

Expressing experience: Not necessarily 'stoned', but 'beautiful'

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The acquaintance inference

In unembedded assertions and denials, predicates of personal taste implicate that the speaker has **direct experience** of a sort relevant for judging the predicate:

- (1) A: You should get sea urchin.
 It's tasty.
 B: Is that what you usually get?
 A: ?? No, I've never tried it.



The acquaintance inference

Projection out of negation suggests that the acquaintance inference is a presupposition:

- (2) A: Don't get sea urchin. It's not tasty.
B: When did you try it?
A: ?? I've never tried it.



The acquaintance inference

But it does not project out of the usual presupposition holes:

- (3)
- a. If sea urchin is tasty, I will order some.
 - b. Sea urchin might be tasty.
 - c. Sea urchin must be tasty.

↗ I have tasted sea urchin

The acquaintance inference

This is different from e.g. the anaphoric presupposition of *too*:

- (4)
- a. I ordered SEA URCHIN too.
 - b. I didn't order SEA URCHIN too.
 - c. If I order SEA URCHIN too, then I won't have enough money to get home.
 - d. I might order SEA URCHIN too.
 - e. I must order SEA URCHIN too.

↪ *I ordered something other than sea urchin.*

The acquaintance inference

And unlike presuppositions, the acquaintance inference cannot be cancelled:

- (5) a. I didn't eat sea urchin TOO — that's the only thing I ate!
b. I don't REGRET that I ordered sea urchin, because I didn't order any at all!

- (6) a. ?? Sea urchin isn't TASTY — I've never tried it!
b. ?? Skydiving isn't FUN — I've never done it!

The acquaintance inference

But the implication of direct experience does disappear in cases of hedging:

- (7) a. Sea urchin is tasty, I hear.
- b. Apparently sea urchin is very tasty. They love it in Japan.

And in “exocentric” interpretations it is transferred away from the speaker:

- (8) This new food is not tasty. My cat refuses to eat it.

Previous accounts

- ▶ Pearson (2013): lexical presuppositions
- ▶ Ninan (2014): knowledge norm on assertion
- ▶ Kennedy and Willer (2019): evidential basis for belief in (a certain kind of) semantically underdetermined propositional content
- ▶ Muñoz (2019): evidential basis for specifically experiential content

Overview of our proposal

Autocentric uses of PPTs are tools for **expressing experiential attitudes**: states of mind that can be acquired only in virtue of having experiences of a certain sort.

Specifically, we will propose that utterances express distinct attitudes insofar as they come with distinct constraints on the state of mind that the speaker must be in for the utterance to be felicitous.

Overview of our proposal

Examples like (9) are bad because the speaker expresses an attitude that one can have only in virtue of tasting sea urchin, only to deny that she has had that very experience.

(9) ?? Sea urchin is tasty, though I've never tried it.

Examples involving hedges and exocentric interpretations, in contrast, are fine because they do not express experiential attitudes, but rather beliefs, which can be acquired in more indirect ways.

Roadmap

1. The expressivist intuition
 - Parallels between PPTs and ethical/moral language
 - Challenges of embedding
 - Challenges of disagreement
2. Our analysis
 - Informal presentation
 - Formalization
3. Issues
 - Disagreement
 - Quality/quantity polysemy
 - A new take on lying vs. bullshitting
 - Questions

Motivational internalism

Our starting point is an intuition that has driven work in metaethical expressivism: the view that there is a special conceptual or necessary connection between accepting a moral judgment and being motivated to act.

Motivational internalism

"[G]oodness" must have, so to speak, a magnetism. A person who recognizes X to be "good" must ipso facto acquire a stronger tendency to act in its favour than [sic] he otherwise would have had. This rules out the Humean type of definition. For according to Hume, to recognize that something is "good" is simply to recognize that the majority approve of it. Clearly, a man may see that the majority approve of X without having, himself, a stronger tendency to favour it. This requirement excludes any attempt to define "good" in terms of the interest of people other than the speaker. (Stevenson, 1937, p. 16)

Direction of fit

Moral thoughts have a special connection to motivation, distinct from non-moral thoughts, because moral thoughts are a different kind of mental state from non-moral thoughts:

- ▶ **Mind-to-world** Non-moral thoughts represent the world to be a certain way, and should be revised in case of a mismatch.
- ▶ **World-to-mind** Moral thoughts represent what the world *should* be like, and a mismatch is no reason to change the attitude.

The motivational inference

On this view, it should be odd to make a moral judgment and in the explicit absence of the appropriate motivational attitude:

- (10) a. ?? Tax fraud is wrong, but I have no opinion about committing it.
- b. Tax fraud is illegal, but I have no opinion about committing it.
- (11) a. ?? Lowering carbon emissions is right, but I have no opinion about doing it.
- b. Lowering carbon emissions is legal, but I have no opinion about doing it.

The motivational inference

Like the acquaintance inference, the motivational inference is preserved under negation:

- (12) a. ?? Taking advantage of tax loopholes isn't wrong, but I have no opinion about doing it.
- b. Taking advantage of tax loopholes isn't illegal, but I have no opinion about doing it.
- (13) a. ?? Emitting more carbon isn't right, but I have no opinion about doing it.
- b. Emitting more carbon isn't legal, but I have no opinion about doing it.

The anthropologist and the heptapods

But it goes away/is transferred in exocentric uses:



(14) Using the middle tentacle to communicate is wrong.

The sensible cad

Suppose we debate just when avid and determined wooing crosses the line and becomes harassing. Anyone who “doesn't give a damn”, for whom no question of action or attitude, actual or hypothetical, hinges on the classification, can't join into the conversation as a full-fledged participant. His use of this kind of language can only be parasitic on the usage of those who do care. Would a serenade be harassing as well as quaint? The sensible cad might predict how people will classify serenades, or role-play at entering the discussion. But it is puzzling what he is doing if he earnestly tries to take sides. There is no such intelligible thing as pure theoretical curiosity in these matters; at stake is how to explain what to do. (Gibbard, 2003, p. 163)

Conditional antecedents

It also disappears in conditional antecedents:

- (15) a. If committing tax fraud is wrong, no one should do it.
- b. If reducing carbon emissions is right, we should do it.
- (16) a. If sea urchin is tasty, we should order it.
- b. If sailing is fun, we should try it.

Epistemic modals

And under *must*:

- (17) I have no opinion about not tipping for bad service, but since everyone else obviously disapproves of it...
 - a. ...it must be wrong.
 - b. ?? ...it is wrong.

- (18) I have never tried sea urchin, but since everyone else obviously enjoys it...
 - a. ...it must be tasty.
 - b. ?? ...it is tasty.

Hedges

And under hedges:

- (19) a. Apparently not tipping for bad service is wrong, though I have no opinion about doing it.
- b. I hear that tipping the UPS guy is right, though I have no opinion about doing this.
- (20) a. Apparently sea urchin is tasty, though I have never tried it.
- b. I hear that skydiving is fun, though I've never tried it.

Experiential vs. moral language

The match is not perfect: in (21), A sounds like a teenager, while in (22), A sounds like an insincere “againster”.

(21) A: Art museums are boring.

B: When did you visit one?

A: ?? I've never visited one.

(22) A: Tax fraud is wrong.

B: When did you become opposed to it?

A: ?? I have no opinion about doing it.

We will have something to say about this later; for now, we take the parallels to be indicative of something important.

Aesthetic language

Finally we note that aesthetic language is similar:

- (23) A: Jimi's performance of 'Are you experienced' at Monterrey is beautiful.
B: When did you realize you like it?
A: ?? I've formed no opinion about it.
B: When did you first hear it?
A: ?? I've haven't heard it either.

Classical expressivism

“Assertions” involving PPTs, moral language, aesthetic language, ... aren't assertions at all, but rather expressions of the relevant experiential, motivational, judgmental, ... attitude (e.g. Ayer, 1936):

- (25) a. “Sea urchin is tasty” \rightsquigarrow expression of GUSTATORY PLEASURE
- b. “Tax fraud is wrong:” \rightsquigarrow expression of MORAL DISAPPROVAL
- c. “This is beautiful” \rightsquigarrow expression of AESTHETIC APPRECIATION

Assuming that one sincerely expresses such an attitude only if one is in the relevant state of mind, the various acquaintance inferences follow.

Some problems for classical expressivism

(26) *Disagreement*

A: Sea urchin is tasty./I like sea urchin!

B: That's wrong. Sea urchin is not tasty./#I don't like sea urchin!

(27) *Propositional anaphora*

Kim believes that sea urchin is tasty.

Pat believes that too.

So, there is something that Kim and Pat both believe.

(28) *Embeddings*

a. If sea urchin is tasty, Kim will eat it.

b. This will be tasty or you can get your money back.

c. This might be tasty. (MacFarlane, 2014)

Our task

We want to capture the expressivist intuition that acquaintance inferences (and etc.) arise from the fact that when one uses a PPT to make an assertion, one expresses an experiential attitude, and one can have such an attitude only in virtue of having the relevant kind of experience.

But we want to avoid the problems for expressivism by providing an analysis in which when one uses a PPT to make an assertion, one makes an assertion, in the usual sort of way with the usual sort of semantic content!

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We want to capture the expressivist intuition that acquaintance inferences (and etc.) arise from the fact that when one uses a PPT to make an assertion, one expresses an experiential attitude, and one can have such an attitude only in virtue of having the relevant kind of experience.

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Strategy: look to the norms of assertion.

“Cheap” expressivism

- ▶ For the reasons outlined above, we will not take on the assumptions of a proper expressivist semantics.
- ▶ Instead, we will say that different speech acts express different attitudes in the sense that their felicity conditions are such that the speaker must be in the mental state that underlies those attitudes.

Expression and assertion

- ▶ The attitude that an assertion of a proposition p expresses is the one that the speaker must hold towards p in order for p to be assertable given the norms of assertion of the speech community.
- ▶ Utterances of propositions containing PPTs express experiential attitudes.
- ▶ Holding the relevant experiential attitude entails having had the relevant experiences (a.k.a., *having been experienced*).

Expression and assertion

- ▶ The attitude that an assertion of a proposition p expresses is the one that the speaker must hold towards p in order for p to be assertable given the norms of assertion of the speech community.
- ▶ The norms of assertion for a proposition containing a PPT require the speaker to hold a certain type of experiential attitude towards that proposition.
- ▶ Utterances of propositions containing PPTs express experiential attitudes.
- ▶ Holding the relevant experiential attitude entails having had the relevant experiences (a.k.a., *having been experienced*).

The basis-for-belief inference

Assertions of “objective” propositions *also* come with a felicity condition based on the state of mind of the speaker: she should have some basis for belief about the truth of the proposition asserted.

- (29) A: Jimi was stoned during his performance of ‘Are you experienced?’ at Monterrey.
B: Why do you believe that?
A: ?? I have no reason to believe it.

The basis-for-belief inference

The basis-for-belief inference is a consequence of many contemporary views on assertion, which say that one should only assert p if one is in a certain state of mind, e.g.:

- ▶ Williamson (1996): one should only assert what one knows
- ▶ Bach (2008): one should only assert what one believes

We want to argue that this is just a specific instance of a more general felicity condition on assertion, which applies also to experiential, moral, aesthetic, etc. propositions.

Not an evidential condition!

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That's also how the acquaintance inference is often characterized (see e.g. Kennedy and Willer, 2019; Muñoz, 2019).

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That's also how the acquaintance inference is often characterized (see e.g. Kennedy and Willer, 2019; Muñoz, 2019).

But that doesn't seem right for the motivational inference, or, arguably, for the evaluative component of aesthetic judgments.

Grounding (informal)

An assertion of a proposition p is felicitous just in case the speaker is in a mental state that distinguishes between worlds at which p is true and worlds at which p is false in the right way.

When this is the case, we will say that p is **grounded** in the relevant mental state.

Doxastic grounding and the basis-for-belief inference

- ▶ A proposition p is grounded in a speaker's beliefs just in case the speaker's doxastic commitments distinguish the p worlds from the $\neg p$ worlds.
- ▶ If an assertion of p is felicitous just in case p grounded in a speaker's beliefs, then assertion of p is felicitous just in case the speaker is not "incredulous towards p ."
- ▶ In this case, assertion of p is an expression of belief.

Experiential grounding and the acquaintance inference

- ▶ A proposition p is grounded in a speaker's experiences just in case the speaker's experiential commitments distinguishes the p worlds from the $\neg p$ worlds.
- ▶ If an assertion of p is felicitous just in case p is grounded in the speaker's experiential state, then assertion of p is felicitous just in case the speaker is not "inexperienced relative to p ."
- ▶ In this case, assertion of p is an expression of experience.

Normative grounding and the motivational inference

- ▶ A proposition p is grounded in a speaker's norm acceptance just in case the speaker's normative commitments distinguishes the p worlds from the $\neg p$ worlds.
- ▶ If an assertion of p is felicitous just in case p is grounded in the speaker's norm acceptance, then assertion of p is felicitous just in case the speaker is not "unmotivated about p ."
- ▶ In this case, assertion of p is an expression of norm acceptance.

Basic setup

- ▶ $\llbracket \cdot \rrbracket$ assigns ordinary extensions at possible worlds and given some context of utterance c
- ▶ Given a context c , let
 - ▶ a_c = the speaker
 - ▶ w_c = the home circumstance
 - ▶ s_c = the context set, the set of worlds compatible with the common ground

Commitment functions

Pick out an agent's doxastic, experiential, normative, (directly) evidential commitments:

- ▶ $\text{DOX}(a, w) = \{w': w' \text{ compatible with } a\text{'s beliefs at } w\}$
- ▶ $\text{EXP}(a, w) = \{w': w' \text{ compatible with } a\text{'s experiences at } w\}$
- ▶ $\text{NORM}(a, w) = \{w': w' \text{ compatible with the norms accepted by } a \text{ at } w\}$
- ▶ $\text{DIR}(a, w) = \{w': w' \text{ compatible with } a\text{'s direct evidence at } w\}$

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- ▶ $\text{DIR}(a, w) = \{w' : w' \text{ compatible with } a\text{'s direct evidence at } w\}$

Make the natural assumption that for all a and w :

- ▶ $\text{DOX}(a, w) \subseteq \text{EXP}(a, w)$
- ▶ $\text{DOX}(a, w) \subseteq \text{NORM}(a, w)$
- ▶ $\text{DOX}(a, w) \subseteq \text{DIR}(a, w)$ (maybe)

Grounding (formal)

Identify worlds that are α -*indistinguishable* from w in c :

- ▶ $|w|^c_\alpha = \text{df}\{v \mid \forall p[p \subseteq \alpha(a_c, w_c) \rightarrow p(w) = p(v)]\}$

Partition an information state (e.g. s_c) into cells that agree on α commitments:

- ▶ $|s|^c_\alpha = \text{df}\{|w|^c_\alpha : w \in s\}$

A proposition p is α -**grounded** in a partitioning $|s|^c_\alpha$, $|s|^c_\alpha \triangleright p$, iff:

- ▶ For all $\pi \in |s|^c_\alpha$, $\pi \cap p = \emptyset$ or $\pi \cap p = \pi$.

Grounding (formal)

Identify worlds that are α -*indistinguishable* from w in c :

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- ▶ For all $\pi \in |s|^c_\alpha$, $\pi \cap p = \emptyset$ or $\pi \cap p = \pi$.

This will be the case only if $\alpha(a_c, w_c)$ distinguishes between p and $\neg p$, i.e. only if a_c is α -*opinionated* about p . **What it takes to be in such a mental state depends on α .**

Experiential grounding

Identify worlds that are *experientially indistinguishable* from w in c :

- ▶ $|w|^c_e = \text{df}\{v \mid \forall p[p \subseteq \text{EXP}(a_c, w_c) \rightarrow p(w) = p(v)]\}$

Partition info state into cells that agree on experiential commitments:

- ▶ $|s|^c_e = \text{df}\{|w|^c_e : w \in s\}$

p is **experientially grounded** in $|s|^c_e$, $|s|^c_e \triangleright p$, iff:

- ▶ For all $\pi \in |s|^c_e$, $\pi \cap p = \emptyset$ or $\pi \cap p = \pi$.

This will be the case only if $\text{EXP}(a_c, w_c)$ distinguishes between p and $\neg p$, i.e. only if a_c is *experientially opinionated* about p , a state that can **only come about through the relevant kind of experience**.

Doxastic grounding

Identify worlds that are *doxastically indistinguishable* from w in c :

- ▶ $|w|^c_d =_{\text{df}} \{v \mid \forall p[p \subseteq \text{DOX}(a_c, w_c) \rightarrow p(w) = p(v)]\}$

Partition info state into cells that agree on doxastic commitments:

- ▶ $|s|^c_d =_{\text{df}} \{|w|^c_d \mid w \in s\}$

p is **doxastically grounded** in $|s|^c_d$, $|s|^c_d \triangleright p$, iff:

- ▶ For all $\pi \in |s|^c_d$, $\pi \cap p = \emptyset$ or $\pi \cap p = \pi$.

This will be the case only if $\text{DOX}(a_c, w_c)$ distinguishes between p and $\neg p$, i.e. only if a_c is *doxastically opinionated* about p . This is a state that **can come about via testimony, inference, etc.**

Normative grounding

Identify worlds that are *normatively indistinguishable* from w in c :

- ▶ $|w|^c_n = \text{df}\{v \mid \forall p[p \subseteq \text{NORM}(a_c, w_c) \rightarrow p(w) = p(v)]\}$

Partition info state into cells that agree on normative commitments:

- ▶ $|s|^c_n = \text{df}\{|w|^c_n : w \in s\}$

p is **normatively grounded** in $|s|^c_n$, $|s|^c_n \triangleright p$, iff:

- ▶ For all $\pi \in |s|^c_n$, $\pi \cap p = \emptyset$ or $\pi \cap p = \pi$.

This will be the case only if $\text{NORM}(a_c, w_c)$ distinguishes between p and $\neg p$, i.e. only if a_c is *normatively opinionated* about p . This state **entails acquisition of the relevant motivational stance**.

Lexical entries (First stab)

- (30) a. $[tasty]^c = \lambda x \lambda s \lambda t. t = \{w \in s : \llbracket tasty \rrbracket(x)(w) = 1\};$
 $|s|^c_e \triangleright \llbracket tasty \rrbracket^c(x)$
- b. $[tasty]^c_{\iota} = \lambda x \lambda s \lambda t. t = \{w \in s : \llbracket tasty \rrbracket(x)(w) = 1\};$
 $|s|^c_{\iota} \triangleright \llbracket tasty \rrbracket^c(x)$
- (31) a. $[wrong]^c = \lambda x \lambda s \lambda t. t = \{w \in s : \llbracket wrong \rrbracket(x)(w) = 1\};$
 $|s|^c_n \triangleright \llbracket wrong \rrbracket^c(x)$
- b. $[wrong]^c_{\iota} = \lambda x \lambda s \lambda t. t = \{w \in s : \llbracket wrong \rrbracket(x)(w) = 1\};$
 $|s|^c_{\iota} \triangleright \llbracket wrong \rrbracket^c(x)$
- (32) a. $[stoned]^c = \lambda x \lambda s \lambda t. t = \{w \in s : \llbracket stoned \rrbracket(x)(w) = 1\};$
 $|s|^c_d \triangleright \llbracket stoned \rrbracket^c(x)$
- b. $[stoned]^c_{\iota} = \lambda x \lambda s \lambda t. t = \{w \in s : \llbracket stoned \rrbracket(x)(w) = 1\};$
 $|s|^c_{\iota} \triangleright \llbracket stoned \rrbracket^c(x)$

Negation

Negation is set subtraction, as in classical dynamic semantics, and we ensure that the assertability conditions of negation match those of what is negated:

- (33) a. $[\neg\phi]^c = \lambda s\lambda t.\exists u: s[\phi]^c u \wedge t = s \setminus u$
 b. $[\neg\phi]^c_l = \lambda s\lambda t.\exists u: s[\phi]^c_l u \wedge t = s \setminus u$

On this view, “Sea urchin is tasty” and “Sea urchin is not tasty,” e.g., differ in their descriptive content but express the same kind of attitude, and have the same felicity conditions.

Conjunction

Conjunction is sequential updating:

- (34) a. $[\phi \wedge \psi]^c = \lambda s \lambda t. \exists u. s[\phi]^c u \text{ and } u[\psi]^c t$
b. $[\phi \wedge \psi]^c_i = \lambda s \lambda t. \exists u. s[\phi]^c_i u \text{ and } u[\psi]^c_i t$

It follows that a conjunction is assertable just in case both conjuncts are assertable.

(Epistemic) *Must*

Three components:

- ▶ Veltman (1996): if updating the input with the prejacent idles, the test is passed and returns the original input; otherwise, the test is failed and returns \emptyset .
- ▶ von Fintel and Gillies (2010): the prejacent should not be entailed by the speaker's direct evidence.
- ▶ *Default expression of belief in the prejacent.*

- (35) a. $[\Box\phi]^c = \lambda s \lambda t. t = \{w \in s : s[\phi]^c_d s\}$ and $\neg \exists u : s[\phi]^c_\delta u$
 b. $[\Box\phi]^c_l = \lambda s \lambda t. t = \{w \in s : s[\phi]^c_l s\}$ and $\neg \exists u : s[\phi]^c_\delta u$

Conditionals

Short version: conditional antecedents and consequents are evaluated in light of the **trivial partitioning**, hence lack of grounding inferences: conditional reasoning is “cheap.”

$$(36) \quad |s|^c =_{\text{df}} \{\{w\} : w \in s\}$$

If you're interested in the actual analysis (which involve an adaptation of ideas in Ramsey (1931), please ask me for the paper (or talk to my co-author).

Exocentric uses

- ▶ **First stab**

An exocentric use of ϕ in context c is a proposal to update the common ground with ϕ in light of c' , where c' is like c except that $a_c \neq a_{c'}$, where $a_{c'}$ is some individual salient in c .

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An exocentric use of ϕ in context c is a proposal to update the common ground with ϕ in light of c' , where c' is like c except that $a_c \neq a_{c'}$, where $a_{c'}$ is some individual salient in c .

- ▶ **More interesting possibility**

Relation between attitudinal “anchor” and locus of perspective in speech act syntax (Speas and Tenny, 2003). Also relevant for account of “interrogative flip.”

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 - ▶ p must be **grounded** in the speaker's mental state
 - ▶ the speaker must be **opinionated** about p
- ▶ Different predicates determine different types of grounding:
 - ▶ doxastic, experiential, normative, aesthetic, ...
- ▶ Embedding operators can introduce new grounding constraints.

Disagreement

- (37) A: Sea urchin is tasty.
B: No, sea urchin is not tasty.
- (38) A: Sea urchin is a mollusc.
B: No, sea urchin is not a mollusc.

Disagreement

Capturing disagreement is no problem; but what about fault(lessness)?

$$(39) \quad A: \lambda s \lambda t. t = \{w \in s : \llbracket \text{tasty} \rrbracket(\mathbf{u})(w) = 1\};$$

$$B: \lambda s' \lambda t'. \exists u: u = \{w \in s' : \llbracket \text{tasty} \rrbracket(\mathbf{u})(w) = 1\} \wedge t' = s' \setminus u;$$

$$(40) \quad A: \lambda s \lambda t. t = \{w \in s : \llbracket \text{mollusc} \rrbracket(\mathbf{u})(w) = 1\};$$

$$B: \lambda s' \lambda t'. \exists u: u = \{w \in s' : \llbracket \text{mollusc} \rrbracket(\mathbf{u})(w) = 1\} \wedge t' = s' \setminus u;$$

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$$|s|_e^c \triangleright \llbracket \text{tasty} \rrbracket^c(\mathbf{u}): a_c = \text{A}$$

$$\text{B: } \lambda s' \lambda t'. \exists u: u = \{w \in s' : \llbracket \text{tasty} \rrbracket(\mathbf{u})(w) = 1\} \wedge t' = s' \setminus u;$$

$$|s|_e^c \triangleright \llbracket \text{tasty} \rrbracket^c(\mathbf{u}): a_c = \text{B}$$

$$(40) \quad \text{A: } \lambda s \lambda t. t = \{w \in s : \llbracket \text{mollusc} \rrbracket(\mathbf{u})(w) = 1\};$$

$$|s|_d^c \triangleright \llbracket \text{mollusc} \rrbracket^c(\mathbf{u}): a_c = \text{A}$$

$$\text{B: } \lambda s' \lambda t'. \exists u: u = \{w \in s' : \llbracket \text{mollusc} \rrbracket(\mathbf{u})(w) = 1\} \wedge t' = s' \setminus u;$$

$$|s|_d^c \triangleright \llbracket \text{mollusc} \rrbracket^c(\mathbf{u}): a_c = \text{B}$$

Disagreement

In our picture, faultlessness should correlate with the legitimacy of maintaining a “difference of opinion.”

- ▶ With experiential grounding: lots of leeway
- ▶ With doxastic grounding:

Example: vague predicates only support faultless disagreement for borderline cases.

- (41) A: That sea urchin is big.
B: No, that sea urchin is not big.

Lies vs. bullshit

The **grounding** condition requires only that the speaker's mental state distinguish between worlds at which the proposition asserted is true and those at which it is false; it does **not** require that the speaker be committed to the truth of what she asserts.

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Assume that comes from a separate **commitment** constraint.

Then:

- ▶ violations of commitment: **lies**
- ▶ violations of grounding: **bullshit**

Varieties of bullshit

(21) *The teenager*

A: Art museums are boring.

B: When did you visit one?

A: ?? I've never visited one.

(22) *The aginst*

A: Tax fraud is wrong.

B: When did you become opposed to it?

A: ?? I have no opinion about doing it.

Varieties of bullshit



Donald J. Trump

@realDonaldTrump

Follow



Of course there is large scale voter fraud happening on and before election day. Why do Republican leaders deny what is going on? So naive!

RETWEETS

14,076

LIKES

36,142



7:33 AM - 17 Oct 2016

9.1K

14K

36K

Quality/Quantity ambiguity

Many adjectives have both a “quantitative” and a “qualitative” interpretation:

- | | | |
|------|--|-------------|
| (42) | a. This metal is dense/heavy/light. | quantity |
| | b. This story is dense/heavy/light. | quality |
| | c. This cake is dense/heavy/light. | both |
| (43) | a. The cake is heavier than the pie. | ambiguous |
| | b. I find the cake heavier than the pie. | unambiguous |

Quality/Quantity ambiguity

A natural explanation: underspecified grounding.

- (44) a. $[\textit{heavy}]^c = \lambda x \lambda s \lambda t. t = \{w \in s : \llbracket \textit{tasty} \rrbracket(x)(w) = 1\};$
 $|s|^c_{\alpha} \triangleright \llbracket \textit{heavy} \rrbracket^c(x)$
- b. $[\textit{heavy}]^c_{\iota} = \lambda x \lambda s \lambda t. t = \{w \in s : \llbracket \textit{tasty} \rrbracket(x)(w) = 1\};$
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Both the attitude expressed and the update to the common ground will vary according to the grounding attitude.

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A similar story about *good*, etc.??

Lexical entries again

- (30) a. $[tasty]^c = \lambda x \lambda s \lambda t. t = \{w \in s : \llbracket tasty \rrbracket(x)(w) = 1\};$
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Questions

- ▶ Why do particular expressions introduce the grounding conditions that they do?
- ▶ Is this really about assertion? Or is a more general use condition on predicates?
- ▶ What, at the end of the day, is the crucial role of the expressive dimension?
- ▶ Do we need more structure in the common ground?

Thank you

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