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Natalia Karczewska*

# INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPICAL COLLECTION *VALUE AND EMOTIONS: TALKING (AND NOT TALKING) ABOUT MORALS, TASTE, AND ART*

The language we use to talk about what is good or bad, what is beautiful or ugly, what is tasty or disgusting has been the center of attention for many philosophers of language in the last few decades. Interestingly, however, analytic philosophers at first considered this kind of language to be quite problematic and either pushed it aside as a poetic, ultimately meaningless part of our linguistic behavior, or they tried to provide an alternative account of it. What this shows, I suppose, is that evaluative language used to be seen as radically different from the language we use to talk about facts, about how things are in the world, namely truth-conditional language. This was a consequence of some representatives of logical empiricism adopting verifiability as a criterion of meaningfulness. According to the verifiability principle, a sentence is meaningful only if it is empirically verifiable or a truth of logic. Since we can't empirically verify the truth value of "Murder is wrong," then this sentence is neither true nor false: it's meaningless. The Vienna Circle philosophers quickly realized that one of the consequences of the verifiability principle renders a large portion of our everyday communication nonsense. A remedy to this unwelcome result was Alfred Ayer's emotivism (1936). This metaethical theory claims that moral sentences serve speakers not as truth-bearers but as expressions of emotion. This idea was later developed into a broader view encompassing not only moral but also aesthetic and personal taste predicates, namely expressivism, which claims that in uttering sentences containing such terms, speakers express non-cognitive attitudes, such as desires or preferences. Even though this view faces some problematic objections (see, e.g., the Frege–Geach

* University of Warsaw, Faculty of Philosophy, Krakowskie Przedmieście 3, 00-927 Warsaw, Poland, e-mail: natalia.karczewska@uw.edu.pl, ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0889-7169.

problem), its contemporary modified versions still have a number of advocates (e.g., Buekens 2011, Clapp 2015, Gutzmann 2016).

Subsequently, reflection on the context-sensitivity of natural language allowed for a more unified treatment of evaluative sentences. It became commonplace to think of terms like "good" or "beautiful" as expressions whose semantic values depend on a perspective. One semantic theory which embraces this strategy is indexical contextualism (e.g., Glanzberg 2007, López de Sa 2008, Zouhar 2018), which aims to account for the intuitive features of terms like "beautiful" or "good" by saying that they name subjective properties of objects, actions, and people. This means that, for instance, things are not just beautiful in themselves, but they are beautiful to some person or according to this or that standard (or perspective). This assumption is reflected in how a contextualist construes the content of an utterance containing a value word: utterances about taste or beauty are thought to express truth-bearing propositions that are essentially about the speaker (or her standard). Even though this approach accounts for a number of problems, it faces issues of its own, one of which is disagreement. According to contextualism, a speaker's utterance of "The Mona Lisa is beautiful" is taken to express the proposition that The Mona Lisa is beautiful according to the speaker's aesthetic standard. This proposition is true if The Mona Lisa is beautiful according to that very standard. What is problematic is that a different speaker's utterance of "The Mona Lisa is not beautiful" expresses the speaker-relative proposition that The Mona Lisa is not beautiful according to their standard, which is true if it is indeed the case. So, if two speakers said something true about The Mona Lisa (or, in a sense, about themselves), how is it that we have the intuition that they are disagreeing? How can two people truly disagree if neither of them is wrong? This is the problem of faultless disagreement (Kölbel 2004, Lasersohn 2005). There are many accounts in the literature that aim to solve this: some of them are in line with contextualist semantics, while others compete with it. Two of the papers published in this volume constitute voices in the disagreement debate.

In his "Judge-Specific Sentences about Personal Taste, Indexical Contextualism, and Disagreement," Marián Zouhar questions one of the assumptions of the original anti-contextualist argument from disagreement. The assumption has it that even though pairs of utterances about taste which do not mention the judge to whom the taste standard is relativized evoke the intuition of disagreement, this is not true of analogical utterances which do include a mention of the judge. One goal of Zouhar's paper is to show that even if one speaker says, "Oysters are tasty to me," and another replies, "Oysters aren't tasty to me," they can still be seen as disagreeing. The other goal is to show how a whole plethora of accounts that aim to resolve the faultless disagreement issue do not satisfac-

torily explain the postulated disagreement intuitions evoked by judge-specific taste utterances such as those above. The Author focuses here on what he calls *dual-proposition theories*, i.e., accounts that claim that, in uttering evaluative sentences, speakers express not just the standard proposition *that x has the evaluative property E (according to standard S)*, but some other content as well: e.g., the speaker's presupposition that their own standard is superior to their interlocutor's (Zakkou 2019); the presupposition that they both share the standard of taste (López de Sa 2007); a metalinguistic suggestion about how an evaluative term should be used in a given context (e.g., Barker 2013), or a normative use-conditional proposition *that x should count as having the property E in the context* (Gutzmann 2016).

Dan Zeman's paper is a polemic against Natalia Karczewska's proposal that aims to explain faultless disagreement data (2021). In a nutshell, Karczewska argues that evaluative sentences are systematically used to perform a distinct kind of illocution over and above assertions, namely *evaluations*, whose aim is to praise or disapprove of the moral, aesthetic, or gustatory qualities of the object being talked about. Intuitions of disagreement, rather than stemming from the conflict between semantically expressed propositions, arise from the conversational dynamic and are cashed out in terms of a proposal to update the common ground with shared commitments and a rejection of this proposal. Zeman points out that Karczewska's account was developed in the first place for predicates of personal taste, and he tests it on aesthetic predicates. He believes that it works for prototypical examples of this kind, such as "beautiful," but it isn't well suited for more "objective" yet still aesthetic terms like "balanced." With "balanced," Karczewska is at risk of committing herself to the unintuitive conclusion that all disagreements – including ones between a knowledgeable art critic and an ignorant layperson – are faultless. Zeman then proposes an alternative way of dealing with this problem which locates the source (and consequently the explanation) of faultlessness in the faulty commitments proposed by one of the speakers.

In his paper "Failing to Make It Explicit: Superficial and Irreducible Perspectivality," Eduardo Pérez-Navarro, like Zouhar, takes up the distinction between context-relative sentences which do and don't include an explicit mention of the perspective. He examines three semantic accounts which all acknowledge that perspective influences the truth-value of a context-dependent utterance but which differ in how this influence comes about. He talks about the abovementioned indexical contextualism, which incorporates the perspective (or standard) in the expressed content; he also discusses both nonindexical contextualism (Kölbel 2004), according to which the content stays constant across contexts but the truth value itself is relative to the perspective deter-

mined by the context of utterance, and assessor relativism (MacFarlane 2014), which also relativizes the truth value but to the context of assessment rather than the context of utterance. Pérez-Navarro then reaches for John Perry's account of the possibility of making explicit the contextual parameter connected with perspectivality in order to argue for two points: first, that Perry's account may provide us with a criterion that distinguishes indexical contextualism from nonindexical contextualism (which has been a contentious issue, see, e.g., Stojanovic 2007); second, that scrutinizing the notion of perspectivality may bring us to a better understanding of what kind of sentences are truly perspectival in the interesting sense.

The last paper presented in this collection concerns a different region of the landscape of normative language: expressive terms. Expressives – a diverse category of terms such as "bastard," "fucking," or "damn" – are considered to play a different role than purely descriptive terms (such as "son," "rainy," or "excursion"): they are used to express some sentiment, attitude, or emotion of the speaker rather than describe some facts about the world by expressing beliefs. As a result, if I say, "The damn train is late," I say something which may or may not be the case, namely that the train is late; however, over and above this, I also convey my discontentment with this situation. It seems that my conveying discontentment does not contribute to the truth-conventional content of my utterance in a straightforward way. Kaplan (1999) attributes to Frege the famous "Truth is immune to epithetical color" slogan, which means that the descriptive and expressive contents of expressive words are independent (Potts 2007). The semantics and pragmatics of terms like "damn" as well as various properties of expressives are a subject of a vivid discussion.

In her paper "The Ineffable Case of Expressives," Justina Berškytė takes up a widely discussed property that is ascribed to expressives (Potts 2007): descriptive ineffability. This feature consists in the fact that speakers are generally unable to satisfactorily paraphrase an expressive in purely descriptive terms in a way which would still convey the "expressive punch." After all, with "damn" or "fucking" we do not just convey "and I'm extremely annoyed with it," i.e., they are not just *very negative intensifiers*. The goal of Berškytė's paper is twofold: to scrutinize the definition of descriptive ineffability, and to argue that it is, indeed, one of the properties that distinguish expressive words from descriptive ones. The Author's revised definition of ineffability eliminates both the mentalist component and the psychological component of the speaker's satisfaction with the effect of the paraphrase; the ineffability stems from the inadequacy of the descriptive language and not from the fact that the speakers do not have the relevant concepts corresponding with the expressive meaning of a given expressive term. Further, Berškytė addresses two kinds

of arguments against ineffability being a distinct feature of expressives: one which claims that purely descriptive terms can also be ineffable (Geurts 2007, Drożdżowicz 2016), and one which says that some expressive terms are actually effable (Mildenberger 2017).

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It is my great pleasure to present this topical collection to the Readers. I would like to thank the Authors for the interesting and inspiring papers and the Reviewers for their work. I would also like to express my gratitude to the editors of *Filozofia Nauki* / *The Philosophy of Science* for their effort.

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