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Diagreement, Internalism and Genuine Assertions of PPTs

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The problem of lost disagreement is seen as a problem for contextualists when it comes to providing an account of predicates of personal taste (further referred to as PPTs). Peter Lasersohn argues that the problem of lost disagreement causes intractable problems for contextualists who appeal to speaker indexicalism or group indexicalism in explaining how PPTs function. Michael Glanzberg, however, believes that a proper contextualist account can offer an account of PPTs that allows for disagreement. However, a worry remains for Glanzberg, as it seems that the only disagreement he provides, when it comes to PPTs, involves cases in which both speakers are not making genuine assertions of PPTs. The inadequacy of Glanzberg's account becomes apparent when we utilize the work of R.M. Hare and notice that there is a form of motivational internalism involved in. As we to come find out, Glanzberg has not given us a proper answer to Lasersohn's challenge.

Before discussing how Glanzberg answers the problem of lost disagreement, it is first important to get a grasp of what the problem of lost disagreement is. The problem of lost disagreement, as discussed by Lasersohn, is a problem that faces indexical contextualists when they try to account for how it can be that two people can both speak truly, but disagree with one another when it comes to PPTs. Lasersohn is quick to point out that the type of PPT he is discussing are ones with which the truth or falsity of sentences involving them, "[…] depends on the "personal tastes" of the speaker (or whomever the relevant individual might be)" (644). The problem Lasersohn finds is that when contextualists offer an account of how two people can speak truly when making genuine assertions of PPTs disagreement is lost (644). For instance, take John and Mary disagreeing over the tastiness of a bowl of chili, where John says, "The chili

is tasty," and Mary says, "The chili is not tasty." One way that a contextualist could try to account for how Mary and John both speak truthfully is by saying that their statements contain a hidden indexical along the lines of "for the speaker." When John says, "The chili is tasty," what he means is that "The chili is tasty (for John)" and when Mary says, "The chili is not tasty," what she means is "The chili is not tasty (for Mary)" (Lasersohn 648-49). Since each statement contains a hidden indexical, John and Mary can both speak truthfully about the chili. The problem is that if John is talking about the tastiness of the chili for himself and Mary is talking about the lack of tastiness of the chili for herself, then Mary and John no longer disagree (Lasersohn 649). Hence, we have the problem of lost disagreement and since we were looking for an account of how Mary and John could both speak truthfully and disagree, the contextualist answer that PPTs involve a hidden speaker indexical will not work (Lasersohn 649-50).

In light of the failings of the speaker indexical view, Lasersohn anticipates that contextualists might try to take a group indexical view. According to group indexicalism the hidden indexical in John and Mary's statements does not pick out the speaker, but instead picks out a contextually relevant group (650). If Mary and John are both eating the same chili and John says, "The chili is tasty," then he is really saying, "The chili is tasty (for the group)" and likewise when Mary says, "The chili is not tasty" she means, "The chili is not tasty (for the group)." Since Mary and John are talking about the tastiness of the chili for the same group, there is disagreement between them (Lasersohn 651). When John first says, "The chili is tasty (for the group)" and Mary says, "The chili is not tasty (for the group)" it makes sense for Mary to object to John's statement, because she is a member of the group and she knows that she does not find the chili tasty (Lasersohn 651).

However, when Mary and John's statements are reversed Lasersohn finds that the group indexical approach runs into problems. If, after tasting the chili, Mary says, "The chili is not tasty" and then John says, "The chili is tasty," then it is difficult to make sense of John's response (Lasersohn 650). Since John and Mary are both speaking about the same group and because they are members of the group, then if what John really means is, "The chili is tasty (for the group)" his response is not appropriate, because he knows that Mary, a member of the group, does not find the chili tasty (Lasersohn 650). Any attempt to make sense of John's response seems to fail. If one argues that John and Mary are referring to different groups, then there is no disagreement, which is why the speaker indexical view was abandoned for the group indexical view in the first place (Lasersohn 650-51). Another possible argument that one could give is that it is not required for the whole group to find the chili tasty, but only a majority. However, as Lasersohn notes, it seems strange to involve discussions of what the group finds tasty when we analyze the disagreement between John and Mary (652). If what is tasty for a majority of the group played a role in John and Mary's disagreement, then John should be able to convince Mary by taking a poll of the group and showing her the results, but, of course, it does not seem likely that such a poll will cause Mary to change her position as to the tastiness of the chili (Lasersohn 652). As such, Lasersohn finds that the group indexical approach fails as well.

However, Lasersohn seems to have let the group indexicalist off easy. Not only does it seem to be the case for group indexicalism that John's response to Mary does not make sense when the ordering of their utterances are reversed, but it also seems that Mary's original dialogue with John made little sense to begin with. If what Mary says is, "The chili is not tasty (for the group)" and John has already asserted, "The chili is tasty (for the group)," then obviously John finds the chili to be tasty. But, if Mary knows that John finds the chili tasty, then why would she

assert that "The chili is not tasty (for the group)"? She knows that John finds the chili tasty and so she knows her view that "Chili is not tasty (for the group)" is false before she even states it. It appears that even without reversing their responses, the interaction between Mary and John is bizarre when considered from the group indexical approach.

A further point against group indexicalism is that if PPTs have as part of their meaning a hidden indexical of "for the group" there could never be any sort of substantial or elongated disagreement between members of the same group. For instance, take Mary and John discussing the taste of the chili. Mary says, "The chili is tasty," and John says, "The chili is not tasty." Under the group indexical view, both speakers should realize immediately that their views are false. However, then there would no longer be any sort of disagreement between them, as we should expect them to just retract what they had said. What we would expect them to do is to soften their claims and say that they didn't mean that the chili was tasty for the whole group. But, taking such a route would be to admit that PPTs don't have the "for the group" hidden indexical, but a "for the majority of the group" indexical, or something along that line. So, the original group indexical view would always seem to collapse into the latter, but as we have already seen Lasersohn point out, the latter has problems as well.

At first glance, there seem to be two other options available to the group indexicalist, neither of which seem like they would provide much success. First, the group indexicalist might hold that the "for the group" indexical was somehow cancellable. Under such a view, we might find that speakers can cancel the hidden indexical of "for the group" in order to not fall into the problem. However, showing how the cancelling functions would take a great amount of work and it's hard to imagine how the result would still have the spirit of the original group indexical view. The second option would be to show that we categorically believe that the other person is

mistaken in his/her beliefs about what is tasty when we are in disagreement and, thus, why we would go on holding our original view. However, the second option appears more implausible than the first, because one of the main reasons for accepting a contextualist account is because of our intuition that both speakers are faultless in their assertions of PPTs, but such an option would be to flat out deny that we have such an intuition. In light of these problems with the group indexicalist view, and the difficulty in fixing these problems, it appears the group indexicalist view is in an even worse position than Lasersohn had led onto.

While Lasersohn might have shown grave problems for both the speaker indexicalist and group indexicalist views, Glanzberg believes that Lasersohn has been a bit too hasty in dismissing contextualism as not being able to provide us with an account of PPTs that allows for disagreement. In order to provide such an account, Glanzberg first provides a semantic theory for gradeable adjectives. Glanzberg, following Kennedy, holds that gradable adjectives are "function[s] from individuals to degrees" (Glanzberg 8). For example, 'tall' designates a function such that when an individual, such as John, is input into the function, we receive as output a degree. There is then a property, which Glanzberg calls a dimension, which orders the degrees. For example, in the case of 'tall' the dimension is height (Glanzberg 8). All three of these elements (degrees, dimension and ordering) form a scale (Glanzberg 8). Bringing all of this together, we find that the statement "John is taller than Mary" is true when the degree of tallness for John on a scale is greater than the degree of tallness for Mary on the same scale. As Glanzberg puts it "tall(John)>tall(Mary)" where the function tall when we input John gives us a degree on a scale that is greater than the degree on the same scale that we get when we input Mary into the function (8).

Glanzberg extends the semantics of gradeable adjectives in order to provide a semantics for predicates involving gradeable adjectives. When considering the positive form of gradable adjective 'tall', as in "John is tall," we find that the degree of tallness that we get from the tall function when we input John is greater than a contextually determined degree of tallness (Glanzberg 8). As Glanzberg puts it, "tall (John)>d" where d is a contextually determined degree (8). The contextually determined degree d is produced by a function s which gives a contextually determined degree for the gradable adjective that is used as input. As Glanzberg states, "[T]he function s returns a contextually significant degree of tallness for input tall" (9). Glanzberg refers to the value of the degree produced from the function s and a gradable adjective as a standard. Since the function s is dependent on the context, the standard produced by that function is going to be based on the context, which means the appropriateness of a statement involving gradable adjectives is also going to be context dependent (Glanzberg 9). As Glanzberg points out, "John is tall" might be appropriate if the standard is determined by a context involving jockeys, but false if the standard is determined by a context involving basketball players (9). For example, in a context involving jockeys tall(John) > s(tall) but in a context involving basketball players tall(John) < s(tall).

Since PPTs are gradable adjectives because they are adjectives that take degree modifiers, Glanzberg believes he can use an account similar to the one used for gradable adjectives to elucidate how PPTs function (9). However, he notes that there are two important differences between a gradable adjective like 'tall' and a PPT like 'tasty'. The first difference is that 'tasty' could have multiple scales whereas 'tall' could not (Glanzberg 10). Glanzberg does not find the fact that PPTs can invoke multiple scales to be a problem for his analysis, because other gradable adjectives that are not PPTs can do so as well. For instance, 'smart' could mean

'street smart' or 'book smart' (Glanzberg 10). Glanzberg opts to just assume throughout his discussion that the relevant scale has been fixed (10).

A second difference between gradable adjectives like 'tall' and PPTs is that PPTs involve an experiencer, which prompts Glanzberg to involve an experiencer class E in his account. As Glanzberg says, "Being fun or being tasty is still being fun or tasty for someone" (10). The experiencer class E is usually set by the context and, in these cases, E will not always be the same; it won't always be the case that E is the majority of a group, all of a group or just one person in the group, since it is dependent on the context as to which one it is (Glanzberg 13). Once the experiencer class is fixed, the scale is then fixed based on what E is. For instance, when it comes to 'tasty' the scale will be, as Glanzberg points out, "gustatory quality experienced by E" (13). Adding the experiencer class to the earlier discussion of how gradable adjectives work, we find that PPTs (given an experiencer class E) are also functions from objects to degrees on a scale (Glanzberg 13-14). Therefore, when John says, "The chili is tasty," what he is really saying is that the function of tasty (given an experiencer class E) when 'chili' is input provides a degree on a scale that is greater than the degree that is output when tasty (given an experiencer class E) is input into the s function from earlier (the function that produces a degree relative to a context when a gradable adjective is input); or, as Glanzberg more elegantly puts it, what John is really saying is tasty$_E$(chili) > s(tasty$_E$) (14). So, when Mary says, "The chili is not tasty," what she is really saying is tasty$_E$(chili) $\not>$ s(tasty$_E$) and as long as E is the same in both John and Mary's statements, they are in disagreement with one another (Glanzberg 14).

Glanzberg takes his account of PPTs to provide a working contextualist account that deals with the issues encountered by the speaker indexical and group indexical views. Since the experiencer class E is not just the speaker, then we don't run into the problem of Mary saying

that the chili is not tasty for herself and John saying that the chili is tasty for himself and so there

will be situations in which the contextualist account will predict that there will be disagreement

between John and Mary. Therefore, Glanzberg's finds his account does not fall to the problem

of lost disagreement that faced the speaker indexical account (15). Also, because Glanzberg's

account holds that E is determined by context it will not always be the case that E will be all or

the majority of a group and so Glanzberg's account is not just another form of group

indexicalism and thus his view is able to bypass the problems facing group indexicalism

(Glanzberg 15). Lastly, Glanzberg mentions that his account does not force us to accept there

being such a thing as faultless disagreement, where two people can disagree, but neither speak

falsely; a notion that Glanzberg finds to be absurd (16).

However, even though Glanzberg's account might have noticeable improvements over

other contextualist accounts, there still remains a problem for Glanzberg in that it does not

appear that he has given an answer of how disagreement is possible when two people are

expressing their own opinions on taste. In this way, Glanzberg has not successfully answered the

original challenge issued by Lasersohn. The inadequacy of Glanzberg's response becomes

apparent when we realize that there is some defeasible motivation built into PPTs and that we

can utilize work that has been done with judgment internalism by R.M. Hare to get clear on what

the success conditions of asserting a genuine PPT are.

First, though, we should get clear on what internalism is. The type of internalism that I

am primarily concerned with here is motivational judgment internalism, which is the view that

there is a necessary connection between making a moral judgment and having motivation to act

in a way that is in compliance with that moral judgment (Shafer-Landau 143). For example, if

someone utters, "Giving to charity is morally right," then he or she has only made a moral

judgment if he or she has the motivation to give. If no such motivation exists for the person, then he or she has made no such judgment (Shafer-Landau 143).

If the person is not making a moral judgment, when he or she states, "Giving to charity is morally right," because he or she lacks motivation to give, then what exactly is he or she doing? Hare answered the question by saying that the person is using moral language inside inverted commas to talk about what other people find to be morally right or to talk about the moral standards in a society (124). The person who says, "Giving to charity is morally right," but then has no motivation to give, is not making a genuine moral judgment, according to Hare, but instead stating that most people would find giving to charity to be morally right or that the standards of the society are such that giving to charity is viewed as a morally right action (124). So, even though the grammar of the person's utterance looks the same as when he or she is issuing a moral judgment, the underlying meaning is drastically different.

It seems that genuine PPTs are similar to moral judgments in that in order for one to assert a genuine PPT, he or she has to be motivated in some way to act in compliance with that PPT. For instance, 'tasty' seems to have motivation to eat or drink the thing (that is being considered as tasty) built into the meaning of the word; if 'tasty' means something like positive-gustatory experience or gustatory-pleasure, then if I say that something is tasty, then I should have at least some motivation to eat that thing, namely because I find it to give me a pleasant gustatory experience. Now, it is certainly not the case that PPTs involve overriding motivations, as Hare thought was the case with moral judgments. We can think of plenty of cases where the motivation is defeasible. We might have already eaten too much, or perhaps we're just getting over the flu or maybe we're trying to diet, but there does seem to be at least some defeasible motivation present and so we'll need to accept a weaker form of internalism than Hare does, but

at the very least it does seem as though Hare's account will at least get us on the right track for dealing with PPTs.

Similarly, Hare's answer to what is going on when someone tries to make a moral judgment, but has no motivation, also seems to put us on the right path for dealing with PPTs that are not genuine. If I say that something is tasty, but have no motivation to eat it, then I'm using the term in inverted commas, where I am talking about what standards hold the thing to be tasty or that certain people find it to be tasty, or, under Glanzberg's view, what has been determined to be tasty by a context given a particular experiencer class. When viewed in such a way, it seems that we should take speakers using the inverted commas form of PPTs as not asserting genuine PPTs.

With these conditions in mind for asserting a genuine PPT, we notice that we can firmly point out when speakers in Glanzberg's account are not asserting them. One such case is when the speaker is not a member of the experiencer class, because if he or she is not, then the inverted commas usage of the PPT is guaranteed. If the speaker is not a member of the experiencer class, then when he or she is talking about something being tasty, he or she is not talking about something being tasty for him or her but instead talking about what was determined by the context, given an experiencer class, to be tasty, which is exactly what someone is doing when he or she invokes the inverted commas usage. For example, if someone who lives on the east coast says, "Chili is tasty," because the context has been set so that chili was determined to be tasty given an experiencer class of people living on the west coast, then he or she is talking about what is tasty as determined by a group of people that does not include him or her, not anything that involves the person's own opinion; he or she might very well find chili to be revolting.

Even if a person is in agreement with what the context has determined, given an experiencer class, to be tasty, there is still good reason to believe that he or she is not asserting a genuine predicate of person taste if he or she is not a part of that experiencer class. Even though he or she would have motivation to eat or drink the thing, since he or she finds it to be tasty, he or she would still be talking about what is 'tasty' as determined by a different group not involving him or herself. Imagine Jill who finds chili to be tasty, and the context has determined, given an experiencer class, that the chili is indeed tasty, but Jill is not a part of the experiencer class. Jill might very well have the motivation to eat the chili. However, under Glanzberg's account, she has been cut off from being able to assert a genuine PPT, because, as we have seen, Glanzberg believes that what she is really saying is $tasty_E(chili) > s(tasty_E)$. But if that's true, then she's not talking about what's tasty for herself, but what has been determined as being tasty given a different group, and so she is invoking the inverted comma usage. If the speaker is not a part of the experiencer class, then the inverted commas usage is sure to follow.

However, we should also note that even if the person is a member of the experiencer class, he or she might be using the inverted commas sense if what was determined as being tasty given the experiencer class runs contra to his or her own thoughts of what counts as tasty. For instance, Julie might be a member of a fancy wine club and the context might be so that based on the experiencer class, the wine club, a particular wine has been determined as being tasty. Yet, Julie finds that she can't stomach the wine and that it is disgusting. Therefore, we can expect Julie to assert something along the lines of, "The wine is tasty, but I have no motivation to drink it." Even though Julie is part of the experiencer class, she is still using the inverted commas form of a PPT.

The problem for Glanzberg's account is that there are only two cases where both speakers would be asserting genuine PPTs and, unfortunately for Glanzberg, disagreement does not follow from either. The first case is when both speakers are part of the same experiencer class and both have an opinion in agreement with what was determined to be tasty given that experiencer class. In such a situation, there won't be any disagreement between them, because both speakers will be in agreement with one another; they won't disagree at all about the taste of the thing they are discussing, because they have similar opinions regarding the tastiness of the thing. The second case is where both speakers are members of different experiencer classes and while both speakers have an opinion that is in agreement with what is determined to be tasty by each's respective experiencer class, the two experiencer classes are diametrically opposed with what was determined to be tasty; for example, given one experiencer class the chili has been determined to be tasty, whereas given the other experiencer class, the chili has been determined to be not tasty. Both of these speakers, we would expect, would have plenty to disagree over. However, disagreement is not allowed for in such a case by Glanzberg himself, because he holds that in order for there to be disagreement the experiencer class has to remain the same (Glanzberg 14).

If Glanzberg has not given us disagreement in cases where both speakers are asserting genuine PPTs, then he has not answered the original challenge put forth by Lasersohn, which was to show that two speakers could disagree when it comes to PPTs that involved their own personal tastes, yet have both speak truthfully. Since Glanzberg's account only provides for disagreement in cases where one of the speakers is using PPTs in inverted commas, then even though Glanzberg's account does not fall as easily to the criticisms leveled by Lasersohn at

speaker indexicalism and group indexicalism, it nevertheless fails to provide us with a

contextualist account that can allow for disagreements involving genuine PPTs.

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