative adjectives. This alleged polysemy of some dimensionals becomes prominent in how Kennedy [2013] deploys Bierwisch’s typology to account for the subjectivity of GAs.

According to Kennedy [2013], faultless disagreements and embeddings under *find* are diagnostics of actually two forms of subjectivity. Both dimensionals and evaluatives can lead to faultless disagreement in positive form. However, comparative forms of dimensional adjectives do not give rise to faultless disagreement, according to him. Example (2-b) below leads to faultless disagreement only if *cold* is interpreted evaluatively, not if interpreted dimensionally. In example (2-a) there is faultless disagreement because *tasty* only has an evaluative interpretation.

\[(2) \quad \begin{align*}
\text{a. Anna: The tripe is tastier than the haggis.} \\
\text{Beatrice: No, the haggis is tastier than the tripe.} \\
\text{b. Anna: The tripe is colder than the haggis.} \\
\text{Beatrice: No, the haggis is colder than the tripe.}
\end{align*}\]

Meanwhile, according to Kennedy, *find* only selects evaluative adjectives. Example (3-b) is slightly off and example (3-c) definitively off if the adjectives are interpreted as dimensionals, but they are fine if interpreted as evaluatives:

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12 One might also think that lazy, industrious belong to a third class in between relative and absolute gradable adjectives. (Sassoon, p.c.)
13 Gradability is thus achieved via degrees much as Cresswell conceives of them (cf., fn. 9).
14 Cf., Bierwisch [1989], sec. 10.3.
15 Note that here we speak of polysemy but this is actually how Bierwisch’s view has been interpreted by Kennedy. We are aware of the fact that not every linguist will agree on this being a case of polysemy. Here we are simply reconstructing others’ views, not really endorsing them. See further discussion in fn. 68 in chapter
16 Other accounts of PPTs also adopt degrees, see subsection 3.2.1.
Chapter 3. Theories on gradability and on PPTs

(3) a. Anna finds her bowl of pasta tasty/delicious/disgusting.
    b. Anna finds her bowl of pasta big/large/small/cold.
    c. Anna finds the tripe colder than the haggis.

Kennedy assimilates Bierwisch’s typology to the quantitative vs. qualitative distinction.\(^{17}\) When an adjective is evaluative, it is subjective because it concerns the assessments of an object’s qualities, a measurement which is judge-dependent. In this case, the truth of an assessment hinges upon whose opinion counts. This form of subjectivity is tied to the lexical semantics of PPTs: for Kennedy, evaluative adjectives require saturation by an individual-denoting expression (the name representing the judge) corresponding to the source of subjective assessment. A dimensional adjective concerns quantitative measurements of an object’s property. This second form of subjectivity is due to the uncertainty concerning where a cut-off point may lie in a context. While dimensional adjectives like *rich* or *tall* only express a quantitative measurement, PPTs are evaluative, and other gradable adjectives like *hot*, *heavy*, *salty*, *sweet* are polysemous between an evaluative as well as a dimensional meaning. This is why we can embed them under *find*.

For Kennedy, faultless disagreement is a widespread pragmatic phenomenon related to vagueness. It can occur with lots of gradable adjectives, and not only with judge-dependent ones. Faultless disagreements with judge-independent gradable adjectives like *heavy*, *hot*, *expensive* in their dimensional sense can occur because we may agree on the relevant comparison class but still disagree about whether, e.g., Mary is rich, if we have different standards for what counts as rich, i.e., if we draw the line differently. In such case, “what is uncertain is a particular feature of the discourse: the precise value of the standard of comparison relative to which the extension of a vague predicate is determined.”\(^{18}\) In the case of evaluative adjectives like PPTs or like *heavy*, *hot*, *expensive* in their evaluative sense, faultlessness in a disagreement is due to our uncertainty about which dimensions

\(^{17}\)Kennedy draws from his earlier work on colour adjectives in Kennedy and McNally [2010]. There they introduce the quantitative vs. qualitative distinction as a way to structure the ambiguity of colour terms they argue for, against Travis [1997] (although he already develops his argument in earlier works). In this dissertation we leave colour adjectives aside, despite the fact that one would think that colour words and other terms related to what modern philosophers called secondary qualities are natural candidates for subjectivity as in the case of PPTs. The first reason for this has to do with space. Semantic discussions around the case of colour adjectives are a debate of its own, and including it here in a fair manner is unfeasible. The second reason has to do with the discussion concerning whether colour terms pair up with absolute rather than with relative gradable adjectives. We would have to take a position in this debate, we believe, before deciding whether to include them here, given that we have chosen to put absolute gradable adjectives aside in our present investigations. Third, there are philosophical reasons to believe that colour words and other terms related to secondary qualities are not entirely similar to PPTs, given that for instance one can claim, e.g., *Alf’s shoes are brown* on the basis of testimony, of someone else’s report, whereas the same cannot be done for taste judgements like, e.g., *This cake is tasty* (see, e.g., Ginsborg [1998]).

\(^{18}\)Kennedy [2013], p. 20/25.
are part of the qualitative assessment and how they are weighted.

Another way to put this is the following. If you think of the dimensional vs. evaluative distinction as a matter of what measure functions depend on, you may think of dimensional gradable adjectives as projecting an objective scale, with a world-based ordering, while evaluative ones project a subjective scale, with an agent-based ordering.\(^{19}\) A general description of the two sources of subjectivity can be glossed as follows:\(^{20}\) there may be subjectivity regarding standards, discussed already by Fara \cite{Fara2000} and Richard \cite{Richard2004} concerning dimensional adjectives like rich or expensive, but on top of that you can also identify mapping subjectivity, when you consider that measure functions as those associated to PPTs like tasty are agent-based. A faultless disagreement may arise with standards subjectivity and with mappings subjectivity. Embeddings under find require mapping subjectivity, which amounts to people having each their own measure function.

Although Kennedy does not consider explicitly the seeming contradiction in example \cite{Kennedy2017} in chapter 2 subsection 2.3.3 (repeated below in \cite{Kennedy2017}), and how it contrasts when the PPT is replaced with a gradable adjective like heavy (see example \cite{Kennedy2017}), one could speculate what his analysis would be.

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Alf: This is tasty but I don’t find it tasty.}\label{na}
\item \begin{enumerate}
\item The box is not heavier than the suitcase but I find it heavier.
\item This pastry is sweet but I don’t find it sweet.
\end{enumerate}
\end{enumerate}

A possible explanation of the contradiction in \cite{Kennedy2017} would be that when \textit{This is tasty} takes the speaker as the source of the qualitative judgement, it cannot be followed by \textit{but I don’t find it tasty}. The acceptability of the examples in \cite{Kennedy2017} would be given by the polysemy of \textit{heavy}, \textit{sweet}. The first half of the sentence is interpreted dimensionally, so that the adjective denotes a measure function that maps its argument onto a degree that represents a quantity (weight, salt), in the second half the adjective is used in its evaluative meaning, as a “subjective measure function” which maps its argument onto a degree that represents the quality the object according to the judge provided by the matrix subject.

Let us now offer a few critical remarks concerning how subjectivity can find a place in the degree-based approach. Degree-based theories make sense of the positive form by postulating the existence, for every gradable adjective, of a standard or cut-off point. As the positive form \textit{long} denotes the property of having a degree of length that is at least as great as the prevailing, contextually given standard, the positive form \textit{tasty} would be the property of having a degree of tastiness that is at least as great as the speaker’s or assessor’s standard. This is, naturally, the first place where one should start wondering whether this per-

\footnotesize
\(^{19}\)This is suggested by, e.g., Paenen \cite{Paenen2011} and Bylinina \cite{Bylinina2014}.

\(^{20}\)This comes from Fleisher \cite{Fleisher2013}. His own claim is slightly different from Kennedy’s because it does not impute to PPTs only one sort of subjectivity. Fleisher argues that both sorts of subjectivity apply to PPTs.
spective is adequate to encompass the case of PPTs. Does it make sense to say that we judge whether to call something tasty based on a standard\textsuperscript{21} on a line we have drawn, as we may do it when we consider whether to call something long or expensive? Does it make sense to require that, to say This cake is tasty, we have to compare how tasty this cake is with a standard value of what counts as being tasty? We believe it does not.

The semantic function of a cut-off point is to provide a means of separating those objects for which This is tasty is true from those objects for which This is tasty is false. By its account, we can always settle on whether something is the case. The problem is that in this picture, there is a criterion that conditions what we should say next. Even though we may recognise that our past judgements influence to some extent our future decisions as regards what we call tasty, the idea that what we have called tasty in the past would give us a criterion turns taste judgements into something more rational than they are. If we would call tasty only what fits under a given criterion, the spontaneity of what is given to us in new experiences would be barred. We would speak about what we think is tasty and not about what we find tasty. To sincerely call something tasty, it is not a past judgement what we have to look at, but rather how something strikes us right now. In that sense, taste judgements are not comparative in nature, even though it is possible to make comparative judgements regarding taste.

Degree-based theorists often assume that degrees form structures as complex as those of the real numbers. It is rather obvious that we do not have, and would be very difficult to give, a mapping from tastiness to the real numbers.\textsuperscript{22} Which set of numbers represent the degrees of adjectives like happy or beautiful? This indeterminacy threatens the possibility of intersubjective understanding. If agents cannot rely on a determinate scale, if whenever someone utters a taste judgement we are clueless concerning the dimensions at stake or how the judge aggregates measurements, then it seems barely impossible to succeed in communicating when we exchange such utterances. Totality as an underlying assumption also produces other undesirable consequences. We can say of any man whether

\textsuperscript{21}Those who have read Hume\textsuperscript{1757} may wonder whether this notion of standard, and how it applies to tasty, is the same as the standard of taste he discusses. Hume claims that a standard of taste is set by the joint verdict of true judges: “few are qualified to give judgment on any work of art, or establish their own sentiment as the standard of beauty.” (Hume\textsuperscript{1757}, §23) This seems to bring Hume close to an absolutist position, claiming that there is something like true and false judgement in matters of taste. (We will meet such positions below in subsection 3.2.3 when we present absolutist theories concerning the semantics of PPTs.) However, for Hume verdicts of taste concern matters of sentiments, not matters of fact, and are thus devoid of truth-value. In the degree-based account, the standard is precisely the key to deciding the truth or falsity of a judgement, in particular of a judgement of taste.

\textsuperscript{22}This problem, we should note, is not new to semanticists who consider extending the degree-based theory to cover the case of PPTs. Sassoon\textsuperscript{2007} already observed (following here Kamp and Partee\textsuperscript{1995}) that there is much indeterminacy in the mapping of individuals to numbers in a scale, “this is certainly true of predicates like happy. Given the set of real numbers between 0 to 1, why would a certain person have a degree 0.25 rather than say 0.242 in happy?”
he is taller than another one, if we have the technical means and skill to make a measurement. Can we do that regarding any two edible items? Are any two arbitrary edible things comparable? Surely not, try for instance comparing, e.g., roasted chicken with chocolate cakes.

But perhaps Kennedy’s qualitative measurements are not meant to involve such mappings. Scales can be weaker than this, they need not involve demanding total orderings, they can rely on much weaker partial orderings. However, even if in Kennedy’s view the assessment underlying PPTs is qualitative, the measure-theoretic interpretation implies that properly using these adjectives presupposes the ability to perform such measurements. Making measurements presupposes logically and developmentally the ability to make comparisons. This is the root of the problem, that degrees are already conceived as mathematical objects. Plausible as this may be for the case of adjectives like tall or heavy, it is very difficult to see what sort of conventional method of measurement could underlie our assessments of, e.g., tastiness or experienced-heaviness. Such method would have to assign numbers so that relationships of the attributes of things are reflected. But there is no overall agreement on a set of necessary and sufficient properties of tastiness which can be phrased independently of specific experiences. If for some occasion we fix the meaning of various terms, e.g., in a wine glossary, this is always ad hoc.

We have a more general observation concerning the use of degrees and measurement as the basis of a semantics for PPTs, one related to the rule-following considerations. Does it make sense to say that we make subjective or qualitative measurements of, e.g., tastiness? Measurement is a normative practice, being thus at odds with an idea of measurement which admits a subject-bound variability and an inherent indeterminacy of the mapping from the object’s properties to values on a scale. Now, the subjectivity in the determination of the intensity in which taste (or its constituent dimensions) is qualitatively experienced hinders the stability of the values in the scale, where this stability is essential to there being a mapping in the first place. Furthermore, and more generally, a measurement method which is not stable among subjects (or even, within subjects across time) is no longer a measurement method. If you and I may take a different standard metre every time we make a measurement of length, we would not want to call that measurement at all. We would rather call it: a game of comparing lengths. How could a single individual keep track of his past measurements of taste in order to settle a proportion or a constant necessary for a scale? The judge

\[23\text{See a comprehensive study of the options available in Sassoon 2010, see Van Rooij 2011b for an overview.}\]

\[24\text{For “we can only make sense of degrees once we adopt a system of full-blooded quantitative measurement”, Van Rooij 2011b, p. 16.}\]

\[25\text{Even Bierwisch 1989, a degree-based proponent, explicitly relies on comparison as being at the basis of degrees.}\]

\[26\text{Wittgenstein 1958a, esp. §§139, 141, 142.}\]
would have to retain the outcomes of her estimations in order to induce a scale through which gradation in taste could make sense. However, if memories of the intensity of past appreciations are not kept by relating them to a settled scale, they can change as they are recalled, e.g., if when recalling them we do so by relating them to a new, different scale. The idea that PPTs depends on a subjective measurement procedure is a form of Cartesian internalisation of our method of projection which leads to a conceptual clash with the very idea and possibility of measurement. If the assignment of numbers to reflect relationships of the object’s attributes can change when the object’s attributes remain the same, and it can simply change by virtue of who takes the measurement, then it seems that speaking of measurement does not make much sense in the first place. All this highlights the conceptual untenability of a purely subjective determination or epistemic access to the scale in which taste is measured.

Our last point here relates to the discussion initiated in chapter 2, section 2.3 concerning the alleged polysemy of RGAs having a dimensional and an evaluative sense. The idea that gradable adjectives like heavy, old are polysemous between a dimensional and an evaluative meaning disconnects two aspects of gradable adjectives whose relation one should strive to understand. An account like Kennedy’s that merely postulates two degree functions fails to capture the connection that surely exists. Even though Kennedy might be aware of the connection, his formalism does not represent it. A rule like Checked-in luggage cannot be heavier than 23 kg makes sense by virtue of there being a relation between the quantitative measurement and the qualitative one. Furthermore, it seems really hard to find an RGA which could not be given evaluative meaning. We conclude from this that polysemey should not be deployed as an argument to explain why certain RGAs which are not PPTs pass diagnostics for subjectivity. The delineation-based approach can fair better in this sense, for it does not take measurement to be in the backbone of gradability.

3.1.3 Delineation-based approaches

It has been noted that, from a formal point of view, degree-based semantics and delineation-based ones are basically equivalent (provided they have comparable expressive power) in how they can handle English adjectives. There are, however, linguistic and conceptual motivations for delineations as an alternative approach. An initial one is that degree-based views assume that the comparative form is more basic than the positive form, given that the positive form is a covert

\[\text{Stein [1997], ch. 5, pp. 184-190.}\]

\[\text{See our disclaimers for why we simply call this phenomenon ‘polysemy’. See fn. 68 in ch. 2.}\]

\[\text{Cf., e.g., Lassiter [2011]. But to be fair, one should note that degree-based defendants raise empirical challenges against delineation-based approaches. See for instance Kennedy [1997]’s arguments concerning crosspolar anomaly. However, a delineation-based solution to interadjective comparison is given by Van Rooij [2011c]. We do not delve into these issues.}\]
comparative referring to a standard value. To say that, e.g., *Alf is tall* involves comparing Alf’s height with a standard degree. This is empirically challenged by at least two observations. First, for English and for many other languages, the comparative form is obtained via marking of the positive form, which suggests that taking the comparative to be basic as done in degree-based theories goes amiss. Second, there are languages which are argued to lack degree morphology as the one postulated by degree-based views.

Delineation-based theorists take these lessons as the starting point for an arguably more adequate approach. According to this view, gradability has to do essentially with context-sensitivity and not with measure functions being the denotation of adjectives like *long*, *heavy*, *tasty*. For this perspective, gradable adjectives behave like just any other predicate insofar as their application determines whether an object is in the adjective’s (anti)extension. However, their extension is crucially context-dependent. Gradable adjectives are evaluated with respect to comparison classes. The extension of a gradable adjective changes depending on the comparison class one picks. The label for this approach is derived from the fact that the context delineates the extension, anti-extension, and extension gap of gradable adjectives. What we do in conversation is to, little by little, make the meaning of these terms more precise by eliminating elements from the gap, make a sharper delineation of the domain. Note that this approach is eliminative, in the sense that every refinement of a context it smaller than the initial context where the gap was bigger.

This approach started out as a means to tackle phenomena related with vagueness. The supervaluational view proposed that gradable adjectives are defined as interpretation functions relative to a context. The truth of a judgement like *Alf is tall* depends on the completions consistent with the information in a given context. While each completion is a classical context wherein every statement is either true or false, it is undetermined or uncertain what the actual cut-off point for English is. In this way, GAs in the positive form simply denote an extension, like any other adjective, but where the extension depends on a world-dependent cut-off point. A comparative statement *Alf is taller than Bea* is true when the

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30 As noted in Kamp [1975] and Klein [1980].
31 See Bochnak [2013]'s observations about gradation structures in Washo.
32 This view is first suggested in Kamp [1975] and developed in Klein [1980]. It has been further developed by Van Benthem [1982], Van Rooij [2011b], Doetjes et al. [2011], and Burnett [2012].
33 The approach we shall develop in chapter 6 will pair with delineation based views in some respects, but it will not be eliminative in this sense.
35 Actually, gradable adjectives in the positive form are associated with sets of such extensions (one for each completion/comparison class). The idea is that we are always in partial contexts so we always carry with us a set of completions and no single complete extension. But one can see that such uncertainty regarding which completions out of this set is, for all practical purposes, bracketed out until the completion that we defeasibly picked as the relevant one for a context is shown to be inadequate.
set of worlds in which Alf is tall is a proper superset of the set of worlds in which Bea is tall. This proposal crucially relies on a meaning postulate which assumes totality: every two individuals are comparable with respect to a given adjective. In a way, this assumption makes the comparative basic with respect to the positive, for one can never say that, e.g., a man is tall if there is no other man that is either taller or shorter.

It is possible to avoid this assumption. On the comparison class approach, adjectives like *tall* denote functions which select entity sets from context-dependent comparison classes. These are ontologically primitive, whereas entity orderings and degrees are derivative. One can think that while the interpretation of non-gradable adjectives like *dead vs. alive* corresponds to total functions, which say of every object whether it falls in the adjective’s extension, the interpretation of gradable adjectives like *tall* is always partial. It is a function that assigns individuals to positive extensions, negative extensions, and extension gaps to accommodate the fact that, e.g., some people are neither tall nor short, relative to a comparison class which has to be of cardinality greater than or equal to 2. In this account we say, e.g., *Alf is tall* if in the contextually given comparison class, Alf is in the extension of *tall*. Meanwhile, *Bea is taller than Alf* is interpreted by finding a comparison class for which Bea is in the extension of *tall* and Alf is not. As we go on talking, the collection of items in the denotation gap ideally shrinks. Comparative statements like *Alf is taller than Bea* can be interpreted as consisting of a local domain with just the two compared entities of which the speaker can say whether one belongs to the extension of *tall* and the other, to the antiextension. In this respect, this proposal also endorses totality.

But this view fails to accommodate absolute gradable adjectives and their context independence, because it is not possible for an object to be in the extension of, e.g., *dry* given one comparison class but to be in its negative extension with respect to another comparison class. A way out is found by being more precise about the nature of the comparison classes intervening in the interpretation of relative vs. absolute gradable adjectives. One can for instance require that the positive use of absolute ones be interpreted with respect to the maximal comparison class (the whole domain), while for RGAs a proper subset of the whole domain may be taken into consideration. Or one can locate the differ-

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37The denotation gap is treated as a new local domain which allows the determination of the status of some gap members under, e.g., *tall*. Intuitively, those which are the tallest in the new domain get to the adjective’s extension, and those which are the least tall get to the antiextension. This process can be repeated by treating the rest of the entities, the reduced gap, as a new local domain, and so on until the gap is completely eliminated.
38As argued by Kennedy [2007], McNally [2011].
39This is how Van Benthem [1982] does it. Van Rooij [2011b] tackles these challenges by drawing on Arrow’s (1959) derivation of a preference ordering relation which takes the notion of choice as primitive, and which gives rise to a weak order (an irreflexive, transitive and almost connected binary relation on a set of individuals). Adjectives are, in a sense, identified with
ence between relative and absolute gradable adjectives by distinguishing types of context-sensitivity in the adjectival domain.\textsuperscript{[40]}

Delineation-based semantics for PPTs have not been proposed so far\textsuperscript{[41]} although PPTs like beautiful have been accounted for in delineation-based solutions to multidimensionals\textsuperscript{[42]}. It is clear since long age\textsuperscript{[43]} that adjectives like useful, clever are, like big non-linear, for they give rise to incomparabilities. Alf might be very good at spelling and Bea may be very good at math, and for each of these very different reasons we may want to call them clever, and each dimension gives rise to a separate ordering, so we may want to say that Alf is cleverer than Bea when we consider spelling as taking priority, while one would say Bea is cleverer than Alf when we consider skills in math as taking priority. Suppose we believe that beautiful can be included to this list of multidimensionals by claiming that dimensions of beautiful are, e.g., harmony, where elegance, uniqueness.\textsuperscript{[44]} If one insists\textsuperscript{[45]} that the comparative can only be used if one particular dimension is fixed, it is possible to meet the necessary constraints to define the comparative.\textsuperscript{[46]} So if beautiful can be seen as working like clever in the sense that we can decide on one specific aspect that we compare each time we compare, multidimensionality leads to a delineation-based view of PPTs.\textsuperscript{[47]}

A nice feature of the delineation-based view is that it does not single out gradable adjectives as being essentially different from other adjectives. The peculiar behaviour of gradable adjectives is mostly due to the role of context sensitivity, to the variation of comparison classes and to the varying (im)precision with which one can communicate. But the idea that subjectivity of PPTs like beautiful reduces to multidimensionality is disputable. This suggestion implies that one can meaningfully isolate necessary and sufficient dimensions which constitute beauty. Even if this reduction is only done in the context of a very specific example, it is dubious that any such finite enumeration would qualify as a definition of the adjective beautiful. Last but not least, this approach assumes transitivity\textsuperscript{[48]} which places constraints on tasty that might make the wrong predictions. If one considers successive tasting of a,b,c,a, one might get a failure of transitivity (a > b, choice functions.

\textsuperscript{40}This is Burnett\textsuperscript{[2012]}’s analysis. Her formal account is in line with Van Rooij\textsuperscript{[2011b]}.

\textsuperscript{41}Sassoon\textsuperscript{[2009]} actually uses some of the formal tools from delineation semantics but in combination with a degree-based account of gradable adjectives resulting in a contextualist theory of PPTs. To avoid confusion, then, we present her view in subsection 3.2.1 below where we discuss contextualism.

\textsuperscript{42}Recently, McNally and Stojanovic\textsuperscript{[2014]} have hypothesised that aesthetic adjectives are multidimensional, but they do not offer a formal analysis of these adjectives. Note as well that their claim is that aesthetic adjectives are not to be identified with PPTs.

\textsuperscript{43}As Klein\textsuperscript{[1980]} points out.

\textsuperscript{44}As Van Rooij\textsuperscript{[2011c]} does.

\textsuperscript{45}To be modeled via choice functions the ordering needs to be almost connected.

\textsuperscript{46}A similar solution but in a degree framework is given by Umbach\textsuperscript{[2014]}.

\textsuperscript{47}In the probabilistic theories mentioned in fn.\textsuperscript{[5]} a > b means that under most forced choices, a is preferred to b. This notion need not be transitive.
Chapter 3. Theories on gradability and on PPTs

$b > c$ but $a < c$) in the subject's verdict.\(^{48}\) The set up of this perspective simply leaves out of consideration the fact that taste assessments depend on experiences which are not merely intellectual but also physical, and that ultimately the verdict is dictated by our embodied reactions rather than by our previous evaluations.

We come now to a few more general observations. First, this framework predicts that as long as the comparison class stays fixed, our judgement of, e.g., tastiness of an object should remain fixed as well. This, however, does not fit the facts. We often change our minds simply by tasting again, by iterating our savouring experiences. How our judgement may change is not something that can be predicted in general. Sometimes, tastes are acquired when we expose ourselves repeatedly to a taste; but sometimes, tasting something over and over again, we may grow tired of the sensation and dislike what we are having. Adding new objects to the comparison class (or new experiences, if one believes that this is what we compare) is neither necessary nor sufficient for us to change our minds.

Second, the idea that we have to compare objects or experiences is problematic in the case of PPTs. When we say that a fruit is tasty or that a theme is melodic, we may have no other objects in mind which are (not) tasty or melodic. Even though we may want to say that anything tasty is tastier than something that is not tasty, our positive judgement does not require that we can compare the current object to something else. One may produce a qualified judgement where comparison classes obviously play a role, as in This wine is tasty for a Grand Cru. But this does not entail that comparisons play an essential role in saying This wine is tasty or This Grand Cru is tasty. We may have no idea of what comparison class an object belongs to, and still we may intelligibly judge it to be tasty.\(^{49}\) This is precisely what is at work in blind tasting.

Third, while in the case of length, we can (ideally) put objects next to each other on a plane and compare them with respect to their height, if we compare two or more objects with respect to their tastiness, it is not the objects that we compare but rather our appraisal thereof. What, if anything, could be a plane on which we can put our current and past experiences on a par and compare them? It is not possible to locate this plane in the past experience, for a new experience is bound to modify that plane. If the plane is given by our current state, our appraisal of something we have experienced in the past may have changed, so actually we would not be comparing a current experience with a past one, but rather a current experience with our remembrance of a past experience. We have no criterion by which we can actually compare our current and past experiences.

\(^{48}\)While one might want to explain this loop away by adding a temporal index on each of the tasting instances, it is nonetheless implausible to hold that after successive tasting of $a, b, c$ with assessments $a > b, b > c$, one is thereby guaranteed to infer $a > c$ as one is enabled in case the adjective is, e.g., long.

\(^{49}\)In a way, this observation comes close to what Bierwisch [1989] claimed about evaluative gradable adjectives like lazy vs. industrious whose application is independent of a comparison to a reference set.
This is not to say, however, that we cannot meaningfully speak about our past evaluations. The point is that to make a taste judgement now, we do not invoke past experiences that serve as a comparison class.

A more general argument is the following. The main contention of the delineation based view, namely that all gradable adjectives are essentially interpreted in relation to a comparison class, rests on the possibility to pick a comparison class independently of the use of gradable adjectives. Otherwise, the proposal would leap into a regress. But to determine the class of objects with respect to which we judge something to be $G$, we need a criterion: not all objects qualify, so we need to have some idea of the property or aspect of the object that the adjective $G$ identifies. The comparability of objects presupposes that we already have a way to sort them out.

In this section, we have presented two mainstream approaches to gradability and discussed how they can account for subjectivity. We now turn our attention to different positions concerning, specifically, the semantics of PPTs. A word of clarification before we move on. We shall see, one of the core positions in the debate about the semantic of PPTs is called contextualism. One can easily think that this is simply a specialised variant of delineation-based semantics concerned with PPTs, given that this approach to the semantics of gradability takes context to be at the center of the scene. However, contextualism in the debate about PPTs is compatible with degree-based theories of gradability, as we shall see below.

3.2 Main approaches to PPTs

Models for PPTs primarily strive to make sense of the first two subjectivity diagnostics presented in chapter 2 section 2.3 faultless disagreement and embeddings under find. Contextualists, relativists, and absolutists simply adopt a truth-conditional view on meaning. Expressivism comes in different flavours, but it basically claims that the subjectivity of PPTs is due to (part of) their meaning’s not being truth-conditional. Common to these views is that subjectivity is conceptualised as judge-dependence of some sort. For contextualism, presented in subsection 3.2.1, PPTs are subjective either because they add a judge-parameter fixed by the context of utterance, or because the linguistic norm setting the interpretation of the adjective is fixed by a judge: truth is not judge dependent but content-depends on whose opinion or experience is taken into account. Relativism, presented in subsection 3.2.2, claims that PPTs are subjective because they add a judge-parameter fixed by the context of assessment:

\[\text{50It may seem surprising now to read that absolutists admit a form of judge-dependence. Here we are referring to very specific forms of absolutism (one could call it “nuanced absolutism”) developed to account for the semantics of PPTs like Moltmann [2010] and Pearson [2013a] presented below. Our description of these theories will make clear the sophisticated sense in which they admit judge-dependence of PPTs.}\]
truth depends on who assesses it. Absolutism as developed in this debate claims that truth-conditions of taste judgements are judge-independent; nuanced forms of absolutism, however, let subjectivity in by arguing that we have a distinct first-personal cognitive access to the propositional contents expressed by these judgements, a form of epistemic judge-dependence. We present this view in subsection 3.2.3. Expressivism of a standard sort would basically deny that taste judgements have truth-conditional content. Expressivism as has been developed for PPT actually claims that there is truth-conditional content involved in what taste judgements mean, but this is not the level at which subjectivity enters. Subjectivity enters either at the level of pragmatics, as an expressive-affective layer, or as an additional use-conditional semantic layer having felicity conditions akin to that of directives or commissives. Subjectivity has to do with a judge’s expression of a non-cognitive attitude. We examine these views in subsection 3.2.4. We will present these views and discuss them separately in this section, and keep for section 3.3 a more general reflection on the challenges for these views.

3.2.1 Contextualism

Contextualism is, in a sense, a conservative option by which semanticists have tried to accommodate the subjectivity of PPTs without drastically deviating from the post-Kaplanian semantic architecture. Contextualists generally hold that the content of propositions containing PPTs is judge-dependent: before one can assess the truth of a statement like \textit{This cake is tasty}, one has to determine the content of the statement by means of a mechanism that rightly picks the judge, or the set of judges, whose (qualitative standard of) taste is at stake. Once this is fixed, truth-conditions are judge independent, so whoever assesses a proposition should get the same answer as a result.

Contextualism about PPTs comes in different flavours, depending on, among other things, the following three axes of discussion.\textsuperscript{51} The first axis concerns the formal implementation of the semantics they elaborate. The second one relates to what exactly context is seen to contribute: an experiencer on whom a cut-off point depends, or a judge taking a stance concerning the prevailing linguistic convention. The third one regards the analyses they offer of faultless disagreements and embeddings under \textit{find}. The core agreement among these positions we take it to be that a contextualist does not think there is a sharp

\textsuperscript{51}Glanzberg \cite{Glanzberg2007} also speaks — like Kennedy \cite{Kennedy2013} — of qualitative scales. He does not, however, discuss what at a formal level makes a scale a qualitative, as opposed to a quantitative one. Glanzberg, adopts a basic degree-based approach to the semantics of PPTs, claims that actually dialogue participants disagree about what amount of, e.g., tastiness or fun, is assigned to the object under evaluation. The scale for a PPT like \textit{tasty} is the gustatory quality as experienced by a group of people or agents. When the speaker and hearer share scales and standards, they may discuss whether, e.g., “roller coasters have sufficient fun to count as fun in the context”. Here you see that contextualism with respect to PPTs can be married with a degree-based approach to gradability.
3.2. Main approaches to PPTs

difference between between contextual variations in truth value observed with taste judgements and variations in truth value observed with other well-known classes of expressions.

Some contextualist views on PPTs clearly lean on degree-based approaches to gradability\footnote{Like Glanzberg [2007], Barker [2013] also takes up a degree-based account of gradability, but puts it within an update framework in which uncertainty about where a cut-off point is to be drawn is reduced, which brings him somewhat close to the delineation-based view, as Lassiter [2011] points out.} some rely on, or closely relate to, the philosophy underlying delineation-based analyses.\footnote{Like Sassoon [2009], but Barker’s own solution relates to this idea as well through the notion of precisification or delineation of the conversational context. Sassoon [2009] gives a model for PPTs which is actually a mixed account which involves a degree-based interpretation for the basic meaning of PPTs and a delineation-based approach to what she calls the “inherent indeterminacy of degree functions for taste”. Building on Kamp’s vagueness models for gradable adjectives, Sassoon takes PPTs to be true in a partial context if and only if it is true in the set of completions consistent with it. For Sassoon, completions determine complete interpretations for PPTs like tasty, fun. Each completion corresponds to the taste of one possible individual, so the taste of each individual is assumed to be fully specified (completions are classical contexts where every statement is either true or false). In each completion, a PPT like tasty denotes a degree function: The cake is tasty is evaluated per completion, and it is true if and only if the value assigned to the cake in that completion exceeds the cut-off point of tasty in that completion. As a result, the interpretation of PPTs differs in different completions, “while none corresponds to the actual “objective” (inter-personal) interpretation (as such probably does not exist).” (Sassoon [2009], p. 139) PPTs are special in that we are uncertain of which degree function they denote, of whose taste they represent, where the existence of different tastes imply different scales.} The subjectivity of PPTs is conceptualised as judge-dependence of the proposition expressed the sentence in which it features, a lexical peculiarity that singles them out among other (gradable) adjectives.

A first variant of contextualism for PPTs assumes that the context of utterance provides a judge argument on whom the content of a proposition like This cake is tasty or This show is boring depends, an argument that is otherwise fixed by an overt phrase, as in tasty to Alf or boring to Bea.\footnote{Cf., Stojanovic [2007], Sundell [2011], Stephenson [2007] partly endorses this sort of contextualism, to account for cases of so-called exocentric judgements, where the agent whose taste seems to be the relevant one is not the speaker, but it integrates it with a relativist account of the normal case where the judge corresponds to the speaker.} Let us call this position representational contextualism. The core idea that is agreed upon here is that in case two speakers disagree in their taste judgements, they do not express inconsistent propositions. For this view, the whole notion of faultless disagreement is absurd, a philosophical mirage. With a change of judge provided by switch of the context of utterance comes a shift in the property claimed to hold of the object under evaluation in a faultless disagreement. If the issue is whether the cake is tasty to Alf or not tasty to Bea, then there is not one issue but two, so actually there is a misunderstanding and not an actual disagreement. Discourse participants actually talk past each other, they do not discuss about one and the
same content that one of them asserts and the other one denies.

A second variant of contextualism argues instead that it is the prevalent rule for interpreting the PPT in a taste judgement is judge-dependent. Let us call this view metalinguistic contextualism. The idea is that RGAs have what they call descriptive and metalinguistic uses, where metalinguistic uses are basically cases in which we use RGAs to pass judgements which are meant to change a prevailing standard we agree upon in a given context, i.e., the cut-off point determining the extension of the adjective. The core idea is that in taste disputes, one is negotiating a linguistic standard, so a faultless disagreement is not a misunderstanding but rather a discussion about who determines the prevailing linguistic conventions, a discussion which is bound to be irresolvable given that no one has a privileged position to sanction by herself linguistic conventions that bind the community to which she belongs. Then some theories ensure that there is a constant component in the meaning of such adjectives, a stable core that can be identified with the commending function of adjectives like good and, arguably also for beautiful or tasty. In this sense, contextualism comprises for us theories which do not see necessarily judge-dependence as the requirement of an implicit argument, but which nonetheless take people’s perspectives to be constitutive of the context which settles the a range of viable cut-off points.

Given this divergence among contextualists, one gets different analyses of attitude verbs like find. For representational contextualists, find binds the value of the judge argument of the embedded predicate to the matrix subject. It is thus a syntactic requirement for find complements to contain a slot for a judge argument. Thus, all find does in a restricted judgement like Alf finds this cake tasty is to make sure that tasty gets Alf as the argument that has to fill in the slot required for the interpretation of the adjective to go through. Attitude verbs like find are then thought to simply make explicit the implicit judge parameter on which the content of an unrestricted judgement depends. For metalinguistic contextualists, the complement of attitude verbs akin to find introducing restricted judgements is used to pass a new convention concerning the viable range of cut-off points. Pragmatically, this leads to discourse commitments which are restricted to the individuals appearing as matrix subject of find embeddings, which explains why

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55 Here you can see Sassoon [2009], Sundell [2011], Barker [2013], Umbach [2014]. Actually Umbach’s interpretational use puts together the two sorts of contextualism, as it concern the use of an expression and the individual that the adjective qualifies.

56 This is Umbach [2014]’s claim which she traces back to Kant, relying on Hare [1952]. We see this coming back in Buekens’ expressivist approach and in our own analysis in chapter 4, although our interpretation of this commending function is somewhat different from that of Buekens and Umbach.

57 As first described and defended by Sæbø [2009].

58 Sæbø [2009] puts the English verb find together with the German finden and the Swedish synes, and relates it as well with the French trouver. He labels these as “subjective attitude verbs”. We do not use this label, as explained in fn. 87 ch. 2.

59 Umbach [2014], who partly draws from Reis [2013], actually focuses on the German finden.
denying a first-person restricted judgement like *I find this tasty* with an outright *No, you don’t* is generally off.

Many objections against contextualism are offered by relativists. We will comment on some of these at the beginning of the coming section. The main point we want to raise here, one that also concerns the relativist view we will present in the coming section, is that it has the problematic consequence of ‘privatising’ the meaning of PPTs — this goes for contextualist views that do not ensure a stable core in the meaning of these adjectives\(^60\).

Even though positions are split concerning faultless disagreement, with some authors claiming that it is a philosophical mirage while others claim that it is a typical and pervasive phenomenon, there is a common issue underlying these diagnoses. It turns out, according to such analyses, that in situations of so-called faultless disagreement we are actually trapped in a misunderstanding, a (partial) failure of communication. Either because dialogue participants talk past each other by taking themselves to be discussing about one and the same proposition when they actually discuss about two different ones, or because they actually abide by different linguistic conventions, what looks like a discussion is actually a case of miscommunication. We believe it is dangerous to conflate the notions of disagreement and miscommunication because this renders a host of linguistic exchanges unsuccessful, which seems a most undesirable consequence.

Concerning the contextualist’s view on embeddings under *find*, empirical and conceptual arguments against the judge argument as syntactic requirement by *find* can be found in the literature, all of which give good reasons to think that this approach is not really adequate\(^61\). We just want to underscore one basic problem, and that is that unless one also claims that RGAs such as *heavy, expensive* have implicit judge arguments, one cannot explain why *find* can take these adjectives in its complement. The second observation is a subtler one. The point is that if by saying *I find this tasty* we make a statement concerning our cut-off point for tastiness or our own idiosyncratic linguistic convention for the use of this adjective, and when we make such restricted judgements we block denial given that a reaction with *No, you don’t* is in normal cases ruled out, then we have a case in which a person can keep a private record of her sensations or linguistic usage but cannot be held accountable for her records or usage. As it seems, the idea that *I find this tasty* describes the extent of my own gastronomic pleasure to which I and only I have access leaps into a private language conundrum.

\(^{60}\)So this objection does not apply to Umbach [2014].

\(^{61}\)Cf., Bouchard [2012], Collins [2013], Kennedy [2013], Umbach [2014].
3.2.2 Relativism

We should again start with a disclaimer, as the label ‘relativism’ suggests a monolithic view while there exist numerous different proposals.\(^{62}\) The central feature of relativism concerning PPTs is the claim that the subjectivity of these adjectives forces one to posit judge-dependence not at the level of content but at the level of truth.\(^{63}\) A statement containing a PPT is true relative not only to a world and time of utterance, as any post Kaplanian semanticist would admit, but also to a judge. This is the agent whose taste or opinion dictates whether a taste judgement is true or false. This is identified with the context of assessment\(^{64}\) or a judge therein.\(^{65}\) The relativist move is less conservative than the contextualist one, but this is claimed to be for a good reason, i.e., to take at face value the idea that in matters of taste each one can hold their own view. This makes it possible to say that an unrestricted judgement like This cake is tasty may be true relative to one of the dialogue participants and false relative to the other one.

As anticipated above, views differ concerning the implementation of relativism. The general idea is that a new slot is added to the index of evaluation\(^{66}\), which is usually\(^{67}\) though not always, filled by the speaker in a given context of evaluation.


\(^{63}\) We have seen this position in subsection 3.1.2 when we presented Kennedy [2013]’s analysis of evaluative adjectives.

\(^{64}\) Among other views, see Lasersohn [2005, 2009, 2013]. Köbel’s view on relativism is slightly different, somewhat broader, as he uses the term for views that postulate additional parameters to a possible worlds parameter. Relativist is any position rejecting absolute utterance truth, but one does not need to go as far as claiming that the truth value of a taste sentence depends on context of assessment. One can instead claim that truth depends on standards of taste, which according to Köbel leads to non-indexical contextualism. Taste judgements express contents that may vary in truth-value not only with a time and possible world, but also with a standard of taste. This view is less liberal than Lasersohn’s and MacFarlane’s because it does not go so far beyond the standard Kaplanian view. One can actually argue that Köbel is, after all, a contextualist. This labeling debate is, however, not of interest for us.

\(^{65}\) Lasersohn [2005] defines PPTs like tasty as one-place predicates tasty(x) where the argument x is the object under evaluation, and proposes to add a judge to the index of evaluation of any sentence containing a PPT, which becomes a triple < w, t, j > of world, time, and judge: the truth of propositions containing PPTs is judge-relative. In other words, as noted by Stephenson [2007], Lasersohn’s worlds are ‘centered’ in the sense of Lewis [1979]. Lasersohn assumes that agents typically take an autocentric perspective, they take themselves to be the judge j which determines the truth of an unrestricted judgement like This cake is tasty which they assess. Interestingly, in giving a semantics for expressives like damn, bastard (this sense of “expressive” comes from Cruse [1986] and Kaplan [1999], Potts [2007] considers Lasersohn [2005]’s semantics for PPTs. He takes up Lasersohn’s notion of a judge, but in expressives like damn, bastard, the judge parameter is more strongly anchored on the speaker (rather than in other judges) than in the case of PPTs. Note that judge-shifting works differently for PPTs and for expressives. The example below shows how expressives such as bastard are non-displaceable, unlike PPTs:
utterance. One may utter or assess the same unrestricted judgement but take an exocentric perspective, where we take a judge other than the speaker to be the one which determines the truth of the sentence. A situation like a mother who attempts to convince her child to eat healthy food or the alleged case of a judgement that a certain type of cat food is tasty because the cat has eaten all of it would be paradigmatic cases, where the truth of the uttered proposition depends not on the speaker’s taste or ability, but on someone else’s. An explicit modifier introduced by the preposition to as in The cake is tasty to Alf is an intensional operator that shifts the judge parameter to the agent introduced by the prepositional phrase.  

According to the relativist, faultless disagreement is what it seems to be: a situation where two people make contradictory statements and none of them is at fault. Faultless disagreement occurs when Bea denies the proposition asserted by Alf (there is disagreement) but where the truth of the proposition that Alf asserts and Bea denies is relative to each of them (it is faultless). Although both participants say something that is true at the index determining the truth of the claims each makes, their claims are contradictory.  

Non-displaceability is the property exemplified in how the perspective expressed in the first half of example (i-a) is tied to Alf’s perspective and not to Sue’s, Potts suggests one should let the judge argument enter into the denotation of expressives. Given this contrast in embeddings, we will consider expressives as a separate phenomenon, related but slightly different from the case of PPTs.

(i)  
   a. A: Sue believes that bastard Kresge should be fired. #I think he’s a good guy.
   b. A: Sue believes the tasty cake is on the table. I don’t find it tasty.

This explains why judgements involving...

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68 This example comes from Sassoon [2009], but her analysis aligns with contextualism.
69 Inspired by Von Fintel’s example in Stephenson [2006].
70 Stephenson [2007] proposes a formal improvement of Lasersohn [2005], and has a mixed view which is partly relativist and partly contextualist. According to her, PPTs like tasty are two-place predicates tasty(i, x) with both an experiencer i and an object x as arguments. As Lasersohn, she enriches the Kaplanian context with a third index j representing a judge. When introduced in a restricted judgement like I find the cake tasty, the experiencer-argument is filled in by the subject heading the attitude verb. When standing alone in an unrestricted judgement like This cake is tasty, the experiencer-argument is filled in by a silent nominal item PRO that fixes the judge to be the one provided by Lasersohn’s index i in the context, it is an implicit argument. In special cases (Lasersohn’s exocentric assessments), the experiencer-argument is filled in by a contextually salient individual, which Stephenson represents as a null pronoun pro. So while for Lasersohn, prepositions like for, to are judge-shifting operators when they are used as in The cake is tasty for Alf, Stephenson treats for Alf, to Bea as first arguments in tasty(i, x).
71 Here is a small model to illustrate the point. It involves worlds W = \{w, v\} and agents \{a, b\}. Then what Alf says is, for instance, \{< w, a >, < v, a >, < v, b >\}. Now the proposition expressed by Bea is \{< w, b >\}. Both are true, if w is the actual world, but the propositions they express are contradictory.
72 Articulated by Sæbø [2009], although he ultimately defends the contextualist option pre-
adjectives which are not subjective cannot be embedded under find, for when we try, the verb cannot do what it is supposed to do, namely, specify whose opinion determines the truth of the embedded proposition. It is worth noting that for the relativist there is another feature of subjectivity that one has to account for, one that relativism can handle and contextualism cannot. This is what they call ‘retraction’ that is, the situation when we change our minds and stop liking something we used to enjoy in the past. If I uttered when I was a child Fish sticks are tasty! and now I find them unpalatable, then I should retract my past judgement as being wrong because it is false with respect to my current context of assessment. Contextualism cannot explain retractions because in this view there is no necessary incompatibility between the content I expressed years ago and the one expressed now. So relativism, it is claimed, outweighs contextualism because it succeeds in dealing with so-called faultless disagreement and with retractions.

There are many objections one can raise against relativism. First, relativism seems to clash with plausible assumptions about speaker competence. If we assume that Alf and Bea know the meaning of PPTs like tasty, then Bea should realise that Alf’s claim This cake is tasty is only true relative to himself, and the same is expected of Alf with respect to Bea’s response No, this cake is not tasty. If both Alf and Bea know that about the relativity of evaluation of sentences, how can they take themselves to be disagreeing?

In the previous subsection we indicated that there is a common problem to contextualism and relativism, and that is that both of this positions lead to different but dangerous forms of privatisation. In the case of contextualism, this related to content or linguistic conventions. Relativism proposes, as it were, a privatisation of the world about which agents communicate: facts are assessor-relative. Taste judgements are subjective not because they do not state a matter of fact, but rather because they state something concerning a fact that may be different per judge.

sentenced above.

73In Kennedy [2013], the requirement is that the adjective sets a judge-dependent qualitative way of measuring an object relative to a dimension.
74Cf., MacFarlane [2014], discussed by Marques [2014].
75As MacFarlane [2014] claims.
76But would it really make any sense to say I was (at the point of my utterance) wrong? We actually think this does not make much sense, but here we are not yet raising a critical point.
77As first noted by Stojanovic [2007].
78This is, as it were, one of the horns in a dilemma presented by Rosenkranz [2008]. The other horn is to present the propositions as true simpliciter or relative to every perspective. Although in such case Alf and Bea disagree, this is not faultless: if they take themselves to be uttering something true relative to everyone’s perspective, then they are simply making a mistake.
79Fleisher [2013] openly defends this view. “Judge-dependent mappings associated with taste predicates are facts of the world ... I take no philosophical stance on what sort of facts they are (sensory percepts, opinions, something else entirely?); for linguistic purposes, all that matters
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Concerning embeddings under find, a first observation to make is that without a criterion dictating which adjectives are judge-dependent as the relativist wants it, we are forced to say that anything that can be embedded under find is either judge-dependent or is polysemous and has a judge-dependent lexical entry. As we saw in the previous section, this leads to a multiplication of lexical entries without a clear motivation for sustaining the alleged polysemy.

Finally, concerning retraction and its alleged role as being a decisive argument in favour of relativism, we would like to contest it not by claiming that contextualism can actually accommodate it but rather by questioning the cogency of this notion as presented by relativists. A first challenge to this notion is to argue that a speaker has no obligation to deem her past judgement incorrect when the challenge comes from a different perspective (either someone else’s or her own, if her judgement has changed over time). Another challenge is ask to wonder whether retractions — in the sense of a self-correction and not in the restricted sense which is per definition associated with truth — actually occur in our common use of taste judgements. Retractions in examples of actual use often occur as elaborations on a prior judgement rather than as denials of past ones. A more general way to scrutinise the cogency of the idea of retraction is to ask if and in what sense it is sensible to say that one (or someone else, for that matter) is wrong in matters of taste. The very notion of having and giving grounds for one’s assertions is, precisely, what is problematic in the case of taste, or at least quite different from having and giving grounds with respect to a person’s height or to the number of lines which form a geometric shape. The elusiveness of justification is part of the subjectivity of a judgement like This cake is tasty. Criteria or methods seem to be lacking here, which makes the whole idea of having grounds to assert a taste judgement a questionable claim. This is a most important issue, one we will delve into in much more detail in chapter 4.

3.2.3 Absolutism

Absolutism, in a nutshell, argues that the truth and content of taste judgements are judge-independent. We distinguish here two forms of absolutism. A less nuanced one dismisses the diagnostics of subjectivity as being tests for anything really special about these adjectives, claiming that in the end we should all agree about what we say is tasty or beautiful. This makes it easy to explain why there is disagreement in a faultless disagreement, viz., such disagreements are just like any other disagreement. But this is done at the price of completely dismissing is that our semantics treat them as facts of the world just as it does objective facts like John’s height.” p. 286.

80 Inspired by the objections made by Hirvonen 2014.
81 The discussion concerning Kennedy 2013 subsection 3.1.2 above.
82 As Marques 2014 does.
83 See examples in Pomerantz 1984.
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the intuition that in taste disputes no one has the upper hand. A nuanced form of absolutism stands against the relativisation of truth, but like the relativist it accepts that there is indeed a something faultless in taste disputes. This is due to there being a first-person component in how contents of taste judgements are grasped, which explains why we might fail to reach agreements.\(^{84}\)

The less nuanced variant can be identified with a long standing tradition, going back at least to Plato and Thomas Aquinas, who held that beauty is an objective property of certain things or persons.\(^{85}\) Recent support to such an approach taking good tasters to be “those who get matters right”\(^{86}\) has focused on wine tasting and on taste judgements therein.\(^{87}\) For assessments of quality of wines like balanced, harmonious, bland, it is claimed, there is little disagreement concerning bad quality. Now, concerning personal preference and adjectives like tasty, disgusting, it is recognised that people’s preferences may be specific and, in a way, independent of the objective properties of the product. Faultless disagreement would occur if the comparison class were fixed and still Bea would deny what Alf asserts. But this does not necessitate a relativist position because if “each party could acknowledge that the other’s verdict was correct with respective to their way of measuring the sample against items in the comparison class.”\(^{88}\) But given that what judges rank, the properties that make up for the wine’s taste, are objective, appeal to judge-dependence of truth does not really make sense.

The more nuanced version of absolutism claims that propositions featuring PPTs have absolute truth conditions but through first-person genericity\(^{90}\) it is

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\(^{84}\) Note that we distinguish “more-or-less nuanced” with respect to how much room they leave for subjectivity, and not because we think these are not refined views.

\(^{85}\) As indicated in fn. 21, Hume might be thought to stand for absolutism of this kind. However, while the joint verdict of true judges, of experts, sets a benchmark for what one should good, tasty, beautiful, Hume denies that taste judgements can be true or false.

\(^{86}\) Smith [2007], p. 65. A similar view is given by Lehrer [2009], again with a focus on the case of wine tasting. She revives Putnam to claim that one can be an objectivist when it comes to adjectives used in wine tasting if one is ready to defer to experts’ judgements. Furthermore, she recognises that such a view presupposes something that isn’t really true, namely that experts agree. However, she outweighs this by pointing at the great deal of agreement among experts on the quality of a wine.

\(^{87}\) “Judgements of taste go beyond our sensory experience to how things are in the wine itself.” Smith [2007], p. 65.

\(^{88}\) Baker [2014] admits there can be some, but puts limits to it by pulling out the Humean strategy comparing John Ogilby and John Milton. He develops a Humean, paraconsistent semantics for PPTs which accounts both for the existence and for the limits of faultless disagreement, pointing out that his view is analogous to supervaluational accounts we referred in subsection 3.1.3 above.

\(^{89}\) Smith [2010], p. 206.

\(^{90}\) Moltmann [2010] and Pearson [2013a]. We developed in Crespo and Fernández [2011] a view which deployed genericity of a specific kind, dispositional genericity (inspired first by Krifka [2012], but more precisely by Menéndez-Benito [2005]). We proposed there an analysis building on empirical work in conversation analysis (cf., fn. 99 in chapter 2) to outline the rudiments
ensured that there is a subjective element in how contents of taste judgements are grasped, which accommodates the phenomenon of faultless disagreement. The first proposal in this line suggests that PPTs force us to interpret assertions like This is tasty as actually saying One finds this tasty. We assert and interpret generic one sentences on first-personal grounds, meaning that we understand such judgements as claims in which the speaker identifies himself with each individual in the quantified domain, hence the commending force of such judgements. When we say that something is tasty, we apply the adjective to everyone in the domain as if to ourselves, taking ourselves to be normal or typical. The proposition expressed by a sentence with a PPT has absolute, agent-independent truth conditions: the generic claim made on the basis of the agent’s extrapolation from her own experience is either true or false. In faultless disagreement dialogue participants attribute different properties to the individuals each of them identifies with, but actually “at most one of them is right in extending the first personal grounds to anyone in the contextually relevant domain”. In this proposal, PPTs are ambiguous, having a different meaning when used in restricted judgements like I find this cake tasty. These are, according to Moltmann, expressive speech acts “not directed at truth”. In this case, PPTs are two-place predicates tasty(i, x),

of a formal theory in line with how taste judgements are used in actual conversation, which in combination with an Information State Update framework (Ginzburg 1996, 2012) yielded a first outline of a formal account of the effects that unrestricted and restricted judgements have in dialogue. The basic semantic analysis we proposed treated PPTs as two-place predicates with an argument for the experiencer that can be generically bound. So in a way, our view stood in-between representational contextualism and a genericity-based approach akin to those of Moltmann or Pearson. We chose for dispositional genericity to accommodate the idea that the agents that count for such a generalisation are those able to undergo a phenomenological experience of, e.g., taste in the case of a PPT like tasty. The dispositional interpretation states an expectation concerning facts, in particular, concerning the result of the agent’s assessment. Unlike the contextualist view, the resulting system we sketched was shown to account for the possibility of disagreements over taste. We did not pursue this line further, first of all, because the dispositional genericity interpretation seemed rather ad hoc, without strong linguistic support beyond the its usefulness in dealing with the desiderata presented here in chapter 2, section 2.3. Second, and more importantly, since the expectation built in dispositional genericity is one of facts, it became apparent that the phenomenological experience of agents was turned into a matter of fact. This view would be liable to the objection we give below in section 3.3, it objectivises subjectivity.

91In Moltmann [2010]. Our reconstruction of her view spares lots of technical details for the sake of brevity and focus. Hopefully this will not make it too difficult for the reader to get an idea of the core of her proposal, which is what interests us most.

92The details of this kind of genericity are given in terms of Moltmann’s analysis of the generic pronoun ‘one’ developed in Moltmann [2006].

93This closely relates to the proposal in Sassoon [2009]. So to some extent, Moltmann’s view is quite close to contextualism, except that (a) she ensures that the group of people that count are those that the speaker identifies with, and (b) in her proposal, first-person-based genericity provides the epistemic basis for applying the PPT at hand, rather than fix the content or the contextually prevalent linguistic rule.

94Moltmann [2010], p. 25.
where the attitude verb \textit{find} fixes the experiencer-argument. The resulting sentence simply expresses the experiencer’s subjective stance. This would explain why denial of a first-person restricted judgement is blocked.\footnote{In his preliminaries (his option 3b), Lasersohn \citeyear{Lasersohn2005} briefly considers and dismisses a “genericity reading”, but the view he rejects is far more simple than the one proposed by Moltmann.}

A second option along these lines says that “PPTs such as \textit{tasty} are used to make statements about whether something is tasty to people in general, based on first-person experience.”\footnote{Pearson \citeyear{Pearson2013a}, (43).} When we say \textit{This cake is tasty}, we roughly say that the cake is tasty to every (contextually restricted) individual with whom we empathise\footnote{Pearson implements this idea by taking PPTs to be individual-level predicates following Chierchia \citeyear{Chierchia1995}, PPTs thus have an internal argument because of the syntax given Chierchia’s view of the licensing conditions for ILPs. The variable introduced by a PPT’s covert internal argument is bound by the generic operator which varies over all relevant individuals in the world with whom our ‘someone’ identifies with.} in restricted judgements like \textit{I find this cake tasty}, the matrix subject takes care of the binding.\footnote{Although Pearson does not address this explicitly, one could guess that she would predict that all individual stage predicates would be embeddable under \textit{find}, since being an individual stage predicate is the reason why PPTs come with an internal argument that needs to be bound.} Unrestricted judgements like \textit{This cake is tasty} describe the property of being someone such that for all accessible worlds and all relevant individuals in the world with whom our ‘someone’ identifies with, this cake is tasty to those individuals. Since the “identify with” relation is reflexive, the speaker is included in the generic quantification. In unrestricted judgements, the speaker will be the judge on which the “identify with” relation works.\footnote{Unlike Moltmann \citeyear{Moltmann2010}, who conceptualises the generic identification via qua objects (following here Fine \citeyear{Fine1982}), Pearson’s “identify with” relation involves empathising with other individuals rather than simulating them, so it does not require the use of qua objects. Pearson is also more conservative in not appealing to attitudinal objects (Moltmann \citeyear{Moltmann2003}) in order to make restricted taste judgements truth-evaluable. Instead, for Pearson sentence meanings are of property type, with a truth evaluable object obtained by application of the property to the speaker. Sentences containing PPTs thus come with an abstraction operator in the left periphery of the clause binds the variable responsible for the first-person oriented interpretation of the sentence. This allows Pearson to treat uniformly restricted and unrestricted judgements, because the variable introduced by PPTs is bound by the most local abstraction operator.} In this way, the nuanced absolutists accommodates not only the commending aspect of taste judgements, but also the speaker’s own commitments. This would shed light on the example (39-a) showing that unrestricted judgements imply first-person restricted ones presented in chapter 2, subsection 2.3.3, repeated below:

\begin{quote}
(6) Alf: This is tasty but I don’t find it tasty.
\end{quote}

PPTs require that one has had direct sensory experience of a relevant kind: when we say \textit{This cake is tasty}, we commit ourselves to finding the cake tasty. So disagreements about taste are genuine when the set of individuals ranged
over by the generic quantifier remains constant for both dialogue participants, for in such case the truth value of *This cake is tasty* is not expected to vary at all. It varies, however, when the individuals that speakers identify with are not the same. Each of the dialogue participants is right in such case because each of them makes a true assertion when they make sincere reports of their tastes. Here each speaker is held to have epistemic privilege with respect to sensory experience, and for this reason a sincere report, not only first-person restricted like *This cake is tasty to me* but also unrestricted ones like *This cake is tasty*, cannot fail to be true if made sincerely.

The absolutist gets the easiest explanation of there being a disagreement in a taste dispute. If the statements uttered by Alf and Bea are true or false *simpliciter*, and given that Bea denies what Alf asserts, then only one of them can be right. We have, however, a few observations against this view. The genericity approach is interesting because it digs somewhat deeper into a conceptual characterisation of subjectivity in PPTs. It highlights the way expectations take our own preferences beyond our own case when we say, e.g., *This cake is tasty*. It puts on the table the normative force of unrestricted judgement, i.e., the fact that they make a claim to the agreement of others. However, the postulation of an ambiguity for *tasty*, with a different lexical item being used depending on whether the adjective is used in a restricted or in an unrestricted judgement, is undesirable. Such an approach blocks any straightforward explanation of the relation of unrestricted and restricted judgements. To put it bluntly, why is the expressive dimension of PPTs only sometimes present? Moltmann divides between an assertive and an expressive speech act but does not really illuminate their relation.

In the second alternative we see an effort to bring in experience as a requirement for using certain adjectives. However, in this view the virtues of the first alternative are lost. Pearson’s speaker identifies with others but she does not take herself to be normal or typical. Without this, it seems that unrestricted judgements like *This cake is tasty* come too close to generalisations like *People find this cake tasty*, where *people* is contextually restricted to a set of relevant individuals. Furthermore, Pearson’s analysis of subjectivity is epistemologically problematic. She claims that sincerity is sufficient to guarantee the truth of a first-person restricted judgement of taste like *This cake is tasty to me*. So for this approach subjectivity comes at the price, and with the issues, of privacy. If truth hinges only on truthfulness, there is no criterion; hence, there is no room for empirical mistakes. Thus, speaking of truth and falsity in the case of a first-person restricted judgement seems, in the end, to make very little sense.

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We will see a more systematic treatment of the expressive dimension of taste judgements in Buekens’s view, presented in the coming section.
3.2.4 Expressivism

As announced early on, expressivism comes in various flavours. It is most natural to consider expressivism as an option rejecting the assumption that taste judgements are truth-apt, for this is a straightforward way to say why taste disputes are faultless. In this a view, taste judgements are subjective not because their truth, content, or grasp conditions are judge-dependent, but rather because they are not truth-apt in the first place. They express a non-cognitive attitude of approval or disapproval of the object under assessment. Note that for these varieties of expressivism, “it is the job of a semantic theory to explain what a sentence, ‘P’, means, by saying what it is to think that P.”\(^{101}\) So even if expressivism introduces two distinct kinds of contents, truth-apt and non-truth apt, it shares with truth-conditional approaches the assumption that the meaning of a sentence is given by the state (truth-apt or non-truth apt) it expresses.

Most notorious views in this direction are concerned with moral language, and how it differs from ordinary descriptive language. Ayer’s and Stevenson’s emotivism, and Hare’s prescriptivist views on metaethics (and normative discourse, more generally) defended the idea that moral sentences are not true or false, they are not used to make assertions. Applied to the case of PPTs, such a position would say that the meaning of PPTs is different in kind from the meaning of other adjectives, close to how Moltmann sees PPTs when used in expressive speech acts like embeddings under find. An Ayerian or Stevensonian view on the semantics of these assessments would propose that the utterances in a so-called faultless disagreement are non-cognitive expressions of (dis)approval or (dis)content. Taste disagreements would be diagnosed as disagreements in attitudes or in sentiments, which makes it obvious why Bea’s reaction in a faultless disagreement does not prove Alf’s wrong.\(^{102}\)

Expressivism of this sort, as inspired by emotivism, succeed in putting emotions in the scene, to throw them in the debate of the meaning of PPTs. For expressivism, judgements featuring PPTs would be necessarily related to an individual’s attitudes, but where judgements are not about such attitudes. The (dis)approval is expressed, rather than asserted. One comes to know, assuming that Alf is sincere, that he is allured in a certain way. But this kind of approach has to face multiple challenges. We should note right away that a simple view like this seems to lose grip of there being a disagreement in a discussion like Alf and Bea’s. If a disagreement is given by there being a proposition that Alf asserts and Bea denies, then the simple expressivist just refuses to accommodate that there is a disagreement in a discussion like Alf and Bea’s. But the most well-known and perhaps most pressing objection is the Frege-Geach problem. For the case of PPTs, this is the demand that an adjective like tasty should mean the

\(^{101}\) Schroeder [2008a], p. 704.

\(^{102}\) See in Huvenes [2014] a position where faultless disagreement is diagnosed as disagreement in attitude, but where this is supported within a truth-conditional framework.
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same when used in a atomic unrestricted judgement like *This cake is tasty* and when this judgement relates via logical connectives with other, possibly descriptive judgements, as in *If this cake is tasty, then we will buy another one next week*. The same is demanded for cases where an unrestricted judgement appears in the course of what a logical deduction, as in (7-a) or when embedded under what we usually understand to be a propositional attitude, as in (7-b):

(7) a. (P1) If the roller coaster is fun, then I will buy a ticket.
    (P2) The roller coaster is fun.
    (C) Therefore, I will buy a ticket.

b. Alf believes that the cake is tasty.

So any theory which appeals to different kinds of meaning to explain the normative or evaluative force of PPTs should also accommodate the fact that the evaluative and the descriptive kinds interact and are in some cases inseparable. In this sense, views on PPTs like Kennedy’s or Umbach’s which cash out evaluativity in a truth-conditional framework provide a very elegant way to avoid this objection.

Contemporary expressivist theories like those offered by Blackburn and Gibbard generally make a different claim because for them the difference between the normative and the descriptive realm comes at the level of mental content, and not at the level of language expressing those contents. They claim for instance that moral sentences are different from descriptive sentences because moral sentences express desire-like states of mind. In Searle’s terms, descriptive sentences express a state with mind-to-world direction of fit, while normative sentences (in particular, taste judgements) express world-to-mind states. How would such a position account for faultless disagreement? If we take taste judgements to express desire-like states of mind, a disagreement is a situation in which discourse participants hold incompatible mental states: their wishes, goals, and plans can be held simultaneously by different agents, but not simultaneously by a single agent, and when held by different agents a rupture of cooperation ensues.

These contemporary expressivists are well aware of the Frege-Geach challenge. By pushing the discussion from language to thought, these views do not postulate a distinction between how normative and descriptive language work. But the burden is transferred, then, to explaining how belief-states and desire-states may interact when PPTs and other normative terms work in non-atomic statements. The challenge for expressivism that the traditional, truth-conditional would voice is to characterise the mental states expressed by normative sentences to be similar

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103The example comes from Wolf [2014] who notices that if P1 is uttered by Alf, and P2 is uttered by Bea, then Alf is not bound to assert the conclusion.
105For an extended (but ultimately rejected) attempt to build a Gibbard-like approach to PPTs, see MacFarlane [2014], section 7.3.
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enough to belief states expressed by descriptive sentences, in order to “provide a uniform and general explanation of why a sentence and its negation are always inconsistent, no matter what kind of mental state that sentence expresses.” In any case, the view on disagreement that such a view on PPTs would offer is problematic. In a way quite reminiscent of Moltmann’s simulation and Pearson’s emphatising, Gibbard’s agents may treat the others’ plans as if they were their own. If Bea takes Alf’s plans to prescribe her own behaviour, she has a planning problem, so she should signal this and reject Alf’s proposal. But, as Gibbard himself admits, we are not logically forced to treat differences in plans between ourselves and others as disagreements.

Buekens takes up the task of accommodating the “expressive-affective dimension” of judgements of taste. He proposes what he calls a “semantically kosher alternative to traditional expressivism” in particular one that can face the Frege-Geach problem. He defends a version of semantic minimalism combined with speech act pluralism, in the sense of admitting that “one can perform different speech acts, hence create different pragmatic commitments with one single utterance.” When we utter an unrestricted judgement featuring a PPT, there is one proposition that is the content of the sentence we assert, a proposition whose truth value is not judge-dependent. But by uttering such judgements, we can perform two speech acts at the same time. We can perform an assertive speech act and an expressive speech act. Relativists and contextualists miss this important pragmatic layer, the expressive-affective dimension of the utterance. This variety of expressivism is said to be kosher because it does not claim there are two distinct kinds of contents; the expressive dimension has to do with prag-

106 Schroeder [2000], p. 4.
107 Ridge [2013] criticises Gibbard’s view on disagreement claiming that it accommodates disagreement only via a transcendental argument. MacFarlane [2014] offers similar criticisms, although he presupposes his own analysis of disagreement (as preclusion of joint accuracy), and stands against expressivism of all sorts. For this reason, we choose to give here Ridge’s objections, as he provides a positive expressivist account.
108 Ridge [2013] proposes an analysis of disagreement based on conflicting prescriptions, which would be how someone advises someone else to act under suitably idealised conditions. To give such honest, fully candid, and non-hypocritical advice, “one must take oneself to be inclined to act as one advises ones interlocutor to act if one were in exactly her circumstances.” (Ridge [2013], p. 57) Again, then, we see a form of self-application of the prescription provided by a normative judgement.
109 In Buekens [2011].
110 Related to the notion of expressiveness of derogatory terms recently discussed by Potts and first introduced by Cruse [1986]. See fn. 66 above.
111 Buekens [2011], p. 641.
112 Buekens adds, he is a minimalist but “not necessarily in the more radical sense, defended by semantic minimalists who contend that the content of ‘what the speaker said’ is radically underdetermined by the compositionally determined semantic content of the utterance (Cappelen and Lepore [2005], Borg [2004]).
113 This is a neat difference with Moltmann’s view which separates the assertive and the expressive dimensions.
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According to Buekens, there are no faultless disagreements because when Alf and Bea exchange their judgements, “there is not one proposition the truth of which two speakers can disagree about and yet both be right.”\footnote{Buekens [2011], p. 637.} In a seeming faultless disagreement, Alf asserts that he finds this cake tasty, Bea asserts that she doesn’t. The assertive contents expressed by Alf and Bea are not contradictory. The main difference between I find this cake tasty and This cake is tasty is that the former does not carry the expressive-affective dimension. The conflict arises only in the expressive dimension, not in the assertive one. When Alf asserts that he finds the cake tasty, he expresses his subjective state on the basis of her own experience of her state. Alf has infallible access to his own undergoings. This explains the faultlessness in a case taste dispute. The conflict or opposition results from how the expressive-affective dimension is grasped. To interpret the expressive-affective dimension conveyed by Alf’s utterance, Bea has to appeal to her imaginative power. She grasps Alf’s expression of his own state if she can imagine herself as having the attitude reported by Alf. Suppose she has tried the cake and her subjective experience was one of displeasure. Then she cannot imagine herself as having the attitude reported by Alf. This view on unrestricted judgements reflects, according to Buekens, the “subject-transcendent” of unrestricted judgements.\footnote{Buekens [2011], p. 649. A related claim will be made in own positive approach, although we will not make this play at the level of pragmatics as Buekens understands it here, and we will not think of persuasion as a goal but rather as a by-product of the claim to the agreement of others made by taste judgements.} For Buekens, this recommending dimension is a distinctive aim of social persuasion that taste judgements have, for “only by uttering the former sentence I hope to change your attitudes.”\footnote{Buckmann [2014].} Gutzmann offers a similar expressivist approach except that for him everything gets to be played at the level of semantics, so he could be said to give a non-kosher alternative.\footnote{Buckmann [2014].} He argues for a view of meaning comprising a truth-conditional layer and a use-conditional layer. Following Kaplan [1999], who squibs an idea of how to specify felicity conditions for typical examples of interjections like ouch and oops, Gutzmann is optimistic about how these two layers can be integrated. Gutzmann proposes what he calls a hybrid semantics in which truth and use conditions can work side by side. He adopts a straightforward indexical analysis on the truth-conditional level with judge dependence at the level of character, so that This cake is tasty typically boils down to This cake is tasty for Alf when Alf is the speaker. This account obviously ensures that This cake is tasty but I don’t find it tasty is a contradiction. On the use level, “PPT utterances often
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carry a normative component about what shall be considered as tasty." The truth-conditional layer takes care of the faultlessness of a taste dispute: when Alf says *This is tasty for me* and Bea says *This is not tasty for me*, no one is proved to be wrong. The use-conditional layer takes care of there being a disagreement in a taste dispute. Dialogue participants disagree on what shall count as tasty in the utterance context.

An issue with non-kosher expressivism is that it claims that the expression relation is the same for prescriptive and for descriptive sentences; these differ in the kind of state they express, not in the expression relation itself. But then one has to explain how the expression relation can work and harmonise two different sorts of content. We won’t review this kind of objection here but rather indicate that expressivism creates a division between descriptive and prescriptive sentences, between kinds of meaning, or between kinds of contents that sentences express, and then has to face the problem of the union and resemblance. How can these two kinds of sentences, meanings, or mental contents interact? If they are so similar, then what exactly is the decisive difference? In other words, if truth- and felicity-conditions are as similar as Kaplan [1999] suggested, then should not we try to find a way to conceptualise meaning in such a way that we put these two together instead of making a division?

Kosher expressivists do not go that far but this solution again introduces a separation between descriptive and prescriptive discourse, for apparently only taste judgements would require speech act pluralism to make room for the expressive-affective dimensions. Furthermore, if one claims that an unrestricted judgement like *This cake is tasty* may have equal semantic content as a generalisation like *People (in a survey) find this cake tasty*, then if there is no contradiction in [8-a] there ought to be a contradiction in [8-b] but this does not seem to be the case (as already indicated in chapter 2, subsection 2.3.3):

(8) A: This is tasty but...
   a. ...I don’t find it tasty. (?)
   b. ...people don’t find it tasty.

On the other hand, the weak link between the assertive and the expressive-affective dimension opens up too many possibilities. The semantic content of, e.g., *This cake is tasty* does not dictate which attitude is the right one to express. However, there is a practical sense in which not just any gesture or behavioural pattern fits an evaluation like *This cake is tasty*. While some typical gestures accompany such a positive evaluation, other gestures typically go with a negative evaluation, to the effect that showing a typical gesture of the latter form while making a positive evaluation would have the effect of suggesting that the speaker

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118 Gutzmann [2014], p. 16.
119 Schroeder [2008b] provides a neat argument for this point.
120 As Buekens [2011], p. 641, suggests.
is being ironic or otherwise insincere. So simply how things are with an agent when she speaks is too weak a requirement, for there are typical gestures and behaviour which “do not belong” to This cake is tasty.

On the other hand, the invitation to empathise with the speaker is too weak. First, because in general, when making an invitation one is prepared to take a “no” for an answer. A taste disagreement is more than a disappointment for the speaker: the addressee who disagrees does not merely turn down an invitation, she questions the very claim that the speaker made. Second, because a condition for making an invitation is that one can assume that the invitee is available. This would predict that This cake is tasty could not succeed to express this attitude if the interlocutor has already uttered This cake is not tasty. But this is precisely the context in which an evaluation has expressive force! Unlike an invitation, a normative claim succeeds in being made even when one knows that in fact, those onto whom the claim is laid down are not prepared to abide.

In this section we have discussed four different poles in the debate concerning the semantics of PPTs. We shall now step back and address more general issues underlying these modeling strategies of gradability and PPTs.

### 3.3 Judge-dependence, subjectivity, objectivity

Our main goal here is to give a critical assessment of how subjectivity is conceived within the theories of gradability and PPTs we have presented in previous sections. Subjectivity is conceptualised as some form or other of judge-dependence. An adjective is subjective when its contribution to the meaning or conversational effects of a sentence where it features somehow depends on agents individually conceived. This is the main axis around which the debate revolves. The issue is, or so we shall argue, that subjectivity is being placed within a semantic framework which is built upon a primordial eradication of the subject, a priority to resist psychologism in the time of Frege. Our first point will be that by putting the subject as a judge anchor of sorts, the functions yielded by these systems are not rules governing the successful interpretation of sentences in communication. Judge-dependence as privacy or privileged access threatens the possibility to accommodate intersubjective understanding. This is discussed in subsection 3.3.1. Our second point will be that subjectivity we end up with is objectivised, as argued in subsection 3.3.2.

#### 3.3.1 A battle about where to place the judge

When we speak of judge-dependence here, we intend to cover not only the issue disputed by those four views on PPTs we have reviewed in section 3.2. We also wish to cover the idea of how a subject is thought to play a role in the semantics of gradable adjectives within the frameworks of degree-based or delineation-based
theories, as judge-dependent degree mappings, standards, delineations, or dimensional compositions. So in this general sense we use here, judge-dependence does not just refer to the discussion of whether it is syntactically and/or semantically motivated to represent a judge, and where to place it, but rather to a view that holds that some aspect of meaning may depend on a single individual.

This idea of subjectivity becomes an obstacle for an account of intersubjective understanding, for the non-privacy of linguistic rules, and for the normativity of unrestricted judgments. When the subject is conceived of as an individual on whom the meaning of an adjective or judgment hinges, we are left with no intersubjective criterion according to which there can be applications and misapplications. This argument is the springboard towards our own positive account of how subjectivity is related to gradability and normativity developed in the subsequent chapters.

To be clear, we will not claim here that judgments featuring PPTs and other gradable adjectives are not truth-evaluable, as a classical expressivist would have it. Our claim is more subtle but in a way, also more principled. We think one may well define truth-conditional content of taste and related judgments, as shown by the many different attempts we have seen so far. We just think this is a deadlock in the pursuit of the question about the subjectivity in the meaning of (some) gradable adjectives. A truth-conditional account puts the psychological realm of individuals aside of that which constitutes meaning. Therefore, when one tries to put the subject in that picture, the equilibrium that gives truth-conditional semantics its force and drive are lost. The expressivist move does not fare much better because it puts subjectivity aside as an additional layer whose integration remains to be explained, and whose non-cognitive character is assumed but not justified, as if emotions and affects could simply be deemed non-cognitive. We will plea for a different account of meaning and subjectivity. One should be able to say when a taste judgement is true, but this should not constitute the starting point for the characterisation of the meaning of PPTs and other gradable adjectives.

Meaning that matters to truth-conditional semantics is first and foremost sentential meaning, and the meaning of a sentence is exhausted by the specification of what should be the case for the sentence to be true. Intersubjective understanding is warranted by the objectivity of truth: an addressee understands what a speaker says because that which determines what is meant are the truth conditions for the sentence, which are independent of what one or other dialogue participant may in fact know about what is the case. Given a context, the meaning of a sentence is that which obtains that makes the sentence be true. The non-privacy of linguistic rules is given by the equal accessibility that, in principle, any language user has to what has to be the case for a sentence to be true. Rules which recursively define the truth-conditions for the sentences of a language are normative only insofar as one abides by a governing principle according to which telling the truth, or taking others to do so, is what we ought to do.
This approach to semantics rests on a well-known anti-psychologistic attitude, by means of which contingent features of linguistic agents are cut away from what is relevant for linguistic meaning. But when the subject is cut off the notion of meaning in this way, putting it back in the picture is dubious and problematic. On the one hand, it seems that the resulting notion of subjectivity is as a form of judge-dependence, reminiscent of the Cartesian picture of subjectivity that has been long discussed and regarded with suspicion. (More on this will come in chapters 4 and 5.) On the other hand, this is problematic because the addition of a judge on which meaning somehow depends endangers the explanatory power of truth-conditional semantics in different fronts. Contextualism argues that a plurality of idiolects concerning PPTs and related adjectives exist which leads to a conceptual dead-end when one considers how a single individual may give herself a linguistic rule and follow it. For relativism, a plurality of realities — one per judge — seems to be created, which threatens the intersubjective warrant in the truth-conditional picture. Nuanced absolutism rests on the assumption that the realm of experiences we communicate with evaluative judgements is exclusively accessible to each individual, where each judge enjoys a privileged and therefore unique and incorrigible view on herself. When a judge is the only one that has access to that which determines the truth-conditions of her claim, intersubjective understanding melts down. Finally, expressivism also aligns with judge-dependent accounts, notably in how they conceive of the assertive dimension, but also in the way expression is associated with the realm of single individuals.

**Contextualism and a plurality of idiolects**

The contextualist places judge-dependence in the relation between language and reality. The claim that we live in a myriad of idiolects is not new in semantics. In our discussion we do not want to address those past claims about the need or convenience of a plurality of idiolects, we rather scrutinise the idea that a plurality of propositional contents — one per judge or relevant group, as different contextualists argue — could make communication possible when our judgements involve PPTs.

According to the contextualist account, the participants of a faultless disagreement attach different senses to the same expression. As we saw in subsection 3.2.1, it is a consequence of this analysis that when two judges actually agree in their judgements, this is not necessarily done on the basis of common understanding. Both may use the same term while they actually hinge on different standards.

\[121\] Here and below, we have in mind the classical division of Ogden and Richards dividing the mental, the realm of language, and reality as components of a theory of meaning.

\[122\] Cf., Chomsky [1955], Davidson [1986]. But while these authors give arguments to defend the idea why linguistics and/or philosophy of language should focus on idiolects, the contextualist in our discussion does not. Lacking such a defense, and assuming that a formal theory of meaning should make room for successful communication, the claim of contextualists is lacking.
Therefore, assent or acceptance of a speaker’s judgement is not an agreement with its content. This assimilation of disagreement to misunderstanding is quite unattractive because it turns out that communication involving such judgements is not possible. In very simple terms, if an eavesdropper Carl listens to a conversation between Alf and Bea in which Bea agrees to Alf’s claim that *This cake is tasty*, and if Carl judges and/or expresses that he agrees with Alf’s claim, then he may not agree to the same as Bea has agreed to.

A deeper problem, one related to the rule-following considerations, relates to the idea that faultless disagreement reduces to metalinguistic disagreement. This view assumes that individuals can give themselves rules and follow them. Such an idea fails for two reasons. First, because if it is up to an individual to determine the rules she follows, she may change them anytime, which means that her linguistic behaviour is not normatively guided by these alleged rules. If judges may employ different linguistic conventions, and if no one is in a better position to decide which linguistic conventions hold for PPTs, then no other person than the judge herself can provide a warrant for correctness and incorrectness. And as it happens, a person’s tastes change, they may even change in a very short amount of time. If an agent can change the conventions she abides by as she pleases, then she cannot be said to be guided by those rules. Metalinguistic contextualism holds that linguistic conventions concerning PPTs are individual, judge-bound. Such an idea seems to carry an inconsistency. A convention or an agreement involves two parties. A single judge cannot convene with himself how he should use an adjective.

**Relativism and individual worlds**

The relativist places judge-dependence in the relation between mind and reality. Their plea for judge-dependence of truth seems to amount to a claim that the interlocutors in a faultless disagreement designate different parallel realities, where the opinion of each of the interlocutors describes the circumstances in her context of assessment. With the non-sharedness of the reality, the criteria of correctness for asserting unrestricted judgements like *This is tasty* evaporate. When the experiences of which a subject can truthfully talk about are thought of as being given to him and only to him, these experiences stop playing to role of referents. Truth can therefore no longer play the role of being the warrant for intersubjective understanding.

Suppose now the relativist claims that actually any judgment containing a PPT refers to the factual experience undergone by the judge, so that unrestricted judgements designate the state of affairs or possible world (or whichever truth-

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123 Cf., Wittgenstein [1958a], Kripke [1982], Stein [1997], etc.

124 Possibly one cannot defeat Köhler’s relativism this way but given how close he comes to contextualism, one can probably extend the argument against contextualism given above. See fn. 65 above.
maker one employs) in which the judge in fact has a certain experience of, e.g.,
pleasure when eating a cake. If the agent’s determination is fully given by facts of
the world, she does not describe an inner reality. In that case, however, it seems
that adding a judge in the index of evaluation is just notation, a label for empir-
cial phenomena that are not subjective in any specific sense beyond there being
an agent whose name can be attached to the phenomena under consideration.
There is nothing subjective left because experience is turned into an empirical
phenomenon which an agent reports.

If the judgements do not describe the judge’s factual experience as part of
reality, then the judge is somehow not part of reality but she determines the
truth of her assertions. In such case, the border between mind and reality is
blurred. This softening of the boundaries may not seem a problem by itself
but given the idea of meaning embraced by the truth-conditional supporter, the
consequences are unappealing, for it seems that unrestricted judgements may
be true just by virtue of someone’s thinking that it is the case. But then the
warrant for intersubjective understanding which is at the core of the idea of
meaning provided by truth-conditional semantics comes under threat, because if
the thoughts of a judge may be the sole criterion for the correctness of what she
says, then that criterion is per definition not shared. In other words, if all that
matters for the truth of This is tasty is whether a judge likes a cake, when the
judge likes the cake her judgement is in a sense self-verifying.\footnote{A relativist view like Stephenson’s comes with a pragmatic theory of conversation in which
assertion of $\varphi$ is allowed when the speaker believes that $\varphi$ is true. Even though the conversational
effect of adding this assertion to the common ground is that all conversation participants are
thereby committed to agree with the speaker, the speaker’s own belief of the truth of unrestricted
judgements like This cake is tasty does not depend on anything but herself, and this is the
problem we are signaling here.}

Absolutists and privileged access

The more nuanced trend of absolutism we have presented places judge-dependence
in the relation between language and mind. Since truth-conditions and content of
taste judgements are conceived as absolute, i.e., universally shared by the speakers
of a community, in this proposal there is no loss of intersubjectivity as encoun-
tered above, in relativism and contextualism. However, the first-person based
genericity deciding which people come under the One quantifier comes with a
distinct first-personal cognitive access to the propositional contents expressed by
these judgements. So there is a form of judge-dependence in these views, as re-
gards access to that which determines what property the evaluation expresses.\footnote{Pearson [2013a] entitles her article: “A judge-free semantics for PPTs”. She keeps her
promise, as she “does not appeal to a judge parameter as a component of the evaluation index”
(p. 1). However, first-person orientation is a sort of epistemic privilege that an individual has
with respect to some of her claims. In this sense, there is a form of judge dependence in her
proposal.}
However, there is no uniform definition of what “first-person orientation” is. Here we distinguish and discuss separately four different claims that are associated to this notion. However, the core idea of first-person orientation depicted by their theories is by-and-large shared.

The first claim is that asserting or interpreting a taste judgement involves the application of the property that is expressed by this sentence to others as if to oneself. As we saw before, the agents whom an agent identifies with should be those who are normal “in the relevant respects”, after one has abstracted away from the particularities of their own person and situation. A judgement like This cake is tasty generically quantifies over people in the domain with whom the agent identifies with, who are thus said to share the agent’s assessment. We generalise beyond our own experience to the likely experience of anyone with whom we empathise who might eat the cake and claim that they find it tasty too. On the one hand, this is somewhat surprising because it seems that the first-person’s distinctive perspective is precisely given by that which makes an agent who that agent is, all particularities comprised. The idea of simulation might involve a difficulty: if the agent generalises her own situation abstracting from features of his situation that are particular to herself, then the generalisation may well ignore that she finds the cake tasty, which may be taken as a feature of his situation that is particular to herself. On the other hand, if an agent can only rely on inherently subjective contents in order to determine her own assessments, how can she ever take others to share her views given that these are per definition of a purely subjective attitude?

The second claim is that an agent needs “direct evidence” to make taste judgements, which is supposedly made clear by the contrast of an unrestricted judgement with a claim like The cake must be tasty, which are taken to be based on “indirect evidence”. This is a most reasonable idea if by “direct evidence” one understands “experience of the relevant sort” but if by “direct evidence” one means something like “evidence that only the experiencer can have”, then this idea carries significant philosophical consequences. The basic issue is that this notion of “direct evidence” related to our embodied experience of, e.g., tasting a cake, is taken to be grounds on which the truth of a statement can be supported, whereas the same sort of embodied experience seems to resist this role. When considering, for instance, the Müller-Lyer illusion illustrated in chapter fig. 2.1, the visual experience we have is certainly not firm ground on which the truth of a claim like The segment in the image above is longer than the one in the image below can be supported. What we want to point out is that talk of truth

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127 Proviso: even though these different senses appear in these authors work, not all four belong to either one or other author.

128 This is the kind of constraint we tried to capture in Crespo and Fernández 2011.

129 Already present in Stephenson 2007’s remarks about the attitude verb find and made acceptable as well by how this association is made in discussions about linguistic evidentiality.

130 Or, in the form of Berkeley’s classical example (Dialogue 1), my experiences of finding the
3.3. Judge-dependence, subjectivity, objectivity

exclusively on the basis of our sensory experience is problematic (more on this will be said in chapter 5).

When we have evidence for a certain judgement, we can provide a justification for why we claim that the judgement is true, or at least this is how we usually think of evidence. But in the case of taste judgements, this supposed “direct evidence” I have when I have tasted the cake cannot function as justification that may lead someone else to assent to the truth of my claim. I tell you that this cake is tasty, you ask me why, I tell you Because I find it tasty! This just misses the whole point of justification. It seems then that “direct evidence” is actually not evidence at all, at least insofar as evidence can provide justification for the truth of our claims. If it makes sense to claim that a taste judgement is true, then, justification should be found outside of the experience of a single agent. It is completely reasonable to pay attention to the requirement posed by certain adjectives concerning the experience of the speaker. But this observation is not equivalent to calling evidence one’s experiences.

The third claim is that taste judgements require first-personal cognitive access to propositional contents. Conditions for grasping content essentially differ between dialogue participants because each participant has immediate or privileged access to her and only her experience. But this leads to the undesirable scenario in which an agent may know the truth of a claim but where no one else is in a position to accept that.

The fourth claim is that sincere expression of one’s opinion in matters of taste cannot fail to be true. But if conditions of grasping contents are individual and lead to infallible knowledge, there is no room for correction. This is the locus of the Cartesian nature of the idea of self forged by these views. Those who defend an idea of subjectivity based upon notions like infallible or privileged epistemic access to one’s own undergoings, e.g., to one’s tastes or moods, follow a long but not thereby unproblematic tradition: the linguistic self seems to coincide with the Cartesian self, the ego cogito. But when this picture is adopted, no criterion for truth ensues because a single agent cannot set up for herself a normative framework to name her undergoings or experiences. If there is no way in which an agent may fail to truly say whether she finds the cake tasty, and if there is no criterion which demarcates who the agent may identify with (given that an agent water in a vat when I insert my cold hand in it, but I may have no evidence that the water in the vat is hot. In fact, I may have evidence that the water in the vat is not hot, and still have an experience of finding the water in the vat hot. We do not want to conclude, like Berkeley does, that these properties are not physical.

\[131\] Facts about how Japanese necessarily requires an epistemic marker like must to say something like The cake is tasty to Mary, so that one should always say roughly The cake must be tasty to Mary, and about Tibetan evidential markers for signaling endophoric judgements and exophoric judgements, underscore this idea. See Backhouse [1994] and Garrett [2001].

\[132\] So here we disagree with the soundness of the idea that Japanese perception verbs and PPTs require privileged access to one’s own sensations and emotions (as endorsed by Bylinina 2014 and put forth by McCready and Ogata 2007).
may not fail in expressing herself, meaning that whatever she say she's like must be the case), then an agent’s first-person based generalisation cannot fail to be true.

We do believe one should see relevant experience as a requirement for making an evaluative judgement involving strongly evaluatives, but to see a particular judgement or a self-ascription as an instance where each and only each separate individual has the last word is not the right path. We believe that agents have a singular phenomenological access to their own experiences, this will be discussed in chapters 4 and 5. But we also believe that our judgements of taste are not descriptions of states to which a subject has privileged access, to the effect that only the speaker can say whether her description is correct.

The issue is somewhat deeper. The point is: even if I cannot fail to be aware that I am having fun or that I find a cake tasty, this does not mean I have knowledge of it, in the sense that I have a criterion that can serve to convince others. Can I doubt whether I have fun or whether I find a cake tasty? Diachronically, I surely can: I can change my mind. But in general, when we are having fun, there is little room for doubting. If I see the arrows in the Müller-Lyer illusion, I can first see the segment in the image above as being longer than the one in the image below, and after you draw parallel lines showing that the segments are equally long, I can see them as being equal. The switch taking place here is not based on a change in the state of affairs, but rather in my own experience. What was wrong with the previous experience? Is the new experience the right one? Right and wrong are not the kind of predicates you can apply to an experience.

Expressivists and the individualistic view of subjectivity

In spite of the subject-transcendence that Buekens argues for, his view on subjectivity is nonetheless individualistic, similar in that respect to other views we have encountered so far. In making a taste judgement, an agent first and foremost speaks on the basis of her own experiences, which she cannot fail to identify: “speakers are authoritative about what they express when expressing it”\(^{133}\). The speaker is thus the ultimate source for setting which attitude we, as audience, are required to empathise with. The problem with this view, as with other conceptualisations of subjectivity we have encountered so far, is that it makes it very difficult — if not impossible — for an addressee to be sure whether she’s interpreting Alf correctly. But then in case Alf lies and says This cake is tasty just to make a compliment, we, as audience, are required to empathise with an attitude that is not the attitude actually held by the speaker. If the speaker is

\(^{133}\)This is similar to how Pearson [2013a] sees judgements like This is tasty or I find this cake tasty as reporting sensory experience to which each speaker has privileged; for Stephenson [2007], we report direct experience of the individual’s internal psychological state.

\(^{134}\)Buekens [2011], p. 650.
the ultimate source of the attitude, and he may express an attitude he does not actually hold, it is unclear what we as audience should empathise with.

Gutzmann conceives of expressivism by adding a use-conditional layer next to the truth-conditional one. He openly endorses judge-dependence of character at the truth-conditional level, so to this extent his account clearly falls under the criticisms we have been offering here. In his own words, “if one makes a PPT-utterance, one is first and foremost making a claim about one owns (sic) taste”\footnote{Gutzmann [2014], p. 19.} Even though he argues that the use-conditional layer develops a deontic force, because he conceives of the use conditional level as fixing what shall count as $G$ (e.g., as tasty when the claim made is \textit{This cake is tasty}), this nonetheless puts forward an unilateral claim on what shall count as tasty which can be seen as a variant of the metalinguistic move already reviewed above..

### 3.3.2 The objective subject of degrees and delineations

The second general objection we raise is that a truth-conditional approach to natural language meaning forces us to objectivise the subject. Hints of this objections appear in the critical notes we have made earlier in this section, here we try to summarise the core of the argument. When we try to put back a subjective element into the meaning of PPTs once the meaning of gradable adjectives through the lenses of either degree-based or delineation based theories, we lose grip of subjectivity we were seeking for. A judge-dependent mapping, cut-off point, delineation, or composition of dimensions, is in any case an expression of how an object relates to other objects, and not an expression of what we experience with that object. This argument will be extended in chapter 5, subsection 5.1.4 once we get to review the notion of intentionality underlying the notion of meaning that comes with the truth-conditional framework.

Of course, how someone compares two objects says something about how she experiences them. But when the subject’s role is limited to that of an anchor for a mapping or a cut-off point, as the degree-based theorist has it, the procedure by which one decides whether to call something, e.g., \textit{tasty}, is the result of a measurement procedure. Instead of expressing one’s embodied experience, the adjective is applied on the basis of a systematic onlook at the objects of our experience. So the adjective actually expresses a reflection on our experience, rather than our experience \textit{tout court} (think again of the Müller-Lyer image to see what this distinction refers to). However, it seems that the moment we accept that we call something \textit{tasty} after duly comparing our current experience with the ones we have had in the past, we express a theory about the subject rather than the subject herself.

Both sources of subjectivity fitting the degree-based view lead to trouble. In the case of standards’ subjectivity a subject decides how much of property $P$ she
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thinks there should be in an object $o$ to consider it in the extension of $P$, then the speaker claims that she knows where the precise cut-off point for $P$ lies. There is a fact of the matter, a difference in how much of property $P$ $o$ has which decides whether $o$ is, e.g., tasty, namely, how much of property $P$ $o$ has. In the case of mapping subjectivity, a subject decides how much of property $P$ she thinks there is in an object $o$, then the speaker claims that $o$ has property $P$ to degree $d$. As far as this very agent is concerned, this is a measurement, so it is an objective matter. Once we take a point of view different from that agent, that agent’s subjectivity is simply given by what she judges to be the case. In either case, subjectivity is objectified.

The delineation view focuses on how an object compares to others in a comparison class. Subjectivity can enter either by fixing a delineation or the priority among dimensions of an adjective. In the former case, a delineation is a set of objects forming a comparison class, and the subject is a mere contextual factor fixing the selection of objects. In the latter case, the subject determines how delineations of different dimensions are put together, but the orderings within each delineation are still given by the comparison class that is picked, so it is ultimately a relation among the objects under comparison what determines what the subject calls tasty. So whether something is tasty is, in the end, objective: the fact of the matter that there is a relevant agent and that for that agent the composition or the delineation are so-and-so. The agent becomes a feature of context rather than a subject whose felt experience counts. The subject as a feature of context is more like a prop in a scene than the actor who speaks out her mind and who requires her claim to become part of a common ground. Subjectivity is objectified.

The challenge ahead of us is to work out a notion of subjectivity that does not wind up being objectified and that does not isolate individuals from each other. Subjectivity can and, we shall argue, should be conceived as being inherently related to interactive processes taking place in the interspace of subjects. We should not see it as a phenomenon occurring next to the facts of the world that language allows us to talk about, but it should not be turned into a realm upon which single agents can have access to.

3.4 Conclusion and work ahead

We close this long chapter with a brief summary of the lessons and challenges left by the existing views explored here.

Degree- and delineation-based accounts of gradability are powerful frameworks but they accommodate subjectivity at the price of objectivising it. For semantics to be possible, we need intersubjectivity. Objectivity is simply one way to cash this out, not one that properly preserves what is subjective about a subject when we try to put it into the picture. The delineation-based account makes
3.4. Conclusion and work ahead

less problematic assumptions that the degree-based one given that the issue of having private measure functions is a conceptual loophole in this approach to subjectivity. Relativists, contextualists, nuanced absolutists, and expressivists with respect to the meaning of PPTs associate subjectivity with an individually determined feature of some aspect of the meaning of these adjectives. The subject in her experiential and embodied determinations does not find a place within the boundaries of truth-conditional semantics, for the price to pay is too high, as we lose grip on explaining successful communication in conversations, be those agreements or disagreements. These approaches point at different aspects that surely play an important role in modeling the meaning of PPTs and related adjectives. Both context of utterance and context of assessment play important roles, as pointed out by contextualists and relativists, respectively. Taste judgements reach out to others, they transcend the individual, something that both absolutists and expressivists point out and which both camps trace back to Kant. As the former suggest, taste judgements claim other people’s assent and in that sense they are not so different from just any other judgement. But as the latter put forth, there is some affective and expressive trade going on when we make taste judgements, they relate to reactions like *Yuck!* or *Yummy!* which are typically thought to fall outside the scope of truth-conditional semantics.

In the following two chapters, we take up the lessons drawn here. In chapters 4 and 5 we revise the idea of how subjectivity and meaning can come in contact with each other by a path which does not assume judge-dependence because it is couched on the phenomenological stream according to which embodiment, perception and sense-making are essentially intersubjective affairs. Our work ahead is to bridge a tradition which sees language as a calculus of meaning with an anthropological conception of language. Our first move, in chapter 4, will be to deepen our understanding of Kant’s view on aesthetic judgement, to see what the claim of universality made by taste judgements exactly amounts to, and how taste judgements relate to other judgements. The proper place of subjectivity is not in a judge-argument but rather in a community of sense-making, an idea we will support by looking at how taste and similar judgements relate to what Wittgenstein called certainties. This epistemological quest will shed light on how subjectivity enters into the semantics of evaluative judgements while these still make a normative claim when formulated unrestrictedly, and how to take up these insights in a semantic framework that does not force us to objectivise the subject.

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136 This way of framing traditions is actually presented as a pair of alternatives by Hacker 2014. We think these alternatives need to meet.