Disagreement and Attitudinal Relativism

Jack Spencer

Forthcoming in *Mind*

May 20, 2014: Penultimate Draft

1 Introduction

There are many expressions about which it is controversial whether they are context-sensitive.[1] These *contested expressions* include knowledge ascriptions ('knows'), predicates of taste ('tasty', 'delicious', 'cool'), colour ascriptions ('red'), epistemic modals ('might', 'must', 'probably'), deontic modals ('ought', 'may'), and indicative conditionals. A dispute about whether an expression is context-sensitive is a dispute between a contextualist and an invariantist. A *contextualist* about an expression claims that the expression is context-sensitive; an *invariantist* denies this.

Although the dispute between contextualists and invariantists is about subsentential expressions, it is often helpful to cast the dispute at the sentential level. Let a *contested sentence* be a sentence that contains one contested expression but no other potentially context-sensitive expressions. The dispute between contextualists and invariantists then centres around the following question: Do utterances of a contested sentence express the same proposition irrespective of the context of utterance? Invariantists say yes; contextualists say no. Invariantists think that there is more cross-context

[1] In setting up the dispute between contextualists and invariantists, I follow Ross and Schroeder, both in their 2013 (pp. 43–51) and in previous drafts of their paper that were made available online. Ross and Schroeder focus on 'epistemic' expressions, such as epistemic modals, deontic modals, and indicative conditionals. But as they note (see their n. 5), a similar dialectic arises for other contested expressions.

synonymy,[2] and contextualists think that there is less.

One of the main arguments against contextualism is the *argument from lost disagreement*, an argument which attempts to use claims of cross-context disagreement to establish claims of cross-context synonymy. Take for example the contested sentence w: 'Water might be an element'.[3] According to contextualism about 'might', utterances of w express different propositions in different contexts. When Thales, in c_1, utters w, he affirms the proposition *that it is consistent with the evidence in* c_1 *that water is an element*.[4] When Cavendish, upon discovering the composition of water in c_2, utters $\neg w$, he denies the proposition *that it is consistent with the evidence in* c_2 *that water is an element*. Contextualism thus predicts that Thales and Cavendish do not disagree; for the proposition that Thales affirms is distinct from, and consistent with, the proposition that Cavendish denies.[5] By contrast, invariantism seems to predict that Thales and Cavendish do disagree; for if invariantism is true, then Thales affirms the very proposition that Cavendish denies. So the fact that Thales and Cavendish *seem* to disagree tells against contextualism and in favour of invariantism. This is called the argument from lost disagreement because certain cross-context disagreements 'go missing' under contextualism.

In their recent paper 'Reversibility or Disagreement', Jacob Ross and Mark Schroeder attack both invariantism and the argument from lost disagreement. Ross and Schroeder draw attention to a phenomenon that they call reversibility. (More on what reversibility is below.) According to Ross and Schroeder, invariantists who motivate their view by employing the argument from lost disagreement face a destructive dilemma. Either such invari-

[2]Two utterances are cross-context synonymous iff (a) the utterances are made in different contexts, and (b) the utterances express the same proposition.

[3]This example is from Ross and Schroeder (p. 44).

[4]Here I use a simple form of contextualism about 'might' to illustrate the general contours of the argument from lost disagreement. There are, of course, other, more sophisticated forms of contextualism, and different forms of contextualism make different predictions about what utterances of w in c_1 express.

[5]There are forms of contextualism on which Thales affirms the very proposition that Cavendish denies. But every contextualism about 'might' predicts that there are some contexts, c_x and c_y, such that an utterance of w in c_x expresses a different proposition than does an utterance of w in c_y.

antists are unable to account for reversibility, in which case their view stands refuted, or they are unable to account for the cross-context disagreements that go missing under contextualism, in which case their view stands unmotivated. Reversibility or disagreement: according to Ross and Schroeder, invariantists can account for one, or the other, but not for both.

I believe that there is a path between the horns of Ross and Schroeder's dilemma. In this essay I develop a relativistic account of belief, which I call *attitudinal relativism*. Attitudinal relativism is an interesting and plausible account of belief, I think, even before we start to grapple with Ross and Schroeder's dilemma. According to attitudinal relativism, there is an unacknowledged social dimension along which beliefs can differ: one belief can be socially stronger than another. As we will see in sections 5 and 6, by drawing these social distinctions among beliefs we gain some needed explanatory power. Certain otherwise puzzling bits of propositional behaviour can be explained in a simple and satisfying way. When we turn our attention back to Ross and Schroeder, we find an added benefit. By using the resources of attitudinal relativism we can articulate a non-standard, more nuanced conception of disagreement. I accept this non-standard conception of disagreement, and I think that other invariantists should as well. For invariantists who accept this non-standard conception of disagreement can avoid both horns of Ross and Schroeder's dilemma; they can account for reversibility *and* for the disagreements that go missing under contextualism.

2 The disagreement thesis

The disagreement between Thales and Cavendish is the sort of cross-context disagreement that goes missing under contextualism. How do invariantists account for cross-context disagreements?

I take this to be the standard invariantist story.[6]

Remember the set-up. Thales sincerely utters w; Cavendish sincerely utters $\neg w$; and Thales and Cavendish seem to thereby disagree. According to invariantism about 'might', utterances of w express the same proposition irrespective of the context of utterance. To keep things simple, suppose that

[6]This explanation parallels Ross and Schroeder's (pp. 46–8).

utterances of w express the proposition *that water might be an element*, and that utterances of $\neg w$ express the proposition *that it is not the case that water might be an element*. An utterance is *sincere* just if the agent believes the proposition expressed by the utterance.[7] So, Thales, in sincerely uttering w, expresses his belief that water might be an element, and Cavendish, in sincerely uttering $\neg w$, expresses his belief that it is not the case that water might be an element. Say that an agent *disbelieves* that p just if the agent believes that $\neg p$. Then, according to invariantism, Thales believes the very proposition that Cavendish disbelieves; and it is plausible to think that when an agent believes the very proposition that another agent disbelieves, the two agents thereby disagree.

There are three important steps in this explanation.

(1) *Semantic invariance*: Utterances of the contested sentence (in this case, w) express the same proposition irrespective of the context of utterance, and likewise for the negation of the contested sentence.

(2) *Sincerity–belief link*: An agent sincerely utters a sentence only if she believes the proposition expressed by the utterance.

(3) *Belief/disbelief*: Any agent who believes that p disagrees with any agent who disbelieves that p.

All three steps are needed. Semantic invariance fixes the semantic facts, but the semantic facts by themselves make no predictions about disagreement. Whether agents disagree is a matter of what propositional attitudes they have. We therefore need to connect the semantic facts to facts about propositional attitudes, which the sincerity–belief link does. Finally, we need a theory about which patterns of propositional attitudes constitute disagreement, and belief/disbelief represents a plausible sufficient condition.

A striking fact about (1)-(3) is that they generalize. Thales expresses a belief by sincerely uttering w, but any agent in any context who sincerely utters w expresses the same belief. Cavendish expresses a belief by sincerely uttering $\neg w$, but any agent in any context who sincerely utters $\neg w$ expresses

[7] This definition of 'sincere' is from Ross and Schroeder (pp. 46–7). Here, and throughout the essay, I assume that utterances are assertive.

the same belief. So, if Thales and Cavendish disagree, then *any* agent who sincerely utters w disagrees with *any* agent who sincerely utters $\neg w$. In other words, (1)-(3) imply what Ross and Schroeder call the *disagreement thesis*: Any agent in any context who sincerely utters the contested sentence disagrees with any agent in any context who sincerely utters the negation of the contested sentence.[8]

The disagreement thesis does a good job of explaining the case of Thales and Cavendish. It does a good job of explaining other cases, too. Suppose that Neothales is a contemporary of Cavendish. At a conference, in the midst of presenting his work, Cavendish says, 'My results establish that the longstanding belief—that water might be an element—is false. Water is a compound.' Neothales, unconvinced, turns to his colleagues and says, 'I disagree. Water might be an element, never mind Cavendish and his so-called results.' It seems that Neothales and Cavendish disagree *for exactly the same reason* that Thales and Cavendish disagree, which is precisely what we would expect if the disagreement thesis were true.

3 Reversibility and correct contrariness

But the disagreement thesis is not true. Ross and Schroeder argue that there are counterexamples to the disagreement thesis, and I find their argument convincing.

The central component in Ross and Schroeder's argument is the phenomenon of reversibility. A sentence is *reversible* just if a fully rational agent can sincerely utter it, even under ideal conditions, while correctly believing that she will later sincerely utter its negation (p. 49). The simplest and least interesting cases of reversible sentences involve indexicals and demonstratives. Suzy, who is twelve years old, sincerely utters the sentence, 'I am twelve years old', while correctly believing that 365 days later she will sincerely utter the sentence, 'It is not the case that I am twelve years old'. But there are more surprising, more interesting cases. As Ross and Schroeder

[8]Ross and Schroeder define the disagreement thesis in terms of epistemic sentences, but nothing is lost in the move to contested sentences more generally.

point out (pp. 49–52),[9] for just about any contested expression, there are contested sentences containing the expression that are reversible. Here are two examples.

> ***Chug***: Bill, a freshman in college, utters the sentence, 'Chugging beer is fun', while correctly predicting that in thirty years, when his own son is a freshman in college, he will sincerely utter the sentence, 'It is not the case that chugging beer is fun'.

The second example involves 'might'.

> ***Old News***: Ankita is the anchorwoman for the *Morning News Hour*. As of this morning, it is unknown whether Axeworthy is the murderer, and so Ankita sincerely utters m: 'Axeworthy might be, and might not be, the murderer'. She knows, however, that in the afternoon the DNA test will be completed and its results announced, establishing whether Axeworthy is the murderer. Ankita also knows that the anchorman for the *Evening News Hour* is very sloppy, and she expects that this evening he will sincerely utter m. And she correctly predicts that when she hears this, she will (correctly) exclaim: 'Nonsense! It is not the case that Axeworthy might be, and might not be, the murderer.'[10]

There is nothing odd or irrational about Ankita. The sentence, 'Axeworthy might be, and might not be, the murderer', is reversible, and any semantic theory that says otherwise, or leaves no room for reversibility, is thereby shown to be inadequate.

Reversibility, it should be noted, is an instance of a more general phenomenon, which we might call *correct contrariness*. Cases of reversibility are the intrapersonal cases of correct contrariness. There are also interpersonal cases. Consider a variation on *Old News*.

[9] Ross and Schroeder say, 'For each kind of epistemic expression, there are epistemic sentences involving that kind of expression' that are reversible (2013, p. 49). Here I extend their view to contested expressions, more generally.

[10] This example is from Ross and Schroeder (p. 44). I have added the parenthetical remark. Also, where I use the word 'sincerely', Ross and Schroeder use the word 'assertively', but this difference is merely stylistic. I assume that all utterances are assertive, and Ross and Schroeder clearly intend Ankita's utterance to be sincere.

> ***Old News and Death***: As of this morning, it is unknown whether Axeworthy is the murderer, and so Ankita sincerely utters m: 'Axeworthy might be, and might not be, the murderer'. She knows, however, that in the afternoon the DNA test will be completed and its results announced, establishing whether Axeworthy is the murderer. Ankita knows that the anchorman for the *Evening News Hour* is very sloppy, and she expects that this evening he will sincerely utter m. Ankita will die before the DNA test results are announced, as she is aware. But Ankita predicts that when Bina, her punctilious co-anchor on the *Morning News Hour*, hears the sloppy anchorman sincerely utter m, Bina will (correctly) exclaim: 'Nonsense! It is not the case that Axeworthy might be, and might not be, the murderer.'

What is important about *Old News* and *Old News and Death* is not that Ankita sincerely utters a sentence and later sincerely utters its negation. Nothing turns on who makes the utterances. What is important is the deeper fact: that Ankita *judges* both that it is correct to sincerely utter a sentence and that later it will be correct to sincerely utter its negation.

For our purposes, three facts about correct contrariness are especially important.

First, cases of correct contrariness are counterexamples to the disagreement thesis. In *Old News*, Ankita does not disagree with her later self. In *Old News and Death*, Ankita does not disagree with Bina.

Second, if invariantism is true, then cases of correct contrariness are counterexamples to belief/disbelief. If invariantism about 'might' is true, for example, then utterances of m express the same proposition—call it, p_m—irrespective of the context of utterance. Ankita sincerely utters m in the morning, and sincerely utters $\neg m$ in the evening. Hence, if invariantism about 'might' is true, morning-Ankita, a temporal part of Ankita, believes that p_m, and evening-Ankita disbelieves that p_m. But the two temporal parts of Ankita do not disagree, so belief/disbelief is false.

Third, invariantists can account for correct contrariness only by maintaining that reversible sentences express relative propositions.[11] A proposition

[11] What follows is a compressed version of the argument in Ross and Schroeder (pp.

is *relative* just if its truth-value can vary from one context of evaluation to another; otherwise the proposition is *absolute*.[12] Suppose that Ankita knows that invariantism about 'might' is true. Then she knows that while she currently believes that p_m, she will later disbelieve that p_m. A fully rational agent can believe a proposition and believe that she will later disbelieve it only if (a) she believes that her future belief is afflicted by some epistemological defect[13] or (b) she believes that the truth-value of the proposition is different now than it will be when she disbelieves it. Ankita does not believe that her future belief is afflicted by some epistemological defect; this is precisely the import of the 'even under ideal conditions' clause in the definition of reversibility. So, if Ankita is fully rational (as *ex hypothesi* she is), then she must believe that p_m is a relative proposition, which is true relative to the context of evaluation that she currently occupies and false relative to the context of evaluation that she will occupy in the evening.

To summarize this section: if we want to be invariantists about a contested expression and we acknowledge that there are contested sentences containing the expression that are reversible (or more generally, admit of correct contrariness), then we must reject the disagreement thesis and we must maintain that the contested sentences express relative propositions.

4 The need for a new disagreement thesis

What is the cost to invariantism of rejecting the disagreement thesis?

According to Ross and Schroeder, the cost is very high indeed. Ross and

52–4).

[12] A 'relativist', as Ross and Schroeder define it (p. 46), is someone who, in my terminology, believes that there are relative propositions. In principle, one could be a contextualist about an expression and believe that there are relative propositions. After all, contextualism is a thesis about meaning, not about ontology. As it turns out, however, the main argument for the existence of relative proposition is that they are expressed by contested sentences. Contextualists do not think that relative propositions are expressed by contested sentences, so virtually all contextualists reject the existence of relative propositions. In the reverse direction, those who believe in relative propositions also believe that, irrespective of the context, contested sentences express relative propositions.

[13] What is an epistemological defect? Any of the myriad factors that make one exempt from Bas van Fraassen's 1984 Reflection Principle. For discussion, see Briggs 2009.

Schroeder say, 'What is problematic about invariantism is not that the invariantist cannot reconcile' correct contrariness and the disagreement thesis '(since no one can do so) but rather that while her opponents can happily reject the disagreement thesis, the invariantist cannot easily do so without undermining much of the motivation for her view' (2013, p. 71). Here we encounter the aforementioned dilemma. Invariantists must account for correct contrariness, since otherwise their view stands refuted. But, as Ross and Schroeder see it, the disagreement thesis is an indispensable part of the argument from lost disagreement. And since the argument from lost disagreement provides much of the motivation for invariantism, without the disagreement thesis invariantism stands unmotivated.

I see things differently. I agree that the disagreement thesis does important work in the argument from lost disagreement, and I agree that the disagreement thesis implies (wrongly) that there is disagreement in cases of correct contrariness. But I believe that a different conception of disagreement—a *new* disagreement thesis—can do the same work in the argument from lost disagreement, while avoiding the implication that there is disagreement in cases of correct contrariness.

What work does the disagreement thesis do in the argument from lost disagreement? It does a bit of negative work and a bit of positive work.

On the negative side, the disagreement thesis delivers a crucial premiss in the argument against contextualism. Suppose that a particular form of contextualism has been proposed. This form of contextualism predicts that utterances of the contested sentence, s, express one proposition in c_1 and a different proposition in c_2. We can rebut this contextualism by identifying a cross-context disagreement that spans c_1 and c_2—i.e., a case in which an agent in c_1 sincerely utters s, an agent in c_2 sincerely utters $\neg s$, and the two agents seem to thereby disagree. But notice that we have rebutted only one form of contextualism; a new form might be proposed. This new form of contextualism might predict that s expresses the same proposition in c_1 and c_2. Of course, this new form of contextualism is a form of *contextualism*, so it predicts that there are some contexts, c_3 and c_4, in which s expresses different propositions. To rebut this new form of contextualism we need to identify a cross-context disagreement that spans c_3 and c_4. But then, in reply, a *third*

form of contextualism might be proposed, which predicts that s expresses the same proposition in c_3 and c_4.

In principle, this back and forth could continue *ad infinitum*. But we invariantists think that we have an argument against contextualism in all of its myriad forms. Any contextualism that is substantively different from invariantism predicts that there are some contexts, c_x and c_y, in which s expresses different propositions. We invariantists say that we can find a cross-context disagreement that spans any two contexts. Call this the *spanning premiss*: No matter what form contextualism takes, we can find a cross-context disagreement (or a merely possible cross-context disagreement) that rebuts it. This is the negative work done by the disagreement thesis. If we want to run the argument from lost disagreement against contextualism, then the spanning premiss must be true; i.e., it must be true that no matter what form contextualism takes, we can find cross-context disagreements that go missing.

On the positive side, the disagreement thesis provides invariantists with the resources to account for the otherwise missing disagreements. Suppose that we have a cross-context disagreement that spans c_x and c_y, and suppose that this disagreement goes missing under the particular form of contextualism at hand. The disagreement thesis enables invariantists to say that this cross-context disagreement is, in fact, a disagreement.

We thus have three desiderata for the new disagreement thesis. Continuing the numbering from above, they are:

(4) *Correct contrariness*: Invariantism together with the new disagreement thesis should not imply that there is disagreement in cases of correct contrariness.

(5) *Spanning premiss*: Invariantism together with the new disagreement thesis should allow for cross-context disagreements that span any two contexts.

(6) *Accountability*: Invariantism together with the new disagreement thesis should enable invariantists to account for the cross-context disagreements that go missing under contextualism.

To these three desiderata, I want to add a fourth.

We saw in the previous section that cases of correct contrariness are counterexamples to belief/disbelief. Morning-Ankita believes that p_m; evening-Ankita disbelieves that p_m; but the two temporal parts of Ankita do not disagree. That there are counterexamples to belief/disbelief is surprising in its own right. After all, in many cases, a belief and disbelief of the same proposition clearly suffice for disagreement. I believe that it will rain tomorrow; you disbelieve that it will rain tomorrow; and we thereby disagree about whether it will rain tomorrow. I believe that there is uranium on Pluto; you disbelieve that there is uranium on Pluto; and we thereby disagree about whether there is uranium on Pluto. In rejecting belief/disbelief we incur an explanatory burden: Why are some belief/disbelief pairs disagreements, while others are not?

It is at this point in the dialectic that one encounters a *pragmatic* theory of disagreement. According to a pragmatic theory (*contra* what I said above), disagreement is not always wholly a matter of propositional attitudes; sometimes agents disagree partially in virtue of their assertions. It may be that A and B have the same propositional attitudes, but that A has made some assertions that B has not, and as a result, while A and C might disagree, B and C might not disagree.[14]

From an invariantist point of view, a pragmatic theory can look appealing. One apparent advantage: invariantists who adopt a pragmatic theory of disagreement are thereby able to explain why some, but not all, belief/disbelief pairs are disagreements. (I discuss another apparent advantage in section 8.) Nevertheless, I think invariantists should turn to a pragmatic theory only as an option of last resort, for two reasons.

First, the leading pragmatic theories of disagreement are Andy Egan's and John MacFarlane's, and Ross and Schroeder have presented formidable

[14]I borrow the distinction between attitudinal and pragmatic conception of disagreement from Ross and Schroeder (pp. 58–68). According to an attitudinal conception of disagreement, the disagreement facts supervene on the facts about propositional attitudes. According to a pragmatic conception of disagreement, the disagreement facts do not supervene on the facts about propositional attitudes. Rather, the disagreement facts supervene on the facts about propositional attitudes together with the facts about which agents have made which assertions.

(I think decisive) objections against these theories.[15] Every extant pragmatic theory of disagreement suffers from false positives, predicting that agents disagree when in fact they do not.

Second, and more importantly, adopting a pragmatic theory weakens the argument from lost disagreement. The argument from lost disagreement attempts to show that there are (full-blooded) disagreements that go missing under contextualism, and hence that there are (full-blooded) propositions that contextualism fails to countenance. When it comes to ordinary disagreements, everyone agrees that certain patterns of propositional attitudes suffice. The disagreements that are, according to pragmatic theories, essentially assertoric are not but a small subset of disagreements generally. But there is a disconcerting coincidence. The disagreements that are essentially assertoric are exactly the disagreements that tend to go missing under contextualism. Adopting a pragmatic theory thus lends additional credibility to contextualists' favourite response to the argument from lost disagreement, *viz.*, the 'disagreement-like' response: that while the (allegedly) missing disagreements are disagreement-*like*, in various respects, they are not disagreements truly so-called. The less the (allegedly) missing disagreements are like ordinary disagreements, the more the 'disagreement-like' response seems adequate. The same point can be made at the propositional level. The fundamental claim of invariantism is that the contested sentence, s, expresses the same proposition, p_s, irrespective of the context of utterance. The invariantist argument against contextualism crucially relies on p_s being a proposition on all fours with ordinary propositions. But notice a difference: when it comes to ordinary propositions, agents can disagree about the propositions solely by virtue of the attitudes they take toward them. So the (alleged) proposition, p_s, is unlike ordinary propositions; it is special and different. But now we begin to wonder why we should be so confident that p_s is a proposition, rather than merely proposition-*like*.[16] The less the (alleged)

[15] See Egan 2007 and 2010, and MacFarlane 2007, 2011, and 2014. For criticism, see Ross and Schroeder (pp. 62–70).

[16] Kent Bach 2011, for example, rejects relativist-invariantism precisely because he thinks that contested sentences do not express propositions. On his view, contested sentences express proposition radicals. And while proposition radicals are proposition-like, in various respects, they are not propositions.

propositions that contextualism fails to countenance are like ordinary propositions, the less objectionable contextualism seems for failing to countenance them as propositions.

Invariantists, therefore, should want more than what a pragmatic theory of disagreement can offer. The disagreements that go missing under contextualism should be as much like ordinary disagreements as possible. The propositions that contextualism fails to countenance should be as much like ordinary propositions as possible. Invariantists, I think, should hold out hope that all disagreements, even the disagreements that go missing under contextualism, are wholly a matter of propositional attitudes. Here, then, is the fourth desideratum:

(7) *Internality*: The new disagreement thesis should say that for any proposition, p, agents can disagree about whether p solely by virtue of the attitudes they take toward p.

The target is now set. The new disagreement thesis ought to satisfy the four desiderata, (4)-(7), and explain why some, but not all, belief/disbelief pairs are disagreements. The positive part of this essay begins in the following section. I think that there is a non-standard conception of disagreement that can do all of the work that we ask of it. In order to state this non-standard conception of disagreement, however, we need the resources of attitudinal relativism.

5 Attitudinal relativism

Attitudinal relativism begins with a bold suggestion: we should get rid of belief and replace it with finer-grained attitudes. The suggestion that we replace belief with degrees of belief, or credences, is familiar, but the present proposal has nothing to do with credence. In my view, there are many different belief-like attitudes even when holding credence fixed. Over the next two sections I am going to put forward the foundations of attitudinal relativism. In this section I provide an inventory of relativized belief-like attitudes. In the following section I say what it takes to have one of these

attitudes toward a proposition.[17]

To get into the attitudinal relativist's frame of mind, it is helpful to consider belief through a *teleological* lens.[18] There are many propositional attitudes. One might pretend that p, or assume that p, or desire that p. So the question arises: What is distinctive about belief? What makes a *belief* that p different from any other attitude toward the same proposition? Proponents of a teleological conception of belief maintain that part of what distinguishes beliefs from other attitudes is the special relation that beliefs bear to truth. Beliefs *aim* at truth, where the aiming in question is partially descriptive and partially normative.[19] On the descriptive side, beliefs are regulated in ways that are truth-conducive: part of what it is to be a belief is to be an attitude that is formed in response to the appearance of truth, revised in response to changes in the appearance of truth, and extinguished in response to the appearance of falsehood.[20] On the normative side, truth is the standard of correctness for belief. In believing that p, one regards p as true, and does so correctly iff p is true.

The attitudinal relativist takes this teleological idea—that beliefs aim at truth—and recasts it in a relativistic setting. We are invariantists, and because we acknowledge correct contrariness, we are also relativists; i.e.,

[17]Are there other attitudinal relativists? The view closest in spirit to the view I develop in this essay is developed by Mark Richard (see Richard MS). Richard and I are clearly driving at similar conceptions of disagreement. It is not clear to me, however, whether Richard is also an attitudinal relativist. Richard rejects belief/disbelief, and suggests that different beliefs 'aim' at different alethic properties. But there are two defining theses of attitudinal relativism—(*i*) that we should replace belief with finer-grained attitudes, and (*ii*) that beliefs with the same propositional content (even had by agents who occupy the same contexts of evaluation) come in different strengths—and Richard seems not to accept either. In any case, so far as I know, this essay represents the fullest development of a relativistic conception of belief, and the only attempt to give an explicit account of the relativized belief-like attitudes.

[18]Helpful, but not essential. One can accept attitudinal relativism and reject a teleological conception of belief.

[19]The slogan, 'beliefs aim at truth', is due to Bernard Williams. There are many proponents of a teleological conception of belief. See, among others, Boghossian 2003, Brandom 1994, Humberstone 1992, Huddleston 2012, Shah 2003, Shah and Velleman 2005, Velleman 2000a, Wedgwood 2002, and Williams 1970.

[20]Cf. Velleman 2000a and Shah and Velleman 2005.

we think that a proposition might be true as evaluated from c_1 and false as evaluated from c_2. Truth is therefore relative and fragmented. There is not just one positive alethic property, truth. Rather, for each context of evaluation, c_i, there is a plugged truth property, truth-at-c_i, and each combination of plugged truth properties is itself a positive alethic property. Attitudinal relativism is the thesis that there is a belief-like attitude for every positive alethic property. Just as beliefs 'aim' at truth, so these attitudes 'aim' at various combinations of plugged truth properties.

Strictly speaking, the fundamental notion is *vouchsafing-for*. To vouchsafe-for-$\{c_1\}$ that p is to regard p as true-at-c_1, and do so correctly iff p is true-at-c_1. To vouchsafe-for-$\{c_2\}$ that p is to regard p as true-at-c_2, and do so correctly iff p is true-at-c_2. To vouchsafe-for-$\{c_1, c_2, \ldots, c_n\}$ that p is to regard p as true-at-c_1, true-at-c_2, ..., and true-at-c_n, and do so correctly iff p is true-at-c_1, true-at-c_2, ..., and true-at-c_n. Each vouchsafing-for attitude has an associated set of contexts of evaluation, and the associated sets induce a partial order among the vouchsafing-for attitudes with respect to *area*. If there are two vouchsafing-for attitudes, and the associated set of the first is a proper subset of the associated set of the second, then the first attitude is *strictly narrower than* the second (or equivalently, the second is *strictly more expansive than* the first). The vouchsafing-for attitudes are also perfectly general: for any set of contexts of evaluation, A, and any proposition, p, any agent can vouchsafe-for-A that p.

For some purposes, however, the vouchsafing-for attitudes are *too* general. Described at the ontological level, attitudinal relativism is the view that we should replace belief with the various vouchsafing-for attitudes. But in so far as we are interested in the pre-theoretical phenomenon of belief, and in a relativistic conception thereof, it is better to focus our attention on a proper subset of the vouchsafing-for attitudes, namely the belief-for attitudes.

All vouchsafing-for attitudes are belief-like in one respect: they involve regarding a proposition as having certain alethic properties, and they are correct just if the proposition has the alethic properties it is regarded as having. But certain vouchsafing-for attitudes are especially belief-like, for they involve regarding the proposition as true in a first-personal way. When the associated set of one's vouchsafing-for attitude includes one's own con-

text of evaluation, one has a *belief-for* attitude. For example, if an agent vouchsafes-for-$\{c_1, c_2, \ldots, c_n\}$ that p, and occupies one of the contexts of evaluation included in the associated set, then the agent believes-for-$\{c_1, c_2, \ldots, c_n\}$ that p. There are some rare cases in which one's vouchsafing-for attitude does not include one's own context of evaluation, and there is work for these mere vouchsafing-for attitudes to do (see n. 25 and n. 31). For the most part, however, the relativized belief-like attitudes that agents take toward propositions are the belief-for attitudes.

Let me quickly wheel in two more pieces of machinery, before turning to ascription.

First, disbelief-for. We can define disbelief-for in terms of belief-for. An agent has a *disbelief-for* attitude toward p just if the agent has some belief-for attitude or other toward $\neg p$. Disbelief-for attitudes inherit their area from belief-for attitudes. If an agent believes-for-$\{c_1, c_2, \ldots, c_n\}$ that $\neg p$, then the agent disbelieves-for-$\{c_1, c_2, \ldots, c_n\}$ that p.

Second, semantics. Rather than accuse people of making a mistake whenever they talk about belief, an attitudinal relativist should provide a semantics on which ordinary belief ascriptions are made true by the belief-for attitudes that agents have. There are many ways for an attitudinal relativist to give a semantics for ordinary belief ascriptions, and as far as I can tell nothing of significance turns on which of them we choose. Here are two options—the first is simple; the second better fits with usage. On the simple semantics, an agent *believes* that p just if the agent has some belief-for attitude or other toward p. The simple semantics is simple and natural, in a Lewisian sense, but it can come apart from usage when agents have very narrow attitudes. If we want a semantics that better fits with usage, we can help ourselves to the set of *salient* contexts of evaluation. An agent *believes* that p, according to the salient semantics, just if the agent has a belief-for attitude toward p that includes all (or most, or enough) of the salient contexts of evaluation.

6 Belief-for ascription

For the purpose of rebutting Ross and Schroeder's dilemma, the most important difference between the various belief-for attitudes is the normative

difference. If p is true-at-c_1 and false-at-c_2, then a belief-for-$\{c_1\}$ that p is correct, but a belief-for-$\{c_1, c_2\}$ that p is incorrect. As we will see in the following section, this normative difference between belief-for attitudes can be parlayed into an account of disagreement that satisfies all of the desiderata; it delivers the spanning premiss, vindicates internality, allows invariantists to account for the disagreements that go missing under contextualism, and does not imply that there is disagreement in cases of correct contrariness. But before we get to disagreement, more needs to be said about belief-for. We have the inventory of attitudes, but we still need a theory of ascription: What does it take to have a belief-for attitude toward a proposition?

Belief-for ascription is like belief ascription, with a twist. Beliefs can be associated with dispositions. If an agent believes that p, for example, then she will have certain dispositions that relate to p. Some of these dispositions will be intrapersonal and some will be interpersonal; let me list a few examples of each. On the intrapersonal side, the relevant dispositions include: the disposition to use p as a premiss in practical reasoning, the disposition to use p as a premiss in theoretical reasoning, and the disposition to abandon the belief in the face of overwhelming evidence that $\neg p$. On the interpersonal side, the relevant dispositions include: the disposition to assert that p, the disposition to judge that people who believe that $\neg p$ are mistaken, and the disposition to offer p to other people as a premiss to use in *their* practical reasoning (as when I know that you are looking for a restaurant and I tell you what I believe, namely that there is a restaurant up two blocks and on the right).

Belief-for attitudes can also be associated with dispositions. On the intrapersonal side, the dispositions are the same. An agent who has a belief-for attitude toward p tends to use p as a premiss in practical reasoning, tends to use p as a premiss in theoretical reasoning, and tends to abandon the attitude in the face of overwhelming evidence that $\neg p$. On the interpersonal side, the dispositions are the same in kind but different in scope. We are interested, for example, not just in *whether* one is disposed to assert that p, but also *to whom*. A disposition to assert that p to an audience T is associated with a belief-for attitude that includes the contexts of evaluations that are occupied by the members of T. A disposition to judge of a particular agent S_1 that

he is mistaken in believing that $\neg p$ is associated with a belief-for attitude that includes the context of evaluation occupied by S_1. A disposition to offer p to a particular agent S_2 as a premiss in *her* practical reasoning is associated with a belief-for attitude that includes the context of evaluation occupied by S_2. In general: we determine whether an agent has a belief-for attitude toward p in the same way that we would have determined whether the agent believes that p, and we determine the area of the belief-for attitude by looking at the scope of the interpersonal dispositions.[21]

Start with assertion. One may be disposed to assert that p to *this* audience and not disposed to assert that p to *that* audience. There are many reasons one might have this sort of differential disposition to assert: perhaps one regards it as polite to assert that p to this audience and impolite to assert that p to that audience, or perhaps one enjoys conversing with this audience and abhors conversing with that audience. In the cases of interest, though, the differential disposition to assert is based not on these sorts of pragmatic considerations but on a differential sense of the proposition's truth-value. In making an assertion one assures the audience that the asserted proposition is true.[22] And, *for alethic reasons*, one might be willing to be on the hook for the truth of a proposition only vis-á-vis certain audiences. To illustrate this idea, consider a series of cases involving a pot of soup.

First case: Abe is at a picnic. One of the items on the food table is a pot of soup. Abe tastes the soup and recoils from the bitter taste. Ben walks up and asks Abe whether the soup is bitter.

Abe likes soup, but dislikes bitter soup. Abe believes that the soup is bitter; his belief is part of what explains why he does not pour himself a bowl. Upon hearing Ben's question, Abe wants to be helpful. He expects that Ben, too, likes soup and dislikes bitter soup. No odd or extraordinary pragmatic considerations are in play. The natural thing for Abe to do is respond in the straightforward way: 'Yes, Ben. The soup is bitter.'

[21] Do non-linguistic creatures, such as dogs and infants, have belief-for attitudes? Yes, they do. Whenever one is inclined to impute a belief to a creature, I impute a belief-for attitude. However, it may be true that the belief-for attitudes of dogs and infants are always maximally expansive.

[22] See Moran 2005 for more on assertion as an assurance of truth. Also see Williams 1970 and Williamson 1996.

Second case: Abe is still at the picnic, standing near the soup. Abe comes to learn that the soup is flavoured with phenylthiocarbamide (PTC, for short). Depending on one's genetic makeup, PTC is either bitter or tasteless. People with gene-X taste PTC as bitter; people without gene-X taste PTC as tasteless. Abe also learns that he is in genetically mixed company: some of the people at the picnic have gene-X, and some do not. Cam walks up and asks Abe whether the soup is bitter.

There is a noticeable difference between the first case and the second. If given three options—(*i*) assert that the soup is bitter, (*ii*) assert that the soup is not bitter, (*iii*) refuse to make either assertion—Abe may well choose the third. (I would choose the third option, in his shoes.) Abe still believes that the soup is bitter; his belief is part of what explains why he (still) does not pour himself a bowl.[23] But Abe may be unwilling to be on *Cam's* hook as regards to the soup being bitter. As we might describe it from semantic heaven: Abe is willing to commit to the truth of the proposition *that the soup is bitter* as evaluated from his own context of evaluation, but he is unwilling to commit to the truth of the proposition as evaluated from Cam's context of evaluation. (Abe may try to minimally change the subject, and say something like, 'Well, it tastes bitter to me.' When one senses that a proposition might be true for some, but not all, of the conversational

[23]Attitudinal relativism predicts that there will be some reluctance in the second case to say that Abe *believes* that the soup is bitter. According to attitudinal relativism, this reluctance stems from a false implication: saying unqualifiedly that Abe believes that the soup is bitter tends to imply that Abe has a maximally expansive belief-for attitude, which he does not.

As it turns out, this reluctance can be parlayed into an argument for attitudinal relativism. On an absolutist conception of belief, Abe is something like a borderline case, exhibiting some, but not all, of the characteristics of someone who believes that the soup is bitter. There are borderline cases of belief, of course (see Schwitzgebel 2001 and 2002). But it stands to reason, I think, that Abe's attitude toward the proposition *that the soup is bitter* is not vague or ill-defined. The resources of attitudinal relativism allow us to describe Abe's attitude precisely: Abe has a narrow belief-for attitude. When it comes to Abe's own practical and theoretical reasoning, Abe takes the proposition *that the soup is bitter* as a premiss. When it comes to Cam's practical and theoretical reasoning, however, Abe does not take the proposition *that the soup is bitter* as a premiss. One problem facing absolutist conceptions of belief, then, is that they predict too many borderline cases of belief. Thank you to Gideon Rosen for discussion on this point.

participants, a natural thing to do is cast about for a different proposition, which is as closely related to the original proposition as possible, but which has the same truth-value for all of the conversational participants.)

Third case: Abe is still at the picnic, standing near the soup. Abe comes to learn that people at the picnic are dressed according to their genetics. People with gene-X are wearing shirts of one colour, and people without gene-X are wearing shirts of another colour. Dan walks up and asks Abe whether the soup is bitter. Abe looks at his own shirt, then at Dan's, and notices that the shirts are different colours. A bit later, Ed walks up and asks Abe whether the soup is bitter. Abe looks at his own shirt, then at Ed's, and notices that the shirts are the same colour.

Abe may be unwilling to assert *to Dan* that the soup is bitter; his reaction to Dan will be the same as his reaction to Cam. But Abe will be willing to assert *to Ed* that the soup is bitter; his reaction to Ed will be the same as his reaction to Ben. It is in this third case that Abe most clearly exhibits a differential disposition to assert of the interesting variety.

By the lights of attitudinal relativism, in all three cases Abe has some belief-for attitude or other toward the proposition *that the soup is bitter*. But Abe takes different belief-for attitudes in the three cases. In the first case, Abe has an expansive belief-for attitude, which includes all of the contexts of evaluation that are occupied by people at the picnic. Upon learning that there is PTC in the soup, Abe's belief-for attitude narrows. Abe's attitude still includes his own context of evaluation, but it no longer includes the contexts of evaluation that are occupied by the other picnic goers. Then, upon learning that people are dressed according to their genetics, Abe's belief-for attitude expands. Abe's attitude comes to include the contexts of evaluation occupied by just those picnic goers whose shirts are the same colour as his own.

Other cases are easy to generate. When on the phone, I am willing to assert the propositions *that Barack Obama is the President of the United States* and *that there has never been a female President of the United States*, but not if I think the person on the other end of the line might be from the future. I believe the proposition *that it is 100% certain that [my name here] is a conscious being*, but I am disposed to assert this proposition to nobody

besides myself.

Turn to judgements of mistakenness. When my niece says that dirt is delicious, I judge that she is mistaken. I say, 'Stop eating dirt, Finley! Dirt is not delicious. It is gross and not to be eaten.' But when aliens, who eat dirt as a staple in their diet, say that dirt is delicious, I do not judge that *they* are mistaken. My disbelief that dirt is delicious extends to the children playing in my backyard, but not to intelligent worm-like creatures in faraway galaxies.[24]

There are also examples of differential mistakenness that involve epistemic sentences. Consider another variation on *Old News*.

> ***Old News and Prejudice***: Ankita and Byron co-anchor the *Morning News Hour*. As of this morning, it is unknown whether Axeworthy is the murderer, and so Ankita sincerely utters m: 'Axeworthy might be, and might not be, the murderer'. Byron, a man of nominal prejudice, thinks that Axeworthy's name is proof enough that Axeworthy is the murderer, and so Byron sincerely utters $\neg m$. Ankita judges that Byron is mistaken. At the same time, Ankita knows that in the afternoon the DNA test will be completed and its results announced, establishing whether Axeworthy is the murderer. Ankita correctly predicts that after the DNA tests are revealed she will sincerely utter $\neg m$, and she judges that she will not be mistaken (indeed, that she will be correct) in her future utterance.

According to invariantism about 'might', the proposition that morning-Ankita affirms is the very proposition that both Byron and evening-Ankita deny. Morning-Ankita judges that Byron's belief is mistaken, but morning-Ankita does not judge that evening-Ankita's belief is mistaken. This, then, is a case of differential mistakenness.

Differential judgements of mistakenness are one indication of the area of an agent's belief-for attitude. In the present case, the fact that morning-Ankita judges that Byron is mistaken suggests that her belief-for attitude includes Byron's context of evaluation, and the fact that she does not judge

[24]For a good discussion of differential judgements of mistakenness, see Richard MS.

that evening-Ankita is mistaken suggests that her belief-for attitude does not include evening-Ankita's context of evaluation.

To round out the interpersonal dispositions mentioned above, consider the advice we offer to one another. Here is a variation on the soup example. Suppose that people are to choose between the soup and some dark chocolate. The soup has PTC; the chocolate does not. People with gene-X wear red shirts; people without gene-X wear blue shirts. A line of people approaches, and everyone is in a terrible hurry. Each person asks you, 'Which is less bitter, the soup or the chocolate?' Time permits you only a brief reply. If you are like me, then irrespective of whether *you, yourself* have gene-X, you tell the people in red shirts that the chocolate is less bitter, and you tell the people in blue shirts that the soup is less bitter.[25]

Let me take a step back. You can think of attitudinal relativism as positing a social dimension along which beliefs can differ, where the social strength of a belief is given by its area. The idea that beliefs (and not just assertions) vary along a social dimension at first can seem somewhat radical. But the idea is implicit in a picture that many of us accept already. On a classic conception of belief, the propositions that we believe are the propositions that we take for granted in reasoning, both practical and theoretical. But reasoning is itself a social phenomenon. What we (one group) take for granted in reasoning might be different from what we (another group) take for granted in reasoning. Attitudinal relativism is a way of systematizing these social differences between beliefs. If believing a proposition is taking it for granted in reasoning, then believing a proposition *for some contexts of evaluation* is taking it for granted when reasoning with people who occupy those contexts of evaluation.

We capture the social differences between beliefs by building the social strength of the belief into the attitude itself, i.e., by replacing belief with the various belief-for attitudes. Belief-for attitudes that differ in area differ

[25]This is what Peter Lasersohn 2005 calls the 'exocentric' stance. A speaker might assert a proposition even though she regards the proposition as false at her own context of evaluation, because she regards the proposition as true at the hearers' contexts of evaluation. Here we find work for mere vouchsafing-for attitudes. The attitude that an agent takes toward a proposition, which she asserts from (and only from) the exocentric stance, is a mere vouchsafing-for attitude.

both descriptively and normatively. On the descriptive side, when an agent has a more expansive belief-for attitude, the agent regards the proposition as being true at more contexts of evaluation, a fact reflected in the agent's interpersonal dispositions. On the normative side, an agent with a more expansive belief-for attitude faces a more demanding standard of correctness.

The descriptive differences between belief-for attitudes can arise even when the propositional object is absolute, and for this reason I think a case can be made that we should adopt attitudinal relativism even if there are no relative propositions. Return to Abe and the pot of soup. Abe's propositional behaviour changes when he learns that there is PTC in the soup, and it changes again when he learns that the picnic goers are dressed according to their genetics. Let us suppose that bitter is an absolute matter, i.e., that the proposition *that the soup is bitter* is true (or false) relative to all contexts of evaluation. In that case, Abe is wrong to treat people differently, depending on the colour of their shirt, with respect to the proposition *that the soup is bitter*. But the fact remains that he *does* treat them differently, and an adequate account of belief must be able to explain this sort of propositional behaviour. The attitude that Abe takes toward the proposition *that the soup is bitter* changes when he learns that there is PTC in the soup, and I think that attitudinal relativism supplies a plausible account of what that change consists in.

But the case for attitudinal relativism is especially strong, I think, if there are relative propositions. To be sure, many philosophers who believe in relative propositions do not accept attitudinal relativism. But they should. Relative propositions and absolute attitudes are not a good combination. If there are relative propositions, then we face a difficult normative question: What belief-like attitude is it correct for an agent to take toward a proposition that is true at some, but not all, contexts of evaluation? Attitudinal relativism answers this normative question in a distinctive and manifestly plausible way. The correct belief-like attitude to take toward a proposition is a belief-for attitude that includes all and only the contexts of evaluation at which the proposition is true. If a proposition is true at all contexts of evaluation, then it is correct for an agent to take a maximally expansive belief-for attitude. If the proposition is true at some, but not all, contexts

of evaluation, then it is correct for an agent to take a narrower belief-for attitude. As I said above, some of the motivation for attitudinal relativism comes from 'is'-facts. We need to account for the fact that agents, like Abe, exhibit differential propositional behaviour, i.e., they regard a proposition as being true at some, but not all, contexts of evaluation. But if there are relative propositions, then we can motivate attitudinal relativism in a much stronger way by appeal to 'ought'-facts. If the proposition *that the soup is bitter* is true at some, but not all, contexts of evaluation, then we need to account for a normative fact: that agents, like Abe, *ought* to exhibit differential propositional behaviour. This normative fact needs to be explained, and attitudinal relativism supplies the explanation. Abe ought to regard the proposition as being true at some, but not all, contexts of evaluation because, in general, one ought to regard a proposition as being true at all and only the contexts of evaluation at which the proposition is true.

When we turn our attention back to Ross and Schroeder, we find a third argument for attitudinal relativism. Many philosophers, especially those who believe in relative propositions, will want to account both for reversibility and for the disagreements that go missing under contextualism, and they can do so by adopting attitudinal relativism.

7 Agreement and disagreement

Agreement and disagreement are to be defined not in terms of truth and falsehood but in terms of correctness. Two beliefs, X and Y, *agree* iff the correctness of X/Y guarantees the correctness of Y/X. Two beliefs *disagree* iff the correctness of X/Y guarantees the incorrectness of Y/X.[26]

[26]MacFarlane 2014 (pp. 113–37) distinguishes four varieties of disagreement, of which the strongest is 'preclusion of reflexive joint accuracy'. My account of disagreement as guaranteed anti-correlation with respect to correctness is similar to MacFarlane's idea of preclusion of joint reflexive accuracy. According to MacFarlane, there cannot be disagreement in the strongest sense about relative propositions. This is an unwelcome consequence of MacFarlane's conception of disagreement, especially for those of us who believe in relative propositions, since the existence of relative propositions is motivated in large part by the intuition that there are cross-context disagreements, *in the very strongest sense*, that go missing under contextualism. By accepting both my conception of disagreement and

For most purposes, we can take guaranteeing to be necessitation. Thus, the correctness of X/Y guarantees the (in)correctness of Y/X iff, necessarily, X is correct iff Y is (in)correct. However, for other purposes, e.g., when we are considering necessary truths and falsehoods, we need a hyperintensional definition of guaranteeing. I sketch one possible hyperintensional definition in the following footnote.[27]

We can now explain why some belief/disbelief pairs are disagreements, and others are not. If p is an absolute proposition, then any belief-for attitude toward p disagrees with any disbelief-for attitude toward p. If p is a relative proposition, however, then whether a belief/disbelief pair constitutes a disagreement can and often does depend on the area of the attitudes. If the attitudes are expansive enough, then there is disagreement. If the attitudes are narrow enough, then there is no disagreement.[28]

---

attitudinal relativism, invariantists *can* allow for disagreements, in the strongest sense, even about relative propositions. I see this as a significant advantage of my conception of disagreement over MacFarlane's.

[27]Intuitively, the correctness of X guarantees the (in)correctness of Y when anything that makes X correct makes Y (in)correct. Say that a state of affairs *makes a belief correct* (or *makes a belief incorrect*) iff the state of affairs is a truthmaker (or falsemaker) for the content of the belief. Then, setting attitudinal relativism aside, the correctness of X/Y guarantees the (in)correctness of Y/X iff every state of affairs that makes X/Y correct also makes Y/X (in)correct. How do we extend this intuitive idea to attitudinal relativism? It is not straightforward. One idea is to posit, for each context of evaluation, c, two relations: *truth-at-c-making* and *false-at-c-making*. Every belief-for attitude has an associated set of contexts of evaluation. Consider a set of ordered pairs $<c, z>$, where c is a context of evaluation, and z is a state of affairs. A set of such ordered pairs *makes a belief-for correct* iff (i) for each context or evaluation included in the belief-for attitude, there is exactly one ordered pair that has the context as its first coordinate, and (ii) every ordered pair in the set is such that z is a truth-at-c-maker for the content of the attitude. One possibility, then, is this definition: the correctness of X/Y guarantees the correctness of Y/X iff every set that makes X/Y correct makes Y/X correct, and the correctness of X/Y guarantees the incorrectness of Y/X iff every set that makes X/Y contains at least one element that makes Y/X incorrect.

[28]It is actually quite interesting to look at which combinations of propositional attitudes produce disagreements. If a belief-for attitude and a disbelief-for attitude are directed at the same proposition, and overlap (i.e. there is some context of evaluation that is the associated set of both attitudes), then there is disagreement. But there are three different kinds of disagreement by overlap. In a standard two-way containment case,

The resultant theory of disagreement is *selective* in the following sense. It is possible that (*i*) A and A^* occupy the same context of evaluation and both have a belief-for attitude toward p, (*ii*) B and B^* occupy the same context of evaluation and both have a disbelief-for attitude toward p, yet (*iii*) while A and B disagree about whether p, A^* and B^*, who have narrower attitudes, do not disagree about whether p. My niece and the dirt-eating aliens both believe that dirt is delicious, and I disbelieve as much. I disagree with my niece about whether dirt is delicious; I do not disagree with the aliens about whether dirt is delicious; but I would disagree with the aliens about whether dirt is delicious, if I had a more expansive disbelief-for attitude.[29] In *Old News and Prejudice*, morning-Ankita believes that p_m, and both Byron and evening-Ankita disbelieve that p_m. Morning-Ankita and Byron disagree about whether p_m; morning-Ankita and evening-Ankita do not disagree about whether p_m; but morning-Ankita and evening-Ankita would disagree about whether p_m, if morning-Ankita had a more expansive belief-for attitude.[30]

A's belief-for attitude includes B's context of evaluation, and B's disbelief-for attitude includes A's context. The conversation between A and B would play out like a prototypical disagreement, both agents would try to change the other's mind. There are also one-way containment cases, however. A's belief-for attitude might include B's context of evaluation, but B might have a narrow disbelief-for attitude, which does not includes A's context. A and B still disagree, for the correctness of either attitude guarantees the incorrectness of the other. But the situation is clearly asymmetric, as would be revealed in a conversation between A and B. A would try to get B to change her mind, whereas B would try to get A to back off and let a thousand flowers bloom. A thinks that B is incorrect to have *any* disbelief-for attitude toward the proposition, and B thinks that A is incorrect only to have such an expansive belief-for attitude toward the proposition. Finally, there are no containment cases. In a no containment case, the conversation between A and B is different yet again. Neither tries to change the other's mind, but both try to get the other to exclude the contexts in the overlap. For example, A might say, 'B, I know that you hate country music, and that's fine. But don't go around telling *the students* that country music is bad.' And B might reply, 'Well, don't go around telling the students that country music is good!'

[29] I am assuming that the aliens have narrow belief-for attitudes. If they have expansive belief-for attitudes, then the point needs to be made the other way: the aliens and I actually disagree about whether dirt is delicious, but we would not disagree if the aliens had narrower attitudes.

[30] According to attitudinal relativism, there are two routes to incorrectness. It might

8 Reversibility and disagreement

Ross and Schroeder claim that invariantists are either unable to account for reversibility or unable to account for the disagreements that go missing under contextualism. But this is false; invariantists can account for both.

When it comes to reversibility (or correct contrariness, more generally), invariantists have two burdens to discharge. First, they must explain how a perfectly rational agent can undergo a case of reversibility. Second, they must explain why cases of reversibility are not disagreements. Invariantists discharge the first burden by maintaining that reversible sentences express relative propositions. They discharge the second burden by adopting attitudinal relativism. In *Old News*, for example, morning-Ankita and evening-Ankita both have narrow attitudes: morning-Ankita's belief-for attitude toward p_m does not include the context of evaluation that evening-Ankita occupies (namely, c_{EA}), and evening-Ankita's disbelief-for attitude toward p_m does not include the context of evaluation that morning-Ankita occupies (namely, c_{MA}).[31][32] If p_m were an absolute proposition, then morning-Ankita

be incorrect for an agent to have *any* belief-for attitude toward the proposition (call this *incorrectness in kind*), or it might be incorrect for the agent to have such an expansive belief-for attitude toward the proposition (call this *incorrectness in degree*). Ross and Schroeder (p. 80) suggest that disagreement might be asymmetric. I take the orthodox line, that disagreement is symmetric. But there is something asymmetric in the vicinity—namely, judgements of incorrectness in kind. I might judge that your belief-for attitude is incorrect in kind, whereas you might judge that my attitude is incorrect only in degree. In such a case, I disagree with what you believe, and you disagree with, so to put it, how I believe what I believe. (See n. 28 for further discussion.)

[31] In fact, as the case is described, not only does morning-Ankita have a narrow belief-for attitude toward p_m, she also has a vouchsafing-for attitude toward $\neg p_m$. She regards $\neg p_m$ as true relative to the context of evaluation occupied by evening-Ankita.

[32] If morning-Ankita and evening-Ankita take narrow attitudes, then they do not disagree. But we could change the case slightly. Perhaps morning-Ankita takes a narrow attitude and evening-Ankita takes an expansive attitude. In that case, the two temporal parts of Ankita have a disagreement of the one-way containment variety (see n. 25).

There is another point to make here. The fact that there is no disagreement does not imply that the two temporal parts of Ankita are on a conversational par. Indeed, they seem not to be. If we imagine a conversation between them, evening-Ankita seems to have a conversational upper hand. It would be right for morning-Ankita to defer to

and evening-Ankita would disagree. But p_m is a relative proposition, which can differ in truth-value between c_{MA} and c_{EA}, so there is no disagreement.

What about the argument from lost disagreement? To run the argument from lost disagreement, invariantists must vindicate the spanning premiss. And good news: they can. According to invariantism, utterances of the contested sentence, s, express the same proposition, p_s, irrespective of the context of utterance. Anyone who sincerely utters s has a belief-for attitude toward p_s, and anyone who sincerely utters $\neg s$ has a disbelief-for attitude toward p_s. The disagreement thesis is false: the fact that one agent sincerely utters s, and another agent sincerely utters $\neg s$, does not imply that the agents disagree. But, in principle, any agent, in any context, can take a maximally expansive attitude. So the spanning premiss is true: we can generate a cross-context disagreement (about whether p_s) that spans any two contexts.

Can invariantists account for the disagreements that go missing under contextualism? Yes. Suppose that we have a cross-context disagreement that spans c_1 and c_2. This cross-context disagreement will go missing under any form of contextualism that predicts that s expresses different propositions in c_1 and c_2. Invariantism, of course, predicts that s expresses the same proposition in c_1 and c_2, so the obstacle to accounting for the cross-context disagreement never arises. According to invariantism, the agent in c_1 takes a belief-for attitude toward p_s, the agent in c_2 takes a disbelief-for attitude toward p_s, and the attitudes are expansive enough to generate a disagreement.

---

evening-Ankita, but it would not be right for evening-Ankita to defer to morning-Ankita. Attitudinal relativism does not explain this conversational asymmetry. But attitudinal relativism also does not stand in the way of the correct explanation. The correct explanation concerns contextual dynamics. When agents in different contexts engage in conversation, their contexts merge. Contexts can differ in terms of the available information, and when informationally different contexts merge, the information available at the post-merger context is all of the information that was available at any of the pre-merger contexts. Evening-Ankita is strictly more informed than morning-Ankita, so, if the two of them were to engage in conversation, the information available at the post-merger context would be exactly the information that is already available at the pre-merger context that evening-Ankita occupies. Evening-Ankita has access to conversationally relevant information that morning-Ankita does not, and both temporal parts know this. It is this informational asymmetry that explains the conversational asymmetry.

Do we need to adopt a pragmatic theory of disagreement? No. Agents can disagree about any proposition solely by virtue of the attitudes they take toward it. Of course, there is some interaction between belief and assertion. The area of an agent's belief-for attitude is correlated with the scope of her disposition to assert the proposition. But I think that this interaction ultimately tells in favour of attitudinal relativism. Let me return to a point that I hinted at in section 4. Consider a puzzle. My niece, Finley, believes that Teletubbies are cool, and I disbelieve as much.[33] Finley and I clearly do not have the same opinion as to whether Teletubbies are cool, but the claim that we *disagree* strikes me as false. Here, though, is the puzzle. If you imagine Finley and I discussing whether Teletubbies are cool, making assertions and evincing reasons in our own favour, then it seems that we do disagree. Finley says, 'Teletubbies are cool!' I typically shrug this sort of comment off, saying, 'Oh, I'm glad they bring you such joy, sweetheart!' But suppose instead that I turn around and say what I believe. 'No, Finley. Teletubbies are not cool. Science is cool; flowers are cool; art is cool. If Teletubbies were cool, then hipsters (being the experts on cool) would like them, and hipsters, so far as I know, *hate* Teletubbies.' Says Finley, 'Yes, they are cool!' And back and forth we go. This seems to be a genuine disagreement, between Finley and me, about whether Teletubbies are cool.

I used to regard this puzzle as evidence in favour of a pragmatic theory of disagreement; it seemed to me that the assertions were somehow creating a disagreement that was not previously there. But now I think that attitudinal relativism provides a better diagnosis. What explains why Finley and I do not disagree is that our attitudes are narrow. I do not assert to Finley that Teletubbies are cool, although I do make that assertion to my adult friends. I do not think that Finley is mistaken in her belief that Teletubbies are cool, but adults who believe that Teletubbies are cool, I think, are mistaken. If Finley is looking for a 'cool' new toy, I point her in the direction of the Teletubbies paraphernalia, etc. When we imagine the counterfactual scenario in which Finley and I are arguing about whether Teletubbies are cool, we are not holding the underlying attitudes fixed. We imagine, *inter alia*, that Finley and I have more expansive attitudes. So, although Finley and I do

[33]For an interesting discussion of 'cool' and other social predicates, see Haslanger 2007.

not actually disagree about whether Teletubbies are cool, we would have disagreed *by virtue of our attitudes* had we been arguing about whether Teletubbies are cool.[34]

9 Conclusion

We have a found a path between the horns of Ross and Schroeder's dilemma. Invariantists should adopt attitudinal relativism, I claim, for by so doing they get the best of both worlds: they can account for correct contrariness *and* for the disagreements that go missing under contextualism. Ross and Schroeder claim to 'cast doubt on the putative data about disagreement' that is often used to motivate invariantism (2013, p. 41). In my view, however, no doubt has been cast. The argument from lost disagreement withstands the scrutiny to which Ross and Schroeder subject it. We can continue to use claims of cross-context disagreement to establish claims of cross-context synonymy, and thus we can continue to use data about disagreement to adjudicate disputes between contextualists and invariantists.[35]

References

[1] Bach, Kent 2011: 'Perspectives on Possibility: Contextualism, Relativism, or What?' In Egan and Weatherson 2011, pp. 19–59.

[2] Barnett, David 2006: 'Zif is If'. *Mind*, 115, pp. 519–40.

[3] Boghossian, Paul 2003: 'The Normativity of Content'. *Philosophical Issues*, 13, pp. 31–45.

[4] Brandom, Robert 1994: *Making It Explicit*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

[34] In fact, the assertions are unneeded. Irrespective of what assertions have been made, if I am disposed to assert that Teletubbies are not cool, and disposed to assert as much *to Finley*, then Finley and I disagree.

[35] Acknowledgements.

[5] Briggs, Rachael 2009: 'Distorted Reflection'. *Philosophical Review*, 100, pp. 229–47.

[6] Egan, Andy 2007: 'Epistemic Modals, Relativism, and Assertion'. *Philosophical Studies*, 133, pp. 1–22.

[7] —— 2010: 'Disputing About Taste'. In Feldman and Warfield 2010, pp. 247–86.

[8] Egan, Andy and Brian Weatherson (eds) 2011: *Epistemic Modality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[9] Engel, Pascal 2005: 'Truth and the Aim of Belief'. In Gillies 2005, pp. 77–97.

[10] —— 2007: 'Belief and Normativity'. *Disputatio*, 2, pp. 197–202.

[11] Feldman, Richard and Ted Warfield (eds) 2010: *Disagreement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[12] Gibbard, Allan 2005: 'Truth and Correct Belief'. *Philosophical Issues*, 15, pp. 338–50.

[13] Gillies, Donald 2005: *Laws and Models in Science*. London: King's College Publications.

[14] Haslanger, Sally 2007: ' 'But Mom, Crop-Topes are Cute!' Social Knowledge, Social Structure, and Ideology Critique'. *Philosophical Issues*, 17, pp. 70–91.

[15] Holton, Richard 2008: 'Partial Belief, Partial Intention'. *Mind*, 117, pp. 27–58.

[16] Huddleston, Andrew 2012: 'Naughty Beliefs'. *Philosophical Studies*, 160, pp. 209–22.

[17] Humberstone, I. L. 1992: 'Direction of Fit'. *Mind*, 101, pp. 45–74.

[18] Kiefer, Howard and Milton Munitz (eds) 1970: *Language, Belief, and Metaphysics*. Albany: SUNY Press.

[19] Kölbel, Max 2003: 'Faultless Disagreement'. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 104, pp. 53–73.

[20] Lasersohn, Peter 2005: 'Context Dependence, Disagreement, and Predicates of Personal Taste'. *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 28, pp. 643–86.

[21] MacFarlane, John 2005: 'Making Sense of Relativist Truth'. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 105, pp. 321–39.

[22] —— 2007: 'Relativism and Disagreement'. *Philosophical Studies*, 132, pp. 17–31.

[23] —— 2009: 'Nonindexical Contextualism'. *Synthese*, 166, pp. 231–50.

[24] —— 2011: 'Epistemic Modals are Assessment-Sensitive'. In Egan and Weatherson 2011, pp. 144–78.

[25] —— 2014: *Assessment Sensitivity: Relative Truth and Its Applications*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[26] Moran, Richard 2005: 'Getting Told and Being Believed'. *Philosophers' Imprint*, 5, pp. 1–29.

[27] Preyer, Gerhard and Georg Peter (eds) 2005: *Contextualism in Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[28] Richard, Mark 2004: 'Contextualism and Relativism'. *Philosophical Studies*, 119, pp. 215–42.

[29] —— MS: 'What is Disagreement?'

[30] Ross, Jacob and Mark Schroeder 2013: 'Reversibility or Disagreement'. *Mind*, 122, pp. 43–84.

[31] Schwitzgebel, Eric 2001: 'In-Between Believing'. *Philosophical Quarterly*, 51, pp. 76–82.

[32] —— 2002: 'A Phenomenal, Dispositional Account of Belief'. *Noûs*, 36, pp. 249–75.

[33] Shah, Nishi 2003: 'How Truth Governs Belief'. *Philosophical Review*, 112, pp. 447–82.

[34] Shah, Nishi and J. David Velleman 2005: 'Doxastic Deliberation'. *Philosophical Review*, 114, pp. 497–534.

[35] van Fraassen, Bas 1984: 'Belief and the Will'. *Journal of Philosophy*, 81, pp. 235–56.

[36] Velleman, J. David 2000a: 'On the Aim of Belief'. In Velleman 2000b, pp. 244–81.

[37] —— 2000b: *The Possibility of Practical Reason*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[38] Wedgwood, Ralph 2002: 'The Aim of Belief'. *Philosophical Perspectives*, 16, pp. 267–97.

[39] Williams, Bernard 1970: 'Deciding to Believe'. In Kiefer and Munitz 1970, pp. 95–111.

[40] Williamson, Timothy 1996: 'Knowing and Asserting'. *Philosophical Review*, 105, pp. 489–523