MORAL CONTEXTUALISM AND MORAL RELATIVISM

By Berit Brogaard

Moral relativism provides a compelling explanation of linguistic data involving ordinary moral expressions like 'right' and 'wrong'. But it is a very radical view. Because relativism relativizes sentence truth to contexts of assessment it forces us to revise standard linguistic theory. If, however, no competing theory explains all of the evidence, perhaps it is time for a paradigm shift. However, I argue that a version of moral contextualism can account for the same data as relativism without relativizing sentence truth to contexts of assessment. This version of moral contextualism is thus preferable to relativism on methodological grounds.

Regardless of one's views about morality, it is tempting to think that ordinary moral expressions like 'right', 'wrong', 'good' and 'bad' depend for their correct application on the moral standards of the speaker (or some contextually salient group of which the speaker is a member).[1]

Semantic accounts which take moral judgements to be sensitive to speaker standards are often referred to as 'relativistic'. But this label is misleading. Relativism takes utterance truth to be genuinely relative: that is, there is no fact of the matter as to whether the utterance is simply true or false. But most traditional speaker-sensitive accounts of ordinary moral expressions assume that moral expressions are implicitly indexical (in the broad sense of 'indexical', according to which an expression is indexical iff its semantic content varies with context).

Gilbert Harman and James Dreier, for example, have argued that our ordinary moral expressions contain a hidden indexical variable that has the speaker as a default value. On Harman's view, moral expressions such as 'ought' and 'wrong' are four-place predicates obtaining among an agent S, a course of action d, considerations c and the motivating attitudes m (if any)

[1] See G. Harman, 'Moral Relativism Defended', *Philosophical Review*, 84 (1975), pp. 3–23; J. Dreier, 'Internalism and Speaker Relativism', *Ethics*, 101 (1990), pp. 6–26; P. Unger, 'Contextual Analysis in Ethics', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 58 (1995), pp. 1–26; B. Brogaard, 'Epistemological Contextualism and the Problem of Moral Luck', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 84 (2003), pp. 371–83; A. Norcross, 'Contextualism for Consequentialists', *Acta Analytica*, 20 (2005), pp. 80–90, and 'Harming in Context', *Philosophical Studies*, 123 (2005), pp. 149–73.

shared by speakers and their intended audiences. So when I utter the sentence 'Jane ought to return the book she borrowed', I am in effect saying that given that Jane has the motivating attitudes *m* shared by me and my intended audience, and given *c* (e.g., that Jane promised to return the book), returning the book is the course of action for Jane that is supported by the best reasons. When you utter the sentence 'Jane ought to return the book she borrowed', you are saying that given that Jane has the motivating attitudes *m* shared by you and your intended audience, and given *c* (e.g., that Jane promised to return the book), returning the book is the course of action for Jane that is supported by the best reasons.

Ordinary moral expressions are thus thought to be context-sensitive in much the same way as pure indexicals such as 'I' and 'now'. If I utter the sentence 'I am hungry' I am saying that I am hungry; if you utter the sentence 'I am hungry' you are saying that you are hungry. In both cases there is a fact of the matter as to what is said by the sentence relative to context, and the (token) utterance is true or false *simpliciter*. So what is often called 'moral relativism' is better called 'moral contextualism'.

There are, familiarly, several obstacles for moral contextualism. Among other things, it is difficult for contextualists to explain the apparent faultlessness of moral disagreement, retractions of previous moral judgements, and the naturalness of propositional-attitude reports involving moral expressions. Faced with these difficulties it is natural to look for an alternative semantics for ordinary moral expressions.

A natural alternative to contextualism is genuine relativism. Max Kölbel, John MacFarlane and others have developed a relativistic semantics which is easily extrapolated to account for expressions such as 'right' and 'wrong'.[2] On a genuine relativistic semantics, the semantic contents of relative expressions are context-invariant. But sentence truth is relativized to a context of use *and* a context of assessment.

So construed, relativism is able to account for the faultlessness of moral disagreement, retractions of previous moral judgements and the naturalness of propositional-attitude reports, but it runs into trouble of a different kind. As Jason Stanley has recently argued, relativism seems unable to account for the factivity of factive propositional-attitude verbs, and appears to require

² See, e.g., M. Kölbel, *Truth without Objectivity* (London: Routledge, 2002), 'Faultless Disagreement', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 104 (2003), pp. 53–73, and 'Indexical Relative *versus* Genuine Relativism', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 12 (2004), pp. 297–313; J. MacFarlane, 'Future Contingents and Relative Truth', *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 53 (2003), pp. 321–36, and 'The Assessment Sensitivity of Knowledge Attributions', in T.S. Gendler and J. Hawthorne (eds), *Oxford Studies in Epistemology*, Vol. 1 (Oxford UP, 2005), pp. 197–233; P. Boghossian, 'What is Relativism?', and C. Wright, 'True Relativism', both in P. Greenough and M. Lynch (eds), *Truth and Realism* (Oxford UP, 2006), pp. 13–37, 38–60.

circumstances of evaluation with unshiftable parameters. These circumstances would be very odd from the point of view of standard semantics.

In this paper I take a closer look at the relativist alternative to contextualism. I begin by laying out the problems for contextualism and relativism. I then offer replies on behalf of the relativist to Stanley's objections to relativism. Finally, I argue that relativism fails on methodological grounds, since a version of non-indexical contextualism, which I call 'perspectivalism', is able to accommodate the same data as relativism does without relativizing sentence truth to contexts of assessment.

I hasten to say that since my primary concern here is to discuss the relative merits of two theories which have already departed from context-insensitive theories of our ordinary moral expressions, I shall not here be concerned with whether an insensitive semantics might ultimately offer a better account of such expressions.

I. THE CASE AGAINST MORAL CONTEXTUALISM

There are, familiarly, several obstacles for moral contextualism. What is claimed to be the overarching virtue of moral contextualism is its alleged ability to accommodate moral disagreement. However, it is questionable whether contextualism really has this ability. The following disagreement, for example, seems faultless linguistically and factually:[3]

A. JOHN: Female infibulation is wrong.
    MARY: I disagree. It is not wrong at all.

The following exchange, on the other hand, points towards semantic incompetence on Mary's part:

B. JOHN: I am hungry.
    MARY: I disagree. I am not hungry at all.

If contextualism is right, then (A) and (B) both indicate that Mary is semantically incompetent, provided that John and Mary agree about non-moral facts in (A). But most people fail to see the alleged semantic mistake made by Mary in (A). So if contextualism is right, then most people are ignorant of the real semantic workings of expressions like 'right' and 'wrong'.

This is obviously so on a contextualist account which takes 'Female infibulation is wrong' to express, relative to context, the proposition that female infibulation is wrong by the speaker's moral standards. But even Harman and Dreier's brand of contextualism suffers from this problem if John is not

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[3] For an account of faultless disagreement, see Kölbel, 'Faultless Disagreement'.

one of Mary's intended addressees. A further problem for Harman's and Dreier's proposals is that if John and Mary genuinely disagree, then their disagreement is bound to be about non-moral issues; for them to disagree, their utterances must express the same proposition, but for their utterances to express the same proposition they must abide by the same moral code.

A second problem for moral contextualism is that people tend to retract their earlier judgements when their moral beliefs change. Suppose John has recently visited a country where female infibulation is routinely done. Upon his return he has completely changed his mind about it. The following exchange then takes place between him and Mary:

C. JOHN: Female infibulation is not wrong at all.
   MARY: But a few months ago you said that it was wrong.
   JOHN: I know. I was mistaken.

If John means different things by 'wrong' on the two occasions, as contextualism says, one might expect John to respond differently, for instance, with 'Yes, but I was right back then as well; it's just that my moral standards were different back then', or 'Yes, but I was right back then as well; I just didn't mean the same thing by "is wrong"'. But this is not how people would normally respond.

Context-sensitive expressions such as 'tall' and 'flat' function differently.[4] If we are talking about the height of average males, I might say 'Michael Jordan is tall – he is 6'6"'. If, on the other hand, we are talking about the height of NBA basketball players, I would be more inclined to say 'Michael Jordan is not tall – he is only 6'6"'. But if reminded of the apparent discrepancy, I do not say 'I know; I was mistaken'. Instead, I say, for instance, 'I only committed myself to Jordan's being tall for a man. The average height for a man is 5'10". But the average height for an NBA player is 6'6". So Michael is tall for a man, but not for an NBA player.'

This sort of difference between 'tall' and 'wrong' counts against treating the content of 'wrong' as contextually variable. It seems that people do not take the moral properties expressed by 'right' and 'wrong' to vary across contexts of use.

A third problem for contextualism turns on the behaviour of expressions like 'right' and 'wrong' in propositional-attitude reports. Suppose that after her conversation with John, Mary runs into Peter. Peter wants to know whether John's recent endeavours have caused him to change any of his moral views. Mary answers with

1.   Yes, John now believes female infibulation isn't wrong at all.

[4] See MacFarlane, 'The Assessment Sensitivity of Knowledge Attributions'.

(1) seems to be an adequate report of what John believes, provided, of course, that John complied with the norms of assertion on the earlier occasion. The report seems adequate even if Mary has come to believe that female infibulation is wrong. But if Mary believes that female infibulation is wrong, and John and Mary agree about all the non-moral facts, then the contextualist is required to say that John and Mary mean different things by 'wrong'. Since Mary is the speaker of (1), the content of 'wrong' depends on her moral standards. So (1) represents John as believing that female infibulation is wrong by Mary's moral standards. But evidently this is not what John believes.[5]

It may be countered that this line of argument does not succeed in undermining the view that the content of ordinary moral expressions is context-sensitive, for people are equally prepared to disquote content-sensitive expressions such as 'tall' and 'flat'. If, in passing, we overhear John say 'Michael Jordan is tall', we might report this as 'John believes that Michael Jordan is tall'.[6] But one would not conclude on the basis of this that the content of 'tall' is context-invariant.

However, expressions generally treated as context-sensitive do not behave in quite the same way as expressions like 'right' and 'wrong'. If we are aware that the standards in play in John's conversational context are different from those in play in our own, we might hesitate to disquote without a follow-up – for instance, 'But John does not believe Jordan is tall for an NBA player'.

Moreover, if I am aware that the standards in John's conversational context are different from the standards in mine, I might say 'John believes that Jordan is tall; but he does not believe he is tall for an NBA player'; but I would not say 'John believes that Jordan is tall; but he is mistaken'. The case of 'right' and 'wrong' is different. Mary might well say 'John believes female infibulation is all right, but he is mistaken'. This difference between ordinary moral expressions and gradable adjectives such as 'tall' suggests that 'right' and 'wrong' are not context-sensitive expressions.[7]

A final problem for contextual theories turns on the fact that they include the speaker's moral standards as a factor relevant for determining the truth-values of sentences containing moral expressions.[8] The truth-value of the

[5] See, e.g., H. Cappelen and E. Lepore, 'Context-Shifting Arguments', in J. Hawthorne and D. Zimmerman (eds), *Philosophical Perspectives*, *17*: *Language and Philosophical Linguistics* (Malden: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 25–50.

[6] Thanks to John Greco here.

[7] It is also possible to argue that gradable adjectives like 'tall' are not context-sensitive. See, e.g., MacFarlane, 'Semantic Minimalism and Nonindexical Contextualism', forthcoming in G. Preyer and G. Peter (eds), *Content and Context: Essays on Semantics and Pragmatics*; M. Richard, 'Contextualism and Relativism', *Philosophical Studies*, 119 (2004), pp. 215–42.

[8] Thanks to Eric Wiland for offering this objection.

sentence 'Murder is wrong' depends not only upon the nature of murder, but also on the nature of the speaker's moral standards. But if this is so, how are we to understand the semantics of a sentence concerning the moral standards themselves? Presumably we want our semantics to handle not only sentences such as 'It is right to pay your taxes', but also sentences such as 'My moral standards are correct'. But it is difficult to see how we can do that, given a contextual semantics. Given a contextual semantics, the proposition expressed by an utterance of 'My moral standards are correct' turns out to be true in the way in which the proposition expressed by an utterance of 'If it is right to maximize utility, then it is right to maximize utility' is true: it is true at all circumstances of evaluation.

Problems like these give some reason to think that a context-insensitive semantics offers a better account of ordinary moral expressions. There is, however, a viable alternative to a context-insensitive semantics, namely, genuine moral relativism. I turn to this next.

II. GENUINE MORAL RELATIVISM

In standard semantic theory, sentence truth is relativized to contexts of use. In Kaplan's framework, a context of use is a sequence of parameters: a speaker, an addressee, a world, a time, and a location.[9] The context of use plays two distinct roles: it fixes the value of indexical expressions, such as 'I' and 'now', and it determines a default circumstance of evaluation. A circumstance of evaluation consists of a world and a time parameter.[10]

In the default case, the values of the world and the time parameters are the world and time of the context of use. But circumstance-shifting operators such as 'it is possible' and 'it has been' shift the circumstance of evaluation. So the past-tense operator 'it has been' as it occurs in 'It has been that there are dinosaurs' shifts the value of the time parameter determined by the context of use from the current time t to a time $t*$ such that $t*$ is earlier than t. The content of the entire sentence is true at the circumstance of evaluation determined by the context of use if and only if the proposition expressed by the embedded sentence is true at the shifted circumstance.

[9] See D. Kaplan, 'Demonstratives', in J. Almog, H. Wettstein and J. Perry (eds), *Themes from Kaplan* (Oxford UP, 1989), pp. 481–563.

[10] Perhaps also the location and standards of precision. I shall ignore the location and standards of precision parameters in what follows. Moreover, I shall assume that it is un-controversial to include a time parameter in the circumstance of evaluation. But see J.C. King, 'Tense, Modality, and Semantic Values', in Hawthorne and Zimmerman (eds), *Philosophical Perspectives*, 17, pp. 195–246.

Max Kölbel, John MacFarlane and others have proposed a radical revision to the standard theory. Where the standard theory relativizes sentence truth to a context of use, relativists propose to relativize sentence truth to a context of use and a context of assessment. A context of use is one in which a sentence is used. A context of assessment is 'a situation in which a (past, present, or future, actual or merely possible) utterance of a sentence might be assessed for truth or falsity'.[11] On a relativistic semantics, the context of use no longer determines a default circumstance of evaluation; instead, the relativist's circumstances are triples that consist of a world and a time parameter determined by the context of use, and an evaluator or judge parameter determined by the context of assessment.

This revision to the standard theory does not affect the truth-value and content of just any old sentence. For instance, if I say 'I am human' at a time t in the actual world @, my context of use and my context of assessment determine a <@, t, me> circumstance. If you then evaluate my utterance for truth at t^*, then our contexts together determine a <@, t, you> circumstance. But if none of the expressions in 'I am human' is relative (which is very plausible), the truth-value of the content of 'I am human', as uttered by me, will be the same at either circumstance of evaluation.

What, then, is a relative expression? A relative expression is one whose content is (or determines) a function from <world, time, judge> triples to extensions. When a sentence contains an expression whose content is a function of the value of a judge parameter, its truth-value will depend on that value. Some relativists have argued that 'know' and 'might' are plausible candidates for being relative expressions, whereas future contingents (e.g., 'There will be a sea battle tomorrow') are plausible candidates for being relative sentences.[12] Others have offered relativistic semantics for predicates of personal tastes (e.g., 'fun' and 'tastes great'), colour expressions (e.g., 'is the same colour as'), and non-standard uses of gradable adjectives (e.g., 'huge' and 'rich').[13] It is quite natural to think that ordinary moral expressions such as 'right' and 'wrong', 'good' and 'bad', are also best

[11] See MacFarlane, 'The Assessment Sensitivity of Knowledge Attributions', p. 18. Page-numbers refer to the on-line version.

[12] MacFarlane, 'Future Contingents and Relative Truth', 'Epistemic Modalities and Relative Truth', 'The Assessment Sensitivity of Knowledge Attributions'; Kölbel, *Truth without Objectivity*, 'Faultless Disagreement'; Richard, 'Contextualism and Relativism'; P. Lasersohn, 'Context Dependence, Disagreement, and Predicates of Personal Taste', *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 28 (2005), pp. 643–86, at p. 655; A. Egan, J. Hawthorne and B. Weatherson, 'Epistemic Modals in Context', in G. Preyer and G. Peter (eds), *Contextualism in Philosophy: Knowledge, Meaning and Truth* (Oxford UP, 2004), pp. 131–70; A. Egan, 'Epistemic Modals, Relativism and Assertion', http://www.geocities.com/eganamit/might.doc; Wright, 'True Relativism'.

[13] For 'rich' and 'tall', see Richard; for 'might', see Egan; for 'is the same colour as' and 'huge' see Egan, Hawthorne and Weatherson; for personal taste, see Wright, Lasersohn.

treated as relative expressions.[14] I shall explore this possibility for 'right' and 'wrong'.

If 'right' and 'wrong' are relative expressions, then they have the same semantic content relative to any context of use and any context of assessment, but their extension varies with the moral standards in play in the context of assessment. But how can 'right' and 'wrong' be assessment-sensitive and still have the same content relative to any context of use and any context of assessment? I think there are two possibilities here. One possibility is that 'right' and 'wrong' express the properties *being right* and *being wrong*, but that these properties are unspecific. If a property is unspecific, then what counts as having it varies with the standards of the evaluator.[15] Another possibility is that 'right' and 'wrong' do not ascribe properties at all. It is plausible that the semantic values of predicates just are functions from circumstances of evaluation to extensions, and that these functions do not correspond with any (sparse) properties.[16]

I find this latter idea more attractive than positing unspecific properties. However, it is not the job of a semantic theory to say whether there exists a certain kind of property. So I shall simply leave open the question of whether the semantic values of 'right' and 'wrong' are *sui generis* properties or functions.

Relativism does better than contextualism on several counts.[17] First, it can explain the regularity and faultlessness of moral disagreement. If 'right' and 'wrong' are relative expressions, then it is obvious that moral disagreement will be a frequently recurring phenomenon. For the truth-value of moral judgements will then vary with the moral standards of the evaluator. Error-theorists like J.L. Mackie can also account for this phenomenon,[18] but unlike Mackie's approach, relativism does not require us to say that we are always in error when we make rightness or wrongness ascriptions.

Moreover, relativism predicts that moral disagreement is faultless. I shall say that a disagreement is objective iff (i) there is a proposition *p* whose

[14] See also Kölbel, 'Indexical Relativism *versus* Genuine Relativism'.

[15] See N. Kompa, 'The Context Sensitivity of Knowledge Ascriptions', *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, 64 (2002), pp. 79–96.

[16] See B. Brogaard, 'A Puzzle about Properties', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, forthcoming, 2007. Alternatively, one might follow Egan in taking properties to be functions from <world, time> pairs to extensions. See A. Egan, 'Second-Order Predication and the Metaphysics of Properties', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 82 (2004), pp. 48–66.

[17] This claim must be taken with a grain of salt. For as Kölbel points out ('The Evidence for Relativism', relativism workshop in Oslo, 9/11/05), 'all of the possible evidence [for relativism] relies on substantial further assumptions' (p. 1), for instance, that ideal speakers of the language are speakers who utter sentences that are true relative to their own standards.

[18] See, e.g., J.L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), ch. 1. Thanks to my commentator Lars Binderup for invaluable discussion here.

truth-value is the subject of disagreement; (ii) relative to each of the disputants' circumstance of evaluation i, one of the disputants assigns the incorrect truth-value to p and the other assigns the correct truth-value to p; and (iii) relative to each of the disputants' circumstance of evaluation i, each disputant x would assign the truth-value x actually assigns to p, had x been in a context which determined i.

A disagreement is faultless iff (i) and (ii) are satisfied but (iii) is not.

Temporalism, the position that a proposition may have different truth-values relative to different times, can then account for disagreement as genuine. Suppose I say 'John is hungry' at t_1 and you say 'John is not hungry' at t_2, disputing my claim, and suppose that when you contest what I said, I am still happy to assent to 'John is hungry'. Our dispute is then objective.

First, I am asserting the temporally neutral proposition that John is hungry, and you are asserting the temporally neutral proposition that John is not hungry. So (i) is satisfied. Secondly, relative to the circumstance c_1 determined by your context of use, only one of us is right about the truth-value we assign to the proposition that John is hungry. The same holds with respect to the circumstance c_2 determined by my context of use. So (ii) is satisfied. Thirdly, relative to each of our circumstances i, we would each assign the truth-value we actually assign to the proposition that John is hungry, had we been in a context that determined i. So (iii) is satisfied.

Moral disputes are not objective, if relativism is right. But they are faultless.

As the contents of 'right' and 'wrong' are context invariant, there *is* something for the disputants to disagree about, *viz* the invariable content the truth-value of which depends on the standards of the judge. For example, if John says 'Female infibulation is wrong', and Mary says 'No, it isn't', then there is something they disagree about, namely, which truth-value to assign to the proposition that female infibulation is wrong. So (i) is satisfied.

Moreover, relative to the circumstance of evaluation that has Mary as the judge, what John is saying contradicts what Mary is saying. At that circumstance, Mary assigns the correct truth-value and John the wrong truth-value. The same holds *mutatis mutandis* for the circumstance of evaluation which has John as the judge. So (ii) is satisfied.

But (iii) is not. If John had been in a context that determined the circumstance actually determined by Mary's context, then John's moral standards would have been different, and so John would not have assigned the truth-value he actually assigns. Since (i) and (ii) are satisfied but (iii) is not, John and Mary's disagreement is faultless. Relativism can thus explain the apparent faultlessness of moral disagreement.

Secondly, relativism can explain why people typically retract their earlier moral judgements if they change their minds about the moral issue in

question. If John denies that female infibulation is wrong but is reminded that he said something different earlier, he does not say 'What I said was true, but I meant something different by "is wrong"'. Instead, he says, for instance, 'What I said earlier was false'. But this is just what relativism predicts. For relativism takes sentence truth to depend on the moral standards of the evaluator. What John said earlier was that female infibulation is wrong. But with respect to John's current moral standards, the proposition *female infibulation is wrong* is false. So what John said earlier is false.

Thirdly, relativism does away with the problem of reported beliefs. If I overhear John say 'Female infibulation is wrong', I might report this as 'John believes that female infibulation is wrong'. Relativism explains why people are quick to disquote. It is because the *content* of ordinary moral expressions is context invariant. So if John believes female infibulation is wrong, what he believes does not depend on anyone's moral standards.

Fourthly, relativism avoids the problem of accounting for the truth of sentences concerning the moral standards that are relevant for determining the truth of sentences containing moral expressions. Given relativism, sentences such as 'My moral standards are right' do not come out as true at all circumstances of evaluation. For some circumstances will have different evaluators or judges in them. 'My moral standards are right' is true at a circumstance which has the speaker as a judge, but it is false at circumstances with a judge whose moral standards differ from the speaker's.

III. STANLEY'S CRITICISM

Relativism is able to explain the contextual variability of moral judgements *and* explain moral disagreement, retractions and belief reports, among other things. So relativism seems to have an edge over contextualism. However, Jason Stanley has recently complained that relativism about 'know' does not explain all of the problematic data.[19] His critique, if successful, extends to moral relativism.

The first problem turns on the relativist assumption that circumstances of evaluation include a judge parameter. Stanley finds this assumption implausible. Normally, the parameters that go into the circumstance of evaluation are those that can be shifted by a circumstance-shifting operator. For instance, the reason why there is a world and a time parameter in the circumstance of evaluation is that there are circumstance-shifting operators

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[19] J. Stanley, 'Against Knowledge Relativism', http://pwp.netcabo.pt/0154943702/Handout2.pdf. A version of this appears as ch. 7 of Stanley's recent book *Knowledge and Practical Interests* (Oxford UP, 2005).

such as 'it is possible' and 'it has been' in the language which shift the world and time parameters. If a parameter cannot be shifted, it is not a parameter of the circumstance of evaluation. For instance, there is no circumstance shifter that shifts the speaker or addressee parameters; and so the speaker and addressee parameters are not parameters of the circumstance of evaluation. So there can be a judge parameter in the circumstance of evaluation only if there are circumstance shifters that shift it. But Stanley thinks there are no circumstance shifters that shift the judge parameter. He considers the possibility that 'according to S' and 'S believes' are circumstance shifters which shift the judge parameter, but he thinks such operators are not 'linked to any notion of truth, relativist or otherwise' (p. 7, ex. 4). The relativists agree;[20] the standards in play, they say, are always those of the evaluator.

But I think this is incorrect. For there is good reason to think that expressions of the form 'S φs', where φ is an attitude verb, must be treated as intensional operators, and if they function as intensional operators, they are indeed linked to a notion of truth. Here is one sort of pressure towards treating expressions of the form 'S φs', where φ is an attitude verb, as intensional operators.[21]

The proposition expressed by a sentence embedded in an attitude context may not be the exact content of any of the attitude holder's attitude states. Take, for instance, 'Joe wants to smoke a cigarette' (or more artificially, 'Joe wants that Joe smokes a cigarette'). On this reading where 'a cigarette' takes narrow scope with respect to the attitude verb, 'Joe wants that Joe smokes a cigarette' ascribes to Joe a desire with the content of 'Joe smokes some cigarette or other'. But as Delia Graff Fara has pointed out, Joe's desire is not satisfied iff Joe smokes some cigarette or other.[22] For Joe has no desire to smoke a cigarette that has been floating in a glass of beer. Thus we cannot take 'Joe wants that Joe smokes a cigarette' to be true iff the content of the 'that' clause is the exact content of Joe's desire (Fara, p. 157). Fara's point can be simplified as follows. 'Joe wants that q' and 'p entails q' do not imply 'Joe wants that p'. So 'Joe wants that Joe smokes a cigarette' together with

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[20] See, e.g., MacFarlane, 'The Assessment Sensitivity of Knowledge Attributions'.

[21] An operator is intensional iff it is not extensional. T. Williamson, 'Indicative *versus* Subjunctive Conditionals, Congruential *versus* Non-Hyperintensional Contexts', in E. Sosa and E. Villanueva (eds), *Philosophical Issues, 16*: *Philosophy of Language* (Boston: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 310–33, defines 'extensional' thus: an operator C is extensional iff $(\alpha \equiv \beta) \supset (C(\alpha) \equiv C(\beta))$, for all sentences α and β. Belief operators are thus intensional; they are also hyperintensional. Williamson defines 'hyperintensional' as follows. An operator is hyperintensional iff it is not non-hyperintensional. An operator C is non-hyperintensional iff $\Box(\alpha \equiv \beta) \supset \Box(C(\alpha) \equiv C(\beta))$, for all sentences α and β.

[22] See D. Graff (i.e., D.G. Fara), 'Desires, Scope and Tense', in J. Tomberlin (ed.), *Philosophical Perspectives, 7*: *Language and Logic* (Atascadero: Ridgeview 2003), pp. 141–63.

'"Joe smokes a soiled cigarette" entails "Joe smokes a cigarette"' do not entail 'Joe wants that Joe smokes a soiled cigarette'. But if the content of 'Joe smokes a cigarette' were the exact content of Joe's desire, then Joe's desire would be satisfied in all situations in which he smokes a cigarette, regardless of whether it is soiled or not.

However, treating the attitude verb as an operator-forming expression produces the right result. 'Joe wants that Joe smokes a cigarette' is true at the actual world iff *Joe smokes a cigarette* is true at all worlds compatible with the exact content of Joe's actual desire.[23]

As several authors have pointed out, similar considerations suggest an account of attitude verbs such as 'believe' as operator-forming expressions.[24] In the previous section I was assuming a non-relativistic semantics without time parameters. Given a non-relativistic semantics without time parameters, 'S believes that p' is true in a context c iff for all worlds w compatible with the exact content of what S believes at the actual world @, p is true at w. If a time parameter is included, 'S believes that p' is true in c iff for all worlds w compatible at t^* with the exact content of what S believes at $\langle$@, $t^*\rangle$, p is true at $\langle w, t^*\rangle$, where t^* is the time of speech. Given relativism, a proposition can be true or false only relative to a judge. So 'S believes that p' is true in c iff for all worlds w compatible at $\langle t^*, S\rangle$ with the exact content of what S believes at $\langle$@, $t^*\rangle$, p is true at $\langle w, t^*, S\rangle$. In other words, 'S believes p' is true iff p is true relative to S's standards in all worlds compatible with what S believes here and now.

Mary's utterance of

2.   According to John, female infibulation is wrong

offers an illustration. Given a relativistic semantics, (2) is true relative to Mary's context iff for all worlds w compatible at $\langle t^*$, John$\rangle$ with the exact content of what John believes at $\langle$@, $t\rangle$, *female infibulation is wrong* is true at $\langle w, t^*$, John$\rangle$. In other words, given relativism, *female infibulation is wrong* can be true or false only relative to the judge, and the judge must be someone with the same moral standards as John. For simplicity, suppose the judge *is* John. Since (2), as uttered by Mary, is true only if *female infibulation is wrong* is true relative to John's moral standards, 'John believes' shifts the judge parameter (in addition to the world parameter). So Stanley is wrong to suppose that there are no operators on the judge parameter.

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[23] Of course, 'world' cannot be taken to mean 'metaphysically possible world', as Joe might desire something that is metaphysically inconsistent. However, the worlds in question need not be construed as metaphysically possible.

[24] See, e.g., K. Bach, 'Do Belief Reports Report Beliefs?', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 78 (1997), pp. 215–24; Fara, 'Desires, Scope and Tense', p. 159. Other considerations in favour of this account of belief reports include traditional Frege/Kripke puzzles.

There is, however, one point which must be conceded to Stanley. Circumstance shifters such as 'John believes' are not normal – not if relativism is correct. Normal circumstance shifters shift parameters determined by the context of use. For instance, 'it has been the case' shifts the time parameter, and 'it is possible' shifts the world parameter. But 'John believes' shifts a parameter determined by the context of use (namely, the world parameter) and a parameter determined by the context of assessment (namely, the judge parameter). This may seem strange. But there is a simple explanation. According to standard semantics, the context of use determines a semantically privileged circumstance of evaluation. But relativism has abandoned this assumption. There is a semantically privileged circumstance of evaluation only relative to a pair of a context of use and a context of assessment. So it should come as no surprise that circumstance shifters do not operate exclusively on parameters determined by the context of use.

A second problem which Stanley raises for relativism about 'know' turns on the factivity of 'know'.[25] Stanley considers and rejects three possible ways of accounting for the factivity of 'know' (y is the evaluator):

(a) 'x knows at t that p' is true at $\langle w, t, y \rangle$ only if p is true at $\langle w, t, z \rangle$ for all possible evaluators z
(b) 'x knows at t that p' is true at $\langle w, t, y \rangle$ only if p is true at $\langle w, t, y \rangle$
(c) 'x knows at t that p' is true at $\langle w, t, y \rangle$ only if p is true at $\langle w, t, x \rangle$.

(a) counter-intuitively falsifies nearly all second-order knowledge claims. For some evaluators are in very demanding contexts, and so mundane second-order knowledge claims like 'x knows at t that x knows he has hands' will be false regardless of who assesses it for truth. (b) counter-intuitively permits an evaluator to truly say 'x knows that p', even though p is false at the circumstance of evaluation determined by x's standards. (c) counter-intuitively permits an evaluator y to truly say 'x knows that p', even though p is false at the circumstance of evaluation determined by y's standards. Relativists, it seems, must reject the truism that 'know' is factive.

I can bring out with the following example what is wrong with option (b). Vinny the Vulture's sister, who is very reliable, tells Vinny that rotten flesh is repulsive.[26] His sister is wrong. If Vinny were to taste it, he would find it

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[25] 'Against Knowledge Relativism', p. 6. Stanley's three cases have the knowledge claim being evaluated at triples $\langle w, t^*, e \rangle$, where t^* is the time of evaluation. But this must be a slip; for relativists take circumstances to be determined by both the context of use and the context of assessment. The time and world parameters are determined by the context of use, and the epistemic standard parameter is determined by the context of assessment. See, e.g., MacFarlane, 'The Assessment Sensitivity of Knowledge Attributions'.

[26] The name 'Vinny the Vulture' is borrowed from Egan, Hawthorne and Weatherson, 'Epistemic Modals in Context'.

delicious. But in the past Vinny and his sister have liked exactly the same kinds of food. So Vinny comes to believe that rotten flesh is repulsive. Suppose that at time *t* Vinny's sister utters

3.   Vinny the Vulture knows that rotten flesh is repulsive.

By option (b), the content of (3) is true at ⟨*w*, *t*, Vinny's sister⟩, even though the content of 'rotten flesh is repulsive' is false at ⟨*w*, *t*, Vinny⟩: not a satisfactory result.

As for option (c), suppose instead that Vinny justifiably believes that rotten flesh is delicious. At time *t* I utter

4.   Vinny the Vulture knows that rotten flesh is delicious.

By option (c), the content of (4) is true at ⟨*w*, *t*, me⟩ even though the content of 'rotten flesh is delicious' is false at ⟨*w*, *t*, me⟩; this is no better than the previous result.

Stanley's objection is powerful. But I do not think it threatens relativism only about 'know'. The same sort of trouble arises for any relative expression embedded under a factive propositional-attitude verb. This emerges from my utterance at time *t* of

5.   Vinny the Vulture appreciates the fact that rotten flesh is delicious.

The content of my utterance is true at ⟨*w*, *t*, me⟩ only if the content of 'rotten flesh is delicious' is true at ⟨*w*, *t*, me⟩ and ⟨*w*, *t*, Vinny⟩. The same holds with respect to my utterance at time *t* of

6.   John realizes that female infibulation is wrong.

The content of my utterance is true at ⟨*w*, *t*, me⟩ only if the content of 'female infibulation is wrong' is true at ⟨*w*, *t*, me⟩ and ⟨*w*, *t*, John⟩. The reason why this creates trouble for relativism is that relativism takes sentences to be true or false relative to a single circumstance of evaluation.

There is, however, a simple way for relativists to evade the objection. They can say that the truth of sentences containing a relative expression embedded under a factive propositional-attitude verb depends on parameters of two distinct circumstances of evaluation. This would be suggested by the following sorts of considerations. As I have just shown, it is quite plausible to think that propositional-attitude verbs shift the judge parameter of the circumstance of evaluation determined by the context of use and the context of assessment. As (4) contains a propositional-attitude verb (namely, 'know'), the judge parameter of the circumstance of evaluation determined by the context of use and the context of assessment is likely to be shifted from the evaluator to Vinny the Vulture. So if my utterance of (4) is true, then

Vinny finds rotten flesh delicious. Furthermore, if O is factive, then Op materially implies p at the circumstance of evaluation at which Op is evaluated. So Op is true at <w, t, me> only if p is true at <w, t, me>. Since rotten flesh is in the extension of 'delicious' with respect to <w, t, Vinny> but is not in the extension of 'delicious' with respect to <w, t, me>, (4) is false; and likewise for (5) and (6).

The only way to resist double indexing is to deny that there are any expressions whose content is a function of a judge parameter. So to avoid double indexing we would need to deny that the contents of predicates such as 'fun', 'delicious', 'cold' and 'looks green' are functions of a judge para-meter. I do not find this plausible. If their contents are not a function of a judge parameter, then their contents *and* extensions are context invariant, or their contents are contextually variable.

The first possibility fails to convince.[27] The second is more credible. But it does not seem right. Suppose, for instance, that the underlying structure of 'looks green' is 'looks green to x', where the default value of x is the speaker. Then if I utter the sentence 'that patch looks green' and you utter the sentence (while pointing at the same patch) 'that patch does not look green', then there is no common content to our dispute. But it surely seems that there is. So it seems that there are at least some expressions whose content is a function of a judge parameter. But double-indexing is then required to account for the extension of these expressions when they are embedded under a factive propositional-attitude verb.

IV. PERSPECTIVALISM

Moral relativism is semantically radical. It forces us to revise standard semantics completely. It also forces us to rethink the practice of assertion. As Robert Stalnaker has argued,[28] the purpose of assertion is to contribute a true proposition to a common ground of true propositions. But if propositions have truth-values only relative to a context of assessment, then the purpose of assertion cannot be to contribute a true proposition to a common ground. Still, if relativism explains the linguistic data more thoroughly than competing theories, perhaps it is time to revise old paradigms.

But it is not time yet; for there is a competing theory which explains the linguistic data equally well. Here is a rough outline of the theory I have in

[27] See, however, H. Cappelen and E. Lepore, *Insensitive Semantics: a Defense of Semantic Minimalism and Speech Act Pluralism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).

[28] R. Stalnaker, 'Assertion', in P. Cole (ed.), *Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 9: Pragmatics* (New York: Academic Press, 1978), repr. in Stalnaker, *Context and Content* (Oxford UP, 1999), pp. 78–95.

mind. 'Right' and 'wrong', I propose, have contextually variable extensions but context-invariant contents. The contents determine a function from circumstances of evaluation to extensions. In accordance with standard semantics, the default circumstances of evaluation are fully determined by the context of use (not by a context of use *and* a context of assessment), but the circumstances are non-standard: they are <world, time, judge> triples, where the default value of the judge parameter is the speaker. I call this view 'perspectivalism',[29] and an expression is a 'perspectival' if its content is a function of a judge parameter whose default value is the speaker.[30] Perspectivalism, I shall now argue, explains the same linguistic data as relativism but without relativizing to contexts of assessment. This is how.

First, relativism seems required because sentence truth is sometimes relative to the standards in play in the context of assessment. But perspectivalism has no trouble with this datum. On Kaplan's notion of a context of use, any sequence of parameters involving a speaker, an addressee, a world, a time and a location is a context of use. The speaker need not be speaking or thinking; the addressee need not be listening. To the extent that a context of assessment is a sequence of a speaker, an addressee, a world, a time and a location, a context of assessment just is a context of use, as far as Kaplan is concerned. Suppose that one night before she falls asleep Mary thinks

7.   What John said earlier today is completely mistaken.

If what John said earlier was that female infibulation is wrong, then 'what John said earlier today' picks out the proposition that female infibulation is wrong. So Mary's utterance of (7) expresses the proposition that the proposition that female infibulation is wrong is completely mistaken. But suppose now that the *extension* of 'right' and 'wrong' is a function of a judge parameter whose default value is the speaker. Then what Mary is thinking is true if and only if it is true by her standards. No relativization to contexts of assessment is required.[31] Relativists think (7) is true or false only relative to a

[29] MacFarlane calls this brand of contextualism 'non-indexical contextualism'. See his 'Semantic Minimalism and Nonindexical Contextualism', forthcoming in G. Preyer and G. Peter (eds), *Content and Context: Essays on Semantics and Pragmatics*, and 'Nonindexical Contextualism', forthcoming in B. Brogaard (ed.), *Relative Truth, Synthese*, 2008. As I shall show, the proposed semantics differs from MacFarlane's non-indexical contextualism with respect to how it deals with reported sentences.

[30] I am here using the word 'perspectival' differently from F. Recanati, 'Indexicality and Context-shift', and A. Bezuidenhout, 'Indexicals and Perspectivals', *Facta Philosophica*, 7 (2005), pp. 3–18, who use it to mean 'an expression whose *semantic value* can be freely shifted'.

[31] Of course, both theories are relativist in a different sense which is worrisome to traditional moral philosophers: both theories make the truth-values of moral claims relative to some subject's standards (the speaker or the evaluator). This goes against absolutist or objectivist intuitions about moral truths. Thanks to John Greco and an anonymous referee here.

context of assessment. So as far as they are concerned, (7) does not have a truth-value relative to the circumstance of evaluation determined by Mary's context of use: it has a truth-value only relative to the circumstance of evaluation determined by Mary's context of use *and* a context of assessment. I am suggesting that (7) has a truth-value relative to Mary's context of use.

(7) is easy. Now for a more difficult case, involving a direct-speech report:

8. Earlier today John said 'Female infibulation is wrong', but he was completely mistaken.

Examples like (8) lend strong support to relativism. For there is seemingly no occurrence of the word 'wrong' that is being used. The only occurrence of 'wrong' is in a direct-speech report. So if Mary uttered (8), then (8) is true iff Mary's considered view about female infibulation is that it is not wrong. John's views about female infibulation are apparently irrelevant to the assessment of Mary's utterance of (8).

I think, however, that the belief that standard semantics cannot account for examples like (8) betrays a mistaken view about the nature of direct-speech reports.[32] As François Recanati has argued,[33] there is good reason to think that a quoted sentence in a direct-speech report is used, not simply mentioned. One reason[34] is that the quoted material in a direct-speech report may be available for copying, as in

9. 'I'm going to see the dean', she said; and she did.

'And she did' is elliptical for 'and she did see the dean'. So the elided material 'see the dean' is available for copying. But this suggests that the material quoted is used. For if the sentence were merely mentioned, the quoted material would not be available for copying, as is shown by '"I'm going to see the dean" is a sentence; and she did'.

Another reason to think a quoted sentence in a direct report is used, not simply mentioned, is that expressions in the matrix clause can depend anaphorically on expressions in the quoted sentence, as for instance in

10. 'Give me your money$_i$ or I'll shoot', he said; but I didn't give it$_i$ to him.

The pronoun 'it' in the matrix clause is anaphoric on 'your money'. But this requires 'your money' to pick out an individual for 'it' to refer to.

Recanati suggests that contextual cues associated with direct-speech reports create a shifted context that determines the semantic values of the

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[32] See B. Brogaard, 'Sea Battle Semantics', *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 58 (2008), pp. 326–35.
[33] 'Indexicality and Context-Shift', conference paper, workshop on indexicals, speech acts and logophors, Harvard University 2004, pp. 11–20.
[34] The first argument is Recanati's (§3.2, example 4); the second is my own.

indexicals in the report. So if I utter the sentence 'Then John said "I am leaving now"', the speaker of the context of use is me, and the time is the current time t. But the direct-speech report creates a shifted context in which John is the speaker and the time is some time t^* such that t^* is earlier than t. So the semantic value of 'I' is John, and the semantic value of 'now' is t^*.

After this examination of the effects of direct-speech reports on context, I return to Mary's utterance at time t of

8.   Earlier today John said 'Female infibulation is wrong', but he was completely mistaken.

(8) has a direct-speech report as one of its constituents. But the quoted material in the direct-speech report is used, not simply mentioned. The direct-speech report generates a shifted context where John is the speaker, and the time is some time t^* such that t^* is earlier than t. Any indexicals in the scope of the speech report have their semantic values fixed by the shifted context. But given perspectivalism, 'wrong' and 'female infibulation' are not indexicals; on the present proposal, the extension of 'wrong' is contextually variable, but its semantic content is not. So the semantic content of 'wrong' is the same in Mary's and John's contexts.

Direct speech reports generate shifted contexts, but they do not by themselves shift the parameters of the circumstance of evaluation. For instance, the direct-speech report in 'John says "I am hungry"' creates a shift of the speaker parameter; yet the parameters of the circumstance remain unchanged. To shift the parameters of the circumstance, a circumstance-shifting operator is required. Granted, (8) contains a circumstance shifter, *viz* the past-tense operator. As the default circumstances are <world, time, judge> triples, circumstance-shifting operators shift <world, time, judge> triples. But the past-tense operator is selective; it shifts only the time parameter of the circumstances. Because the value of the judge parameter remains unshifted, the quoted sentence in (8) is evaluated relative to Mary's standards.[35]

Perspectivalism appears to be able to explain the linguistic data that lend support to relativism. First, it can explain why moral disputes are common. The regularity of moral disputes owes much to the fact that the truth of moral judgements depends on the moral standards of a judge whose default semantic value is the speaker.

[35] It might seem that perspectivalism predicts that utterances such as 'My earlier utterance was false' are false if the speaker occupied a different context on the earlier occasion. But this is not so. According to perspectivalism, when the truth-predicate is not restricted to the meta-linguistic level, utterances are true or false relative to the circumstance of evaluation determined by the context of the speaker. Thanks to Mark Heller for helpful discussion.

Secondly, perspectivalism explains the apparent faultlessness of moral disagreement. If the semantic content of our ordinary moral expressions is context invariant, then the semantic content of 'right' and 'wrong' will be the same regardless of who is speaking. So if John says 'Female infibulation is wrong' and Mary says 'Female infibulation is not wrong', then there is a single proposition, *viz* the proposition that female infibulation is wrong, about whose truth-value John and Mary are disagreeing. Moreover, relative to each disputant's circumstances, the other disputant has assigned the wrong truth-value to the proposition in question. For example, relative to Mary's circumstance, John assigns the wrong truth-value to *female infibulation is wrong* simply by asserting it.

Thirdly, perspectivalism explains why people tend to retract their earlier moral judgements if their moral views change. If, for example, John comes to deny that female infibulation is wrong, he will tend to retract his earlier judgement to the effect that it was wrong. The reason is this. Direct-speech reports create shifted contexts which fix the semantic value of indexicals in the report; they shift context, not the circumstance of evaluation. To shift the parameters of the circumstance of evaluation, a circumstance shifter is required. Since 'Earlier today John said "Female infibulation is wrong" but he was completely mistaken' does not contain a circumstance shifter that operates on the judge parameter, the speaker is the value of the judge parameter.

Fourthly, perspectivalism explains why people are quick to make belief reports involving moral expressions, as in 'John believes that female infibulation is wrong'. Propositional-attitude reports give rise to a shifted circumstance of evaluation. So the content of 'Female infibulation is wrong' is evaluated with respect to a circumstance of evaluation that has John as the value of the judge parameter. Factive propositional-attitude reports require in addition that the content of the embedded sentences is true with respect to a circumstance of evaluation that has the speaker as the judge. So 'John knows female infibulation is wrong' is true at a context of use only if its content at that context is true at a circumstance of evaluation that has John as the judge *and* a circumstance that has the speaker as the judge.

Finally, perspectivalism does not imply that sentences evaluating the speaker's moral standards are trivially true. For different circumstances will have different speakers as the value of the judge parameter. So the proposition expressed by 'My moral standards are right' is true at a circumstance that has me as the judge, but it need not be true at a circumstance that has you as the judge.

Perspectivalism can thus explain many of the linguistic data concerning 'right' and 'wrong'. So can relativism. But perspectivalism is theoretically

more conservative than relativism. Relativism relativizes sentence truth to a context of use and a context of assessment. As a result, what is said on a particular occasion does not have an absolute truth-value at the context of use. Perspectivalism does not relativize sentence truth to contexts of assessment; it relativizes only to contexts of use. So what is said on a particular occasion has an absolute truth-value with respect to the context of that occasion.

V. FREE CIRCUMSTANCE SHIFTS

Before concluding I shall consider some cases which might be thought to cause trouble for perspectivalism. Suppose John and Mary have been discussing female infibulation for the past couple of hours. Mary has been trying to convince John that it is not wrong, and John has been trying to convince Mary that it is. Then Peter shows up. The following exchange transpires:

> PETER: What are you talking about?
> MARY: We are talking about female infibulation. Is female infibulation wrong?
> PETER: Yes, it is. It completely deprives a woman of her ability to become sexually aroused.

When Mary asks 'Is female infibulation wrong?' and Peter replies 'Yes, it is', Peter seems to have answered Mary's question appropriately. But on Jeroen Groenendijk and Martin Stokhof's influential account of questions,[36] the possible answers to a question in a given context of use form a complete set of mutually exclusive propositions determined by the question itself. To give an answer to a question is to make a choice from this set of mutually exclusive possibilities. The extension of a question in a given context of use (if it has one) is thus its unique, true and complete answer in that context. For example, if John prefers Banana Nut Cheesecake to Apple Pie Parfait, then the extension of 'What does John prefer? Banana Nut Cheesecake or

[36] See, e.g., J. Groenendijk and M. Stokhof, 'Interrogative Quantifiers and Skolem Functions', in K. Erlich and H. van Riemsdijk (eds), *Connectedness in Sentence, Discourse and Text*, Tilburg Studies in Language and Literature 4 (Tilburg University, 1983), pp. 71–110, and 'Questions', in J. van Benthem and A. ter Meulen (eds), *Handbook of Logic and Language* (Amsterdam: Elsevier Science, 1996), pp. 1055–1124. See also E. Engdahl, *Constituent Questions* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1986), ch. 4. As Groenendijk and Stokhof point out, although many (informative) questions have a unique, true and complete (or exhaustive) answer in a given context, there are still many ways in which they can be answered (truly and appropriately). For example, a partial answer to a question may be true and favoured for pragmatic reasons.

Apple Pie Parfait?' is the intension of 'John prefers Banana Nut Cheese-cake'. So on Groenendijk and Stokhof's account, the extension of 'Is female infibulation wrong?' is its unique, true and complete answer in that context. The unique, true and complete answer in Mary's context is 'No, it is not wrong'. So if perspectivalism is right, then Peter does not provide the correct answer to Mary's question, despite initial appearances to the contrary.

However, I do not think the objection is intractable. It is well known that Groenendijk and Stokhof's theory of questions must be restricted to certain kinds of questions.[37] Questions that admit of either 'mention some' or 'choice' readings (e.g., 'Where can I buy an Australian newspaper?' or 'What do two of these Logitech Mice cost?') seem to have more than one actually true and comprehensive answer relative to each context. So do so-called 'open questions' (e.g., 'What is relativism?'), which do not tend to be requests for information of a particular kind. Mary's question could be construed as an open question, or as a question about Peter's moral opinion. If it is an open question or a question about Peter's moral opinion, then Peter does indeed provide the correct answer.

Another potential problem for perspectivalism is that there seem to be cases where the speaker is not the default value of the judge parameter.[38] Suppose that Mary wants to know what the president had to say about embryonic stem cell research at a recent meeting. John replies

11. Embryonic stem cell research is morally wrong. It involves harming innocent human beings.

(11) is true, it seems, if and only if it is true by the president's moral standards, not John's. But I suggested above that the speaker is the default value of the judge parameter. So since (11) contains no context-shifters (e.g., quotation marks), we should expect John to be the value of the judge parameter at the circumstance at which the content of (11) is evaluated.

Here is another example that appears to give rise to the same sort of trouble.[39] Suppose Mary utters the following sentence:

[37] For discussion, see B. Brogaard, 'Number Words and Ontological Commitment', *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 57 (2007), pp. 1–20.

[38] See P. Lasersohn, 'Context Dependence, Disagreement, and Predicates of Personal Taste'. Lasersohn thinks that the existence of such shifts involving predicates of personal taste indicates that 'any concrete situation of utterance will determine as many different contexts in our technical sense as there are individuals ... one for each potential judge. We should not limit our choice of judges to individuals who are present in the situation of utterance; John's utterance of *Roller-coasters are fun* might be true or false relative to Mary, even if she was not present when he spoke. Nor, I think, should we even limit our choice of judges to those individuals who eventually interpret the utterance or assess it for truth' (p. 669).

[39] This is based on an example of Recanati's: 'Contextual Dependence and Definite Descriptions', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 87 (1987), pp. 57–73, at p. 62.

12. John has become completely insane. No one has ever done anything
    morally wrong, not even famous serial killers.

Since it is Mary who utters (12), she ought to be the value of the judge
parameter at the circumstance at which the content of the second sentence
is evaluated; but intuitively, the content of the second sentence is evaluated
at a circumstance that has John as the value of the judge parameter. Cases
like (11) and (12) thus appear to cause trouble for perspectivalism.

    However, I think that such cases can be understood in terms of the notion
of a free circumstance shift.[40] A circumstance shift is free if and only if it is
not operator controlled but is controlled instead by the speaker's intentions.
Here is a test of free shifts of the judge parameter. The value of the judge
parameter has undergone a free shift if and only if there are no explicit
circumstance shifters operating on the judge parameter, and there is at least
one operator of the form 'according to S' (where S is someone other than
the speaker) such that inserting it at the front of the sentence does not affect
the intuitive truth-value. For instance, the truth-value of (11) remains un-
changed even if we insert 'according to Bush' at the front.

    Likewise, the intuitive truth-value of 'No one has ever done anything
morally wrong, not even famous serial killers' in (12) remains unchanged if
we insert 'according to John' at the front. (11) and (12) are thus probable
cases of free circumstance shift, and so do not constitute a problem for
perspectivalism.

    It may be objected that examples like (12) seem best treated as indirect
discourse reports rather than as a judge-shifted attribution. For in similar
contexts the sentence following 'John has become insane' could well be one
that was false even when the judge parameter is shifted to John, such as 'His
head is earthenware'.[41] By way of reply, 'John's head is earthenware' is
indeed false at the actual world even if John is the judge. But I am not sug-
gesting that 'according to John' shifts only the judge parameter. I am
suggesting that it shifts the judge parameter and the world parameter of
the circumstance. In other words, I am suggesting that indirect discourse
operators, such as 'according to John', should be treated as intensional oper-
ators. I have already offered an argument for the thesis that attitude verbs
are best treated as operator-forming expressions. The very same argument
can be used to show that 'according to S' must be treated as an operator.

    'According to S, p' is true iff for all worlds w compatible with the exact
content of what S would assent to at the world of speech @ and the time of

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[40] See Recanati, 'Indexicality and Context-shift'.
[41] Thanks to Max Kölbel here.

speech *t**, *p* is true at <*w*, *t**, *S*>. So 'According to John, his head is earthen-ware' is true iff for all worlds *w* compatible with the exact content of what John would assent to at <@, *t**>, the proposition *John's head is earthenware* is true at <*w*, *t*, John>.

VI. METHODOLOGICAL CONCERNS

I finally turn to some methodological concerns. I said earlier that perspec-tivalism fares better than relativism because perspectivalism is theoretically more conservative than relativism. Like other non-relativistic theories, per-spectivalism treats utterances as true or false *simpliciter*. Relativism, on the other hand, treats utterances as true or false only relative to a judge.

However, it may appear that this alleged difference between perspec-tivalism and relativism is illusory. If *x* evaluates someone else's utterance of '*a* is right', *x*'s judgement will take the form '*y* has just said "*a* is right" and that is true', or '*y* has just said "*a* is right" but that is false'; but such judgements will create a new context of use in which *x* is the speaker. So it seems that the default judge will in practice always be the evaluator rather than the (original) speaker.[42] However, the perspectivalist can offer the following reply. We already know that the truth-predicate means something different when it is restricted to the meta-linguistic level from what it means when it is not so restricted. When it is not so restricted, we can infer 'John is a firefighter' from '"John is a firefighter" is true'.[43] But we cannot do this when it is restricted. When it is restricted, the utterance 'John is a firefighter' may be true if John is a firefighter from 1990 to 2000. So 'The utterance "John is a firefighter" is true' does not entail that John is a firefighter. In other words, some difference must exist between meta-linguistic uses of sentences where the truth-predicate is restricted to the meta-linguistic level and uses where it is not so restricted.

Given Recanati's account of direct-speech reports and a truth-predicate that is not restricted to the meta-linguistic level, *s* and '*s* is true' are true iff *s* expresses a proposition that is true at the circumstance of evaluation determined by the context of the speaker who uttered *s* or '*s* is true'. But surely Recanati's account of direct-speech reports does not entail relativism or undermine the possibility of non-relativistic semantics altogether. So the truth-predicate that is restricted to the meta-linguistic level is the usual one (given Kaplan-style semantics); *s* as uttered in *c* is true *simpliciter* iff the

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[42] Thanks to John Hawthorne and Carrie Jenkins here.

[43] S. Schiffer, *Remnants of Meaning* (MIT Press, 1987); T. Hofweber, 'A Puzzle about Onto-logy', *Noûs*, 39 (2005), pp. 256–83. I am assuming that 'John is a firefighter' is not indexical.

proposition expressed by *s* in *c* is true at the circumstance of evaluation determined by the context of the speaker who uttered *s* (and not the context of the semanticist). In other words, the main difference between relativism and perspectivalism concerns meta-linguistic uses of sentences where the truth-predicate is restricted to the meta-linguistic level.

But does this difference make a real difference? It does indeed. Focusing on semantic content in a narrow sense will not help to explain the difference between non-relativism and relativism. For content truth is already relativistic in non-relativistic semantics that recognizes tense operators and/or modal operators: content truth is relative to possible worlds and perhaps times. The real difference between non-relativism and relativism lies in how the two sorts of theories treat utterances which are true relative to the speaker's standards. Given relativism, propositions are functions from <world, (time), judge> triples to truth-values. Or, in a different terminology, propositions are sets of centred worlds. Relativists argue that speakers should only assert the proposition that corresponds to the set of centred worlds that includes the world containing the speaker. In other words, speakers should assert only propositions which are true relative to their own standards.[44] But because relativists insist that utterances are true or false only relative to a judge who may be distinct from the speaker, they cannot easily explain what is so special about content which is true relative to the speaker's standards.[45] Perspectivalism, on the other hand, can offer a simple explanation of what is special about this sort of content. This sort of content is special because the utterance that expresses it is true *simpliciter*, not true or false only relative to the standards of a judge.

VII. CONCLUSION

Moral relativism provides a compelling explanation of linguistic data involving ordinary moral expressions like 'right' and 'wrong'. But it is a very radical view. Because relativism relativizes sentence truth to contexts of assessment, it forces us to revise standard linguistic theory. If, however, no competing theory explains all of the evidence, then perhaps it is time for a paradigm shift. However, I have argued that a version of non-indexical contextualism can account for the same data as relativism without relativizing sentence truth to contexts of assessment. Non-indexical contextualism

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[44] Moreover, the audience has to be within a certain epistemic reach. See Egan, 'Epistemic Modals'.

[45] MacFarlane, in 'Making Sense of Relative Truth', raises a related objection to a related formulation of the norm of assertion.

revises standard linguistic theory in so far as it invokes non-standard circumstances of evaluation. But it is theoretically more conservative than relativism. It treats sentence truth as a function of parameters of the context of use. A sentence such as 'Female infibulation is wrong' has an absolute truth-value relative to the context of use. According to relativism, on the other hand, 'Female infibulation is wrong' has a truth-value only relative to a context of use and a context of assessment. Because it is theoretically more conservative, non-indexical contextualism is preferable to relativism on methodological grounds.[46]

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