

## In Search of Faultless Disagreement<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** It is sometimes claimed that there are disagreements about matters of personal taste that are faultless; in such a case, the disputing speakers believe incompatible propositions about taste while both of them are correct in what they believe. The aim of the paper is to show that it is rather difficult to find such a notion of disagreement that would permit faultlessness in the required sense. In particular, three possible notions of disagreement are discussed; neither of them is found to be satisfactory to those who would like to make room for faultless disagreements. The first notion is derived from ordinary instances of disagreement about matters of fact; it is claimed that no faultless disagreement is possible if disagreement is understood along these lines. The second notion is based on certain ideas derived from relativism about truth; it is argued that, though permitting faultlessness, it leads to counterintuitive results. More precisely, certain cases classified as disagreements in this sense would be, rather, taken as instances of agreement from an intuitive viewpoint and certain cases that are not classified as disagreements in this sense are, intuitively, instances of disagreement. The third notion is derived by omitting one feature of the second notion; it is argued that the resulting notion is so weak that it cannot capture what is essential to disagreement proper.

**KEYWORDS:** Disagreement, disagreement about matters of personal taste, faultless disagreement, perspective, predicate of personal taste, relativism about truth.

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Disagreements about matters of *personal taste* – such as aesthetic qualities of artworks, gustatory qualities of meals, or entertainment qualities of TV shows – abound. Some of them are supposed to be special in that neither of

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the disputing parties make any fault in what they say; they believe incompatible propositions while both are right because arrive at their beliefs in a faultless manner. In a word, their disagreement is faultless. In this paper, I wish to show that it is rather difficult to find a notion of disagreement that would permit faultlessness in the required sense.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 1 offers a tentative definition of disagreement. Section 2 involves some ideas concerning disagreements about matters of personal taste together with a toy example that is going to be used throughout the paper. The notion of *faultless disagreement* (FD, henceforth) is introduced in Section 3. Sections 4–6 involve attempts at explaining in which sense two speakers could be said to disagree if their disagreement is to be faultless. Each attempt faces problems of its own. The first one considers the notion of disagreement as defined in Section 1. It is argued (*cf.* Section 4) that this notion does not permit faultlessness in the sense required. The second and third attempts adopt certain ideas typical of the so-called *relativism about truth* (*cf.* Sections 5 and 6). It is shown that the second attempt leads to rather unintuitive results while the third one fails to capture what should be essential to disagreement proper. Section 7 gives a brief summary.

## 1. A Tentative Notion of Disagreement

Let us start with an attempt to find a working notion of disagreement. To begin with, consider what is going on in the case of disputes about *matters of fact*. Here is a simple example:

(1) Ann: The Sun revolves around the Earth.

Ben: The Sun does not revolve around the Earth.

Let us assume that the sentences express propositions relative to their *contexts of use*, understood along D. Kaplan's lines as tuples consisting of the speaker, time, place and world. Ann's sentence expresses, relative to the context of use  $c_{Ann}$ , the proposition *that the Sun revolves around the Earth* and Ben's sentence expresses, relative to the context of use  $c_{Ben}$ , the proposition *that the Sun does not revolve around the Earth*. These propositions are contradictory and, obviously, only one of them is true. Both Ann and Ben utter the above sentences because they believe that their contents, i.e. the propositions expressed, are true. Furthermore, Ben uses his sentence as a signal that he takes Ann's belief as false with respect to the way how things are in their world; from Ben's viewpoint, she believes something that is an inaccurate representation of the world. He refuses the proposition Ann believes precisely because of recognizing this mistake on her part. We would say he disagree with her.

In semantic theories we are accustomed to make the truth values of sentences relative to *circumstances of evaluation*.<sup>2</sup> The same holds for propositions: the proposition expressed by a sentence in a given context of use is true (false) relative to a circumstance of evaluation. According to standard semantic theories, circumstances of evaluation consist of possible worlds or possible world and time couples. The actual world you, me, Ann and Ben occupy is just one of indefinitely many possible worlds that might become parameters of circumstances of evaluation. Recast in this terminology, Ben disagrees with Ann's claim because they believe contradictory propositions and Ben takes Ann's belief as incorrect relative to their circumstance of evaluation.

So, the following tentative definition could be proposed:

**Definition 1**

Given that *A* and *B* are agents and *p* is a proposition, *B* *disagrees* with *A* about *p* iff there is a circumstance of evaluation *e* such that (i) *A* believes (or judges) that *p* is true relative to *e*, (ii) *B* believes (or judges) that not-*p* is true relative to *e*, and (iii) *B* takes *A*'s belief (or judgment) that *p* is true relative to *e* as inaccurate.

The condition (iii) claims that *B*, in disagreeing with *A*, adopts a certain kind of attitude to *A*'s view: *B* takes *A* as believing something that is an inaccurate representation of the circumstance of evaluation with respect to which *A* takes her belief as accurate. The conditions (i) and (ii) jointly suggest that *A* and *B* entertain the same kind of attitude to contradictory propositions. We may remain neutral as to the question which kind of attitude (be it either belief or judgment or whatnot) is the most appropriate one.<sup>3</sup> The requirement that the agents should entertain the same kind of attitude to *contradictory* propositions might be too stringent, however. In certain cases one agent might disagree with another one if they believe non-contradictory, though still incompatible, propositions – mere contrariness might suffice. For example, if *A* claims that a certain item is red, *B* might disagree with *A* by claiming that the item is in fact pink. In such a case, *A* and *B* entertain the same kind of attitude to contrary propositions. An analogous modification could be made also with respect to the above example. Instead of replying with the proposition *that the Sun does not revolve around the Earth*, Ben could utter a sentence expressing the proposition *that the Earth revolves around the Sun*.

<sup>2</sup>The distinction between context of use and circumstance of evaluation is due to D. Kaplan (*cf.* Kaplan 1989). Kaplan identified the circumstances of evaluation with possible world and time couples. In this paper, however, I leave the time parameter aside.

<sup>3</sup>For the sake of simplicity, I consider only beliefs (and believing) in what follows, leaving aside other kinds of attitude like judgment (judging). However, my claims should be understood as permitting the other kinds of attitude as well.

In so doing, he would disagree with Ann by expressing a proposition that is contrary, rather than contradictory, with the one expressed by Ann.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Disagreement about Matters of Taste

Whenever someone says that a book is boring or that a meal is tasty or that an entertainer is funny or that a piece of music is beautiful, she expresses her personal evaluation based on her own tastes or preferences concerning music, meal, entertainment, etc. In so doing she uses sentences involving predicates such as ‘is boring’, ‘is tasty’, ‘is funny’, or ‘is beautiful’ that are called *predicates of taste*. The sentences involving them are *sentences about taste* and the propositions expressed by such sentences (relative to their context of use) are *propositions about taste*. Obviously, propositions about taste are special in that they are not usually assigned truth values relative to possible worlds only.<sup>5</sup> There might be various reasons for this assumption, the most straightforward one being that a piece of music may be regarded both beautiful as well as not beautiful with respect to the same possible world. Since one object cannot instantiate mutually excluding properties in the same world (at the same time), we sometimes opt for *non-standard circumstances of evaluation* consisting of a possible world *and* a *perspective*. We say that the property expressed by a predicate of taste is instantiated by an object relative to a possible world and perspective couple. Perspective can be identified with various kinds of standard.<sup>6</sup> In the case of sentences involving ‘is beautiful’ or other aesthetic predicates, the perspective is constituted by *aesthetic standards of beauty*; in the case of sentences with ‘is tasty’, etc., the perspective consists of *standards of taste*; in the case of sentences with ‘is funny’, etc., the perspective is identified with *senses of humor*; in the case of sentences with ‘is scary’, etc., the perspective consists of *psychological standards of fear*; and so on and so forth.

Concerning disagreements about taste, here is a simple toy example – parallel to (1) – to be referred to throughout the paper. Imagine that Ann and

<sup>4</sup> Observe that the definition describes a situation in which *B* disagrees with *A* (but not necessarily vice versa). To sanction that the agents mutually disagree with one another one should supplement the second condition with an analogous specification of *A*’s attitude to *B*’s belief. I ignore this complication throughout the paper.

<sup>5</sup> Strictly speaking, it is not the case that propositions about taste are *special* in the way indicated. The same might hold for a lot of other kinds of propositions (such as those expressed by sentences featuring predicates like ‘is rich’ or ‘is tall’) as well. Their truth values can be relativized to comparison classes or various kinds of standards (such as standards of wealth), thresholds, etc. Anyway, I ignore these cases and concentrate merely on propositions about taste and sentences expressing them.

<sup>6</sup> Kölbel (2002; 2009), MacFarlane (2005; 2014) and Richard (2008) employ standards but Lasersohn (2005) works with a judge. I ignore these differences here; cf. MacFarlane (2014: 149–150) for a critical discussion about the judge parameter.

Ben are opera goers and discuss their opinions on Alban Berg's opera *Lulu*. There occurs the following short exchange:

- (2) Ann: *Lulu* is beautiful.  
 Ben: *Lulu* is not beautiful.

When taken at face value, Ann and Ben disagree over whether *Lulu* is beautiful in a similar sense as they disagree over whether the Sun revolves around the Earth. Relative to their respective contexts of use, Ann's sentence can be supposed to express the proposition *that Lulu is beautiful* and Ben's sentence can be supposed to express the (contradictory) proposition *that Lulu is not beautiful*. Moreover, in asserting the latter proposition, Ben aims at refusing Ann's belief as inaccurate.

Some purported instances of disagreement about taste are purely verbal disagreements stemming from the fact that each speaker, despite using a sentence without an overt indexical such as 'I', intends to express information about her- or himself. Using the respective sentences in (2), Ann can be sometimes taken as conveying the proposition *that she likes Lulu* while Ben can be sometimes taken as conveying the proposition *that he dislikes Lulu*. In such a case, there would be no disagreement between them.<sup>7</sup>

There is a simple test distinguishing genuine disagreements from verbal ones (*cf.*, e.g. Kölbel 2002: 39; MacFarlane 2014: 9–10; Stephenson 2007: 491–493). A disagreement is genuine provided one speaker may respond to another speaker along the following lines:

- (3) Ann: *Lulu* is beautiful.  
 Ben: No, that is false.

In using his phrase, Ben denies the content expressed by Ann's sentence relative to her context of use. The pronoun 'that' occurs therein as anaphorically dependent on the previous sentence; it refers to the proposition expressed by Ann's sentence and Ben denies whatever proposition it is. The test amounts to this rule:

Let there is a communication exchange in which the agent *A* uses a sentence (about taste) *s* and the agent *B* responds with not-*s*. Whenever it is possible that, instead of not-*s*, *B* is allowed to use 'No, that is false' as a response to what *A* said, *B* is in genuine disagreement with *A*.

<sup>7</sup> See Kölbel (2002: 99), for example. This claim is commonly accepted without much ado. Anyway, I am rather skeptical about its general validity. So far as I can see, there is a sense in which Ben can be said to disagree with Ann even in the case she expresses the proposition *that she herself likes Lulu* and Ben responds with the proposition *that he himself dislikes Lulu*. I put these complications aside because they are rather orthogonal to our present purposes. Anyway, I hope to pursue this topic elsewhere.

Instead of ‘No, that is false’, Ben might use some of the following sentences: ‘No, *Lulu* is not beautiful’; ‘You are mistaken in what you say’; ‘You are wrong there’; ‘This is untrue’; etc. If using ‘You are wrong there’ (etc.), Ben can be understood as referring *tacitly* to the proposition expressed by Ann’s sentence, whatever it is. In what follows, I assume the exchange in (2) passes the above test.

### 3. Faultless Disagreement

It is sometimes assumed that certain disagreements about taste are special in that neither of the disputing parties makes any mistake in what they assert or believe. This assumption leads to the idea of FD. Here is M. Kölbel’s definition of FD:

“A faultless disagreement is a situation where there is a thinker *A*, a thinker *B*, and a proposition [...] *p*, such that:

- (a) *A* believes [...] that *p* and *B* believes [...] that not-*p*
- (b) Neither *A* nor *B* has made a mistake (is at fault).” (Kölbel 2003: 53–54)

Given point (a), *A* and *B* are supposed to believe contradictory (or, at least, incompatible) propositions, where the propositions believed “contradict one another in the sense that for each circumstance of evaluation *e*, if the proposition [believed by *A*] is true at *e*, then the proposition [believed by *B*] is not true at *e*, and vice versa” (Kölbel 2008: 19). Given point (b), neither *A* nor *B* make any mistake in what they believe; making a mistake amounts to believing “a proposition that is not true in one’s own perspective” (Kölbel 2003: 70; *cf.* also Kölbel 2002: 33).

It is easy to see that the definition of FD omits point (*iii*) of Definition 1. Anyway, given the way how the examples of FD are usually handled in the literature, it is at least tacitly assumed that one agent responds disapprovingly to another agent’s belief. So, I assume the cases of FD satisfy all conditions involved in Definition 1 as well as Kölbel’s condition that the agents make no mistakes in their beliefs.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> A notion of disagreement that omits point (*iii*) is considered in Section 6. It is argued that points (*i*) and (*ii*) alone do not provide an effective notion of disagreement. However, there are slightly different notions of disagreement available in the relativistic literature in which my point (*iii*) is replaced by some other condition. (The very fact that some other condition is added to (*i*) and (*ii*) indicates that the relativists themselves do not consider them as sufficient.) For example, M. Richard claimed that “[t]o say that *x* and *y* disagree is to say that there is a content *p* such that one of *x* and *y* believes it, the other believes its denial, and there is a circumstance relative to which it is appropriate to evaluate both *x*’s belief and *y*’s belief”

The exchange in (2) presents a case of FD provided the propositions expressed are taken as *true* while remaining contradictory at the same time. Put in this way, the idea of FD seems hardly credible: How is it possible that both agents can be correct while believing contradictory propositions? The term ‘faultless disagreement’ seems to be the same kind of oxymoron as ‘living dead’, ‘deafening silence’ or ‘invisible ink’.<sup>9</sup>

#### 4. The First Attempt at Finding FD

If understood in the sense of Definition 1, disagreements about taste are modeled on the basis of disagreements about matters of fact. Recall that in our initial example Ben disagrees with Ann’s claim that the Sun revolves around the Earth because he views it as an incorrect representation of how things are in their world, i.e. he does not take her claim as true relative to the circumstance of evaluation with respect to which she presents it as true. By parity of reasoning, in the case of disagreement about taste, one speaker can be said to disagree with another one because the former takes the latter’s claim as false relative to the circumstance of evaluation with respect to which the latter makes her claim. However, there is one difference: the circumstance of evaluation in question must be non-standard. One speaker disagrees with another one because the former takes the latter’s claim as false relative to the possible world and perspective couple with respect to which the latter produces her claim.

It is easy to see that if disagreement is understood in the sense of Definition 1, the dispute between Ann and Ben about *Lulu* cannot be an instance of FD. Let us abbreviate “the circumstance of evaluation involving Ann’s perspective” as  $e_{Ann}$ . Suppose that, in using her line from (2), Ann presents the proposition *that Lulu is beautiful* as true relative to  $e_{Ann}$ . When disapprovingly responding to Ann’s claim, what Ben is doing? In claiming that it is, rather, the proposition *that Lulu is not beautiful* that is true, Ben might be taken as saying that Ann is wrong in believing that the proposition *that Lulu is beautiful* is true relative to  $e_{Ann}$ . Ben implies that Ann does not evaluate her proposition correctly relative to the circumstance of evaluation involving her own perspective.

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(Richard 2011: 426). I. Stojanovic persuasively showed in her (2011) discussion about Richard’s (2008) book that such a notion of disagreement fails.

<sup>9</sup> It is sometimes claimed that the idea of FD has intuitive background. According to M. Kölbel, “most people have a healthy pre-theoretical intuition that there can be and are faultless disagreements in this sense” (Kölbel 2003: 54). Similarly, FD is occasionally taken as a kind of (*empirical*) *datum* (cf. López de Sa 2008: 298) that can be used to test semantic theories. There are also views opposing the claim that FD (if there is anything like that) does have intuitive backing; cf. Iacona (2008: 290–291).

Obviously, if this is what is going on in the situation envisaged, Ben disagrees with Ann in the sense of Definition 1. Their disagreement, however, can hardly be faultless. If one of them is right (with respect to  $e_{Ann}$ ) the other one has to be wrong (with respect to  $e_{Ann}$ ): either Ann is correct that the circumstance of evaluation is such that the proposition *that Lulu is beautiful* is true relative to it or Ben is correct that the circumstance is such that this proposition is false relative to it. It is impossible for both of them to be right. The same result would be achieved provided we consider some other circumstance of evaluation instead of  $e_{Ann}$ . In a word, if we model disagreements about taste on the basis of disagreements about matters of fact, there is hardly any room left for FDs.

Obviously, the above description of the example in question might be rather distorting in the case of ordinary communication situations involving disagreement about matters of taste. It might be said that ordinary data received from everyday communication situations show that when one person disagrees with another person about matters of taste the former one usually does not wish to say that the latter one is wrong in what she claims with respect to her own (i.e., the latter person's) circumstances of evaluation. Rather, the former person denies what the latter one claims because the former person is of a different opinion with respect to her own (i.e., the former person's) circumstances of evaluation.

The moral is clear: To conform to ordinary data received on the basis of disagreements about matters of taste available from ordinary communication situations we should try another notion of disagreement. In other words, the notion of disagreement applicable to situations concerning matters of fact can hardly be applied to situations concerning disagreements about matters of taste.

## 5. The Second Attempt at Finding FD

The failure of the first attempt is caused by the fact that, according to Definition 1, both agents consider the same circumstance of evaluation and one of them is supposed to refuse the other one's representation of the circumstance in question. An easy way out might consist in adjusting the relevant parts of Definition 1.

Such an adjustment can be motivated by the fact that the idea of FD is usually presented as a worry that can be solved only provided we opt for some version of *relativism about truth*.<sup>10</sup> It is sometimes even claimed that

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<sup>10</sup> For various versions of relativism about truth see Kölbel (2002; 2003; 2008; 2009); Lasersohn (2005); MacFarlane (2005; 2007; 2014); Richard (2008). I should add that it is not quite correct to say that relativism about truth is the only approach capable to cope with FDs; cf. Schaffer (2011) for an interesting non-relativistic suggestion.



giving an explanation of FD is the *best* motivation for relativism about truth (cf. García-Carpintero 2008: 129).<sup>11</sup> Relativism about truth consists in the idea that each speaker considers *her own* perspective when uttering sentences about taste. A sentence is assigned truth value relative to the circumstance of evaluation consisting of the world the speaker inhabits and the perspective she employs.<sup>12</sup> One speaker presents her sentence as true relative to the circumstance of evaluation involving one perspective while another speaker presents his sentence as true relative to the circumstance of evaluation involving another perspective.

As a first shot, let us modify the above definition of disagreement by employing the relativistic strategy. Let us assume, thus, that the disputing parties consider different circumstances of evaluation. The resulting definition might be the following one:

#### Definition 2

Given that  $A$  and  $B$  are agents and  $p$  is a proposition,  $B$  *disagrees* with  $A$  about  $p$  iff (i) there is a circumstance of evaluation  $e$  such that  $A$  believes that  $p$  is true relative to  $e$ , and (ii) there is a circumstance of evaluation  $e'$  such that a)  $B$  believes that not- $p$  is true relative to  $e'$ , and b)  $B$  takes  $A$ 's belief that  $p$  is true relative to  $e$  as inaccurate relative to  $e'$ .<sup>13</sup>

Concerning our example, Ann believes the proposition *that Lulu is beautiful* is true relative to  $e_{Ann}$  and Ben believes the proposition *that Lulu is not beautiful* is true relative to  $e_{Ben}$ , where  $e_{Ben}$  abbreviates “the circumstance of evaluation involving Ben’s perspective”. In other words, Ben believes that the proposition *that Lulu is beautiful* is false relative to  $e_{Ben}$ . Since their beliefs are true at their respective circumstances, they have committed no mistake. Moreover, Ben can be interpreted as disagreeing with Ann because of the condition (iib). This condition permits him to take her belief as inaccurate

<sup>11</sup> Not all relativists motivate their theories by reference to instances of *faultless* disagreement. In particular, MacFarlane (2007) argues for relativism about truth because it captures disagreements about taste but does not require them to be faultless. In his recent book, MacFarlane points out that the term ‘faultless disagreement’ is “dangerously ambiguous” (MacFarlane 2014: 133) and suggests omitting it altogether. The book presents a profound attempt at defending relativism about truth as the best semantic theory explaining disagreement and so-called ‘retraction’; the idea of FD plays no role in it.

<sup>12</sup> Not all versions of relativism about truth subscribe to this position. In particular, MacFarlane’s theory differs in this from other eponymous doctrines. According to his approach – that is also called *assessment sensitivity* – it is not the speaker’s perspective that enters the circumstances of evaluation relative to which a sentence about taste is evaluated but, rather, the assessor’s perspective (cf. MacFarlane 2009; 2014). Assessment sensitivity is not discussed in this paper because it deserves a separate treatment.

<sup>13</sup> Of course, it is permitted that, in certain situations,  $e$  might be the same as  $e'$ .

relative to  $e_{Ben}$ . If this is a situation in which Ben is admitted to disagree with Ann, we have an instance of FD.

The notion of disagreement from Definition 2 leads to unintuitive consequences that are hard to swallow, though. It can be shown that one person can be described as disagreeing with another person about a particular proposition as well as agreeing with that person about the very same proposition.<sup>14</sup> Suppose Ann believes the proposition *that Lulu is beautiful* is true relative to  $e_{Ann}$  and Ben believes this proposition is false relative to  $e_{Ben}$ . Of course, this does not prevent him from admitting that, relative to  $e_{Ann}$ , the proposition is true after all. So, Ben could be described as both agreeing and disagreeing with Ann about the same proposition. More precisely, concerning the proposition *that Lulu is beautiful*, Ben agrees with Ann relative to  $e_{Ann}$  but disagrees with her relative to  $e_{Ben}$ .<sup>15</sup>

To elaborate further on this idea, let us introduce some auxiliary notions:

Suppose  $A$  and  $B$  are agents,  $p$  is a proposition,  $e_A$  is a circumstance of evaluation involving  $A$ 's perspective and  $e_B$  is a circumstance of evaluation involving  $B$ 's perspective. Then

1.  $B$  expresses a *first person agreement* with  $A$  provided (i)  $A$  believes that  $p$  is true relative to  $e_A$  and (ii)  $B$  agrees that  $p$  is true relative to  $e_B$ ;
2.  $B$  expresses a *second person agreement* with  $A$  provided (i)  $A$  believes that  $p$  is true relative to  $e_A$  and (ii)  $B$  agrees that  $p$  is true relative to  $e_A$ ;
3.  $B$  expresses a *first person disagreement* with  $A$  provided (i)  $A$  believes that  $p$  is true relative to  $e_A$  and (ii)  $B$  disagrees that  $p$  is true relative to  $e_B$ ;
4.  $B$  expresses a *second person disagreement* with  $A$  provided (i)  $A$  believes that  $p$  is true relative to  $e_A$  and (ii)  $B$  disagrees that  $p$  is true relative to  $e_A$ .

Obviously, we may combine neither first person agreement with first person disagreement nor second person agreement with second person di-

<sup>14</sup> M. Richard labels cases of this kind as *not truth-apt*. When one speaker claims that what another speaker says is wrong with respect to the former speaker's perspective while admits that it could be right with respect to the latter speaker's perspective, "there is from [the former speaker's] perspective no ascribing truth or falsity to opinions on the matter" (Richard 2008: 133). I find this position unacceptable and *ad hoc*. The reason is that it amounts to the following: When the speaker  $A$  denies a proposition about taste the speaker  $B$  accepts,  $A$  is said to express something true provided  $A$  is *not* willing to tolerate  $B$ 's opinion; once  $A$  becomes tolerant to  $B$ 's view, she may no more express something that is truth-apt. As a result, the truth-aptness of a certain proposition depends on whether one is or is not willing to admit other views that are rather orthogonal to the proposition in question *per se*.

<sup>15</sup> Of course, this is not to say that Ben is of two minds or has incompatible beliefs.

sagreement – in both cases the agent would be irrational. So, leaving these options aside and assuming that Ann believes the proposition *that Lulu is beautiful* is true relative to  $e_{Ann}$ , the following possibilities remain open for Ben:

- a) Ben is both in *first person agreement* and in *second person agreement* with Ann;
- b) Ben is both in *first person agreement* and in *second person disagreement* with Ann;
- c) Ben is both in *first person disagreement* and in *second person agreement* with Ann;
- d) Ben is both in *first person disagreement* and in *second person disagreement* with Ann.

In case *a*), Ben takes Ann's belief as accurate with respect to both  $e_{Ann}$  and  $e_{Ben}$ . Similarly, in case *d*) Ben takes Ann's belief as inaccurate with respect to both  $e_{Ann}$  and  $e_{Ben}$ . Everyone would accept that Ben agrees with Ann in the former situation and disagrees with her in the latter situation.

Case *c*) is more interesting. Ben takes Ann's belief as inaccurate with respect to  $e_{Ben}$  and as accurate with respect to  $e_{Ann}$ . If we assume that Ann and Ben commit no mistake in what they believe about *Lulu*, we have a situation that is described by the proponents of relativism about truth as one involving FD: Ann faultlessly believes that *Lulu* is beautiful with respect to her circumstance of evaluation while Ben faultlessly believes that *Lulu* is not beautiful with respect to his circumstance of evaluation. This claim sounds rather odd in the present case, however. Obviously, Ben agrees with Ann after all! The claim that Ben disagrees with Ann thus sounds unintuitive. Given what the relativist may say about case *c*), it seems that she has to say something counterintuitive about the following exchange:

(4) Ann: *Lulu* is beautiful.

Ben: I know that according to your tastes in music *Lulu* is beautiful.  
And you are right in saying that it is such. However, my tastes differ from yours and I have to say the opposite.

Ben admits that *Lulu* is beautiful according to Ann's perspective. Yet he expresses also another attitude according to which *Lulu* is not beautiful. The relativist has to say that Ben disagrees with Ann, although he himself explicitly admits that she can be correct from her own perspective.

Finally, turn to case *b*) that is interesting as well because Ben takes Ann's belief as accurate with respect to  $e_{Ben}$ , but as inaccurate with respect to  $e_{Ann}$ . What is striking about relativism about truth is that the situation at hand should be described as not involving disagreement! Observe that in case *c*) Ben is supposed to disagree with Ann because her proposition is not true rela-

tive to  $e_{Ben}$ . By parity of reasoning, in case *d*) Ben should *agree* with Ann since he admits that her proposition is true at  $e_{Ben}$ . Again, this sounds odd because Ben explicitly disagrees with Ann that her belief is true at  $e_{Ann}$ . Similarly, the relativist has to say something unintuitive about the following exchange:

(5) Ann: *Lulu* is beautiful.

Ben: I know your tastes in music. *Lulu* cannot be beautiful according to them. I know that because our tastes are strikingly different. If I find *Lulu* beautiful – and I really do – you cannot.

Ben claims that *Lulu* is not beautiful according to Ann's standards. Yet he expresses also another attitude according to which *Lulu* is beautiful. The relativist has to say that Ben agrees with Ann, although he himself explicitly says that, given her own perspective, she must be wrong.

These are rather absurd results. However, the proponents of relativism about truth have to accept them provided their notion of disagreement is the one introduced in Definition 2.

## 6. The Third Attempt at Finding FD

Finally, let us consider still another notion of disagreement which arises from two modifications of the original definition: firstly, let us assume that the disputing parties consider different circumstances of evaluation (as required by relativism about truth); secondly, let us drop the condition (*iii*) which requires one agent to take a disapproving attitude to another's belief. The resulting definition might be the following one:

### Definition 3

Given that  $A$  and  $B$  are agents and  $p$  is a proposition,  $B$  *disagrees* with  $A$  about  $p$  iff (*i*) there is a circumstance of evaluation  $e$  such that  $A$  believes that  $p$  is true relative to  $e$ , and (*ii*) there is a circumstance of evaluation  $e'$  such that  $B$  believes that not- $p$  is true relative to  $e'$ .

This notion of disagreement is very weak. In fact, it consists in that the agents are merely required to have contradictory (or otherwise incompatible) opinions.

Employing this notion of disagreement, example (2) amounts to the following: In using her sentence '*Lulu* is beautiful', Ann declares that she believes the proposition *that Lulu is beautiful* and in using his sentence '*Lulu* is not beautiful' Ben makes it clear that he believes the propositions *that Lulu is not beautiful*. Concerning the former proposition, Ann believes it is true relative to  $e_{Ann}$  and, concerning the latter proposition, Ben believes that it is true relative to  $e_{Ben}$ . Since neither of them is at fault in what they believe, they

are supposed to disagree (in the sense of Definition 3) without making any mistake.

Nominally, this notion seems to be the one assumed in Kölbel's definition of FD. For the agents in his definition are required to believe contradictory propositions without having attitudes to one another's belief. However, such attitudes are assumed in analyses of particular examples in which one person disapprovingly *responds* to another person's claim concerning matters of personal taste.<sup>16</sup> So, despite appearances, I suspect this notion is not invoked in cases of FD. Still, it would be instructive to consider some of its drawbacks. They point to the fact that a proper definition of disagreement should allow for the condition that one agent adopted a suitable kind of dissenting attitude to the content of another agent's belief.

The first problem to be noticed is that it makes useless our rule distinguishing genuine disagreements from merely verbal ones (*cf.* Section 2). Recall that Ben is said to genuinely disagree with Ann provided his sentence '*Lulu* is not beautiful' can be replaced by 'No, that is false' or a similar locution; otherwise, their disagreement is verbal at most. Suppose Ann utters the sentence '*Lulu* is beautiful' and Ben responds with '*Lulu* is not beautiful'. It hardly makes sense to prefix 'No' to Ben's sentence unless he wants to react disapprovingly to Ann's claim. Ben's use of 'No' simply signals that he reacts to the other speaker's sentence. Similarly, if Ben's sentence can be substituted by another suitable sentence such as 'No, that is false' or 'You are wrong there', he reacts disapprovingly to someone else's sentence. In both cases Ben is required to take a stance on the content of Ann's belief. However, Definition 3 does not require that Ben should do that. As a result, we are left without an effective method of distinguishing genuine disagreements from merely verbal ones.

It might be replied that this objection is unjustified. The reason is that Definition 3 could be taken as providing only necessary conditions, rather than sufficient ones, for something being an instance of disagreement. Many disagreements could still be pictured as dialogues in which one person reacts disapprovingly to another person's claim; this feature, however, would be no more a *definitional* feature of disagreement. As a result, Ben's sentence could be modified along the above lines if presented as a response in a dialogue. Be that as it may, there are other unwelcome consequences of Definition 3.

Secondly, Definition 3 is too broad in the following sense. Suppose Ann utters the sentence '*Lulu* is beautiful' relative to her circumstance of evaluation consisting of the world  $w_{Ann}$  and standards of beauty  $s_{Ann}$ . Analogously,

<sup>16</sup> This is plain from the fact that the typical examples of disagreement in the literature are modeled as *dialogues* of a special kind.

Ben utters the sentence ‘*Lulu* is not beautiful’ relative to his circumstance of evaluation consisting of the world  $w_{Ben}$  (which is not the same as  $w_{Ann}$ ) and standards of beauty  $s_{Ben}$ . In such a case, Ben should be said to disagree with Ann. However, this diagnosis is hardly intuitive. The reason is that if disagreements need not be pictured as exchanges in which one speaker reacts to another speaker’s claims, two agents might be admitted to disagree with one another even though they inhabit different worlds (or make their claims relative to different worlds).

Thirdly, it can be shown that if disagreement is what is captured by Definition 3, there could be also instances of FD about various matters of fact, contrary to what we expect and contrary to what the relativists usually claim.<sup>17</sup> If Ann truly believes that the Sun revolves around the Earth relative to her world  $w_{Ann}$  while Ben truly believes that the Sun does not revolve around the Earth relative to his world  $w_{Ben}$ , both beliefs could be true provided the respective worlds are as described. According to the definition, however, Ben disagrees with Ann (and vice versa). As a result, they faultlessly disagree with one another. Since FDs about this kind of matters of facts should be unacceptable, this notion of disagreement is better abandoned.

## 7. Conclusion

As we have seen, believing contradictory propositions does not suffice for two agents to be in disagreement with one another. As a result, the notion of disagreement introduced in Definition 3 hardly corresponds to the notion we usually employ. What is further required is that one agent takes the other one’s belief as an inaccurate representation of the way how things are. Now either both agents share the same circumstance of evaluation with respect to which their beliefs are assigned truth values (*cf.* Definition 1) or each of them considers her own circumstance of evaluation that is distinct from the

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<sup>17</sup> In particular, Kölbel is explicit in claiming that disagreements about objective matters, i.e. matters of fact, cannot be faultless; FDs can be found only in the realm of non-objective propositions; *cf.* Kölbel (2002: 28ff.). Though the example discussed in the main text supports Kölbel’s contention about disagreements concerning matters of fact, I refrain from unrestricted agreement with him on this issue. It might seem that *if* FDs about matters of taste are admitted, certain disagreements about matters of fact might be pictured as faultless as well. More precisely, I. Stojanovic argues in her (2011) that the case of disagreements about who is cool, for example, are no special in comparison with disagreements about who is rich. So, we might presume, if there are FDs about who is cool, there should be FDs about who is rich as well. Given this restriction, my argument in the main text should be understood along the following lines: If disagreement is what is captured by Definition 3, it should be permitted that *every* proposition concerning matters of fact is such that there are FDs about it. However, it is not the case that there are FDs about every proposition concerning matters of fact (the proposition *that the Sun revolves around the Earth* is a case in point). So, Definition 3 is unsatisfactory.

circumstance of evaluation of the other agent (*cf.* Definition 2). It is shown that in the former case no disagreements are faultless. In the latter case, FDs are permitted but there is a high price to be paid – certain situations which would be intuitively described as involving agreement have to be taken as involving disagreement and vice versa.

As a result, it is rather difficult to provide a satisfactory explanation of disagreements in which neither of the disputing parties makes mistakes. This is not to say, of course, that people cannot disagree about matters of taste. They can and they do but it would be deceptive to call their disagreement faultless. Without any hesitation we may admit that one agent disagrees with another agent about matters of taste provided they invoke the same perspective with respect to which they believe contradictory (or incompatible) propositions and the former takes the latter's belief as inaccurate. Such a situation does not admit faultlessness on both parts.

If the agents employ different perspectives, we should better say there is no real disagreement between them. Of course, we may admit they have different opinions but we should distinguish the case in which two agents are of different minds from the case in which they disagree with one another. For in the case of differing opinions the agents may clear up their respective positions and realize that they are not disagreeing with one another without any of them taking back their original position or changing their mind. With the benefit of hindsight they might realize that their dispute arises from misunderstanding or merely verbal disagreement. If this distinction is preserved, one may agree with I. Stojanovic that “either the disagreement is genuine, but only one party gets it right, or else, it is spurious and boils down to a misunderstanding” (Stojanovic 2007: 693).

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