

**Week 9: Lasersohn II. Implicit Arguments, Perspective, Predicates of Personal Taste, First-Person Oriented Content.**  
**Implicit Arguments and Control I: The Super-Equi Puzzle and Datives.**

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**Note: This handout can be downloaded** (then links to references can be clicked) from my site.

And don’t forget to periodically download the [720 Dynamic Reading List](#).

**Readings**

- (Lasersohn 2005) Context dependence, disagreement, and predicates of personal taste.
- (Lasersohn 2008) Quantification and Perspective in Relativist Semantics
- (Lasersohn 2009) Relative truth, speaker commitment, and control of implicit arguments
- (MacFarlane 2006) Comments on what became Lasersohn (2009)
- (Moltmann 2005) Relativized truth and the first person (Abstract) (this is short – it’s a good one to start with).
- (Moltmann In Press-a) Relative truth and the first person. This is the one in which she argues directly with Lasersohn, Kölbel, MacFarlane and others about predicates of personal taste.
- (Moltmann 2006) Generic one, arbitrary PRO, and the first person. This is the one written most directly for the formal semantics community

**Additional readings**

- (Kaplan 1989) Demonstratives. An Essay on the Semantics, Logic, Metaphysics, and Epistemology of Demonstratives and Other Indexicals (originally 1971)
- (Lewis 1979a) Attitudes De Dicto and De Se
- (Chierchia 1989) Anaphora and attitudes *de se*
- (Kölbel 2004) Faultless disagreement.
- (Richard 2004) Contextualism and relativism.
- (Potts 2007) The expressive dimension
- (Lasersohn 2007) Expressives, perspective and presupposition. (comments on Potts)
- (Moltmann In Press-b, Moltmann In Press-c)
- (MacFarlane 2008, MacFarlane 2009)

**Plan: Part I:** Implicit arguments and perspective with predicates of personal taste, continued. Lasersohn et al, continuing from Week 7. Adding recent work by Moltmann

on first-person-oriented content, generic *one*, and relative truth. What kinds of arguments can be given for choosing between an implicit argument in the linguistic structure (contextualism) vs. a "judge" parameter of evaluation (relativism)?

**Part II:** Implicit arguments and control, preliminary. Today a preliminary look at Datives and Experiencers that are sometimes proposed for constructions similar to the ones Lasersohn has studied. Grinder 1971, Kimball 1971, Partee 1975, and more recent work including Landau 2001. (More in Week 10)

## 1. The debate over predicates of personal taste: Issues: Relativism, Contextualism and implicit arguments vs. additional parameters of evaluation.

In work on context-dependence of various kinds, it has been argued by a number of authors that certain types of sentences give rise to a notion of relative truth: truth relative not only to a world and time (and/or situation) of evaluation, but also to something like a "context of evaluation" (Egan et al. 2004), or "context of assessment" (MacFarlane Forthcoming), or a "judge" (Lasersohn 2005).

An alternative approach is to argue that the context-dependence enters instead in passing from "character" in the sense of Kaplan (1989) to the actual proposition expressed ("content"): what proposition is expressed may vary from context to context, but once the proposition is fixed, its truth-conditions are not "relative", and no extra parameters need to be added to indices of evaluation. This is (a simplified picture of) contextualism; Jason Stanley is a well-known exponent.

Positing implicit content, represented semantically and often also syntactically, is a common linguistic strategy; this strategy leads to contextualism, e.g. for Kratzer's appeal to implicit "in view of" clauses providing the implicit domains of various modals. David Lewis (1979b) suggested adding, for instance, an index of evaluation for "standards of precision"; this is a version of relativism, where the same **content** can be true or false at different indices of evaluation.

One of the important differences between the two approaches is that on a contextualist approach to a given phenomenon, the posited implicit content becomes **part of the proposition** expressed, i.e. part of the semantic content. This is very relevant for things like propositional attitude ascriptions and for sentential anaphora, among others. Some of the proposals in this domain have been accompanied by proposals for revising the semantics of attitude ascriptions in at least some cases; that's true for Lasersohn and for Moltmann; it was already true, as we saw, for David Lewis's proposals concerning *de se* attitudes.

This is a very oversimplified view of the debates between relativists and contextualists; we'll see more in Week 11, and occasionally below.

**Arguments:** As we look at proposals concerning predicates of personal taste, epistemic modality, and some other kinds of context-dependence, we'll see several kinds of

arguments that have figured prominently in arguments for relativism of some kind, for instance for utterances involving epistemic modals like *might* or sentences with predicates of personal taste like *tasty*<sup>1</sup>: (i) Faultless disagreement; (ii) Sharing of contents by agents in different contexts of evaluation (raised especially by Moltmann); (iii) “retraction” (won’t discuss at all); (iv) third-party assessments, including eavesdropper data. We’ll look at some of the arguments (of these kinds and some others) as we proceed, and some more next week, but we will by no means cover the large literature in this area.<sup>2</sup> In this section we just briefly preview these four kinds of arguments.

### 1.1. Faultless disagreement.

The first puzzling property is the way sentences with epistemic modals, and sentences with *tasty*-predicates (and some more classes besides) give rise to the possibility that two people can apparently genuinely disagree without either one being “at fault”. Examples:

From Stephenson (2007):

Stephenson’s (16), with epistemic *might*. (She views “Nuh-uh” as an indicator of disagreement.)

Mary: Where’s Bill?

Sam: I’m not sure. He might be in his office.

Sue: Nuh-uh, he can’t be. He never works on Fridays.

Stephenson’s (18), with *tasty*:

Mary: How’s the cake?

Sam: It’s tasty.

Sue: Nuh –uh, it doesn’t taste good at all!

The argument here in favor of relativism and against contextualism, i.e. against filling in implicit content like “It’s compatible with all I know that he is in his office” or “It tastes good to me” is that when relativity of the modality or the taste to a particular individual is made explicitly, it’s anomalous for another speaker to try to disagree:

- (1) Sam: It tastes good to me.  
Sue: # Nuh –uh, it doesn’t taste good at all!

As Stephenson notes, one need not settle whether there is any sensible argument going on in (18) (*De gustibus non est disputandum*) ; it’s enough of a puzzle that denial is well-formed in (18), when it isn’t in cases where the ‘judge’ is explicitly included in the content.

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<sup>1</sup> Tamina Stephenson (2007) explicitly draws many parallels between the behavior of *might*-sentences and *tasty*-sentences, while noting a few important differences between them.

<sup>2</sup> Thanks to Heidi Buetow for helping me find my way into the relevant philosophical literature in this large and active area.

The other piece of the puzzle is the “faultlessness”: Sam and Sue disagree, but it is widely (not universally) agreed that it needn’t be the case that one of them is *wrong*.

### 1.2. Sharing of contents.

This has to do with when one can say things like “Sam and Sue believe the same thing.” This locution is tricky – sometimes it seems to target character, sometimes content, and often it seems that we have a choice. From (Moltmann In Press-a):

Another linguistic manifestation of sharing is the validity of the inference in (6), assuming that A’s and B’s criteria for evaluating wine are known to be quite different (A, but not B, lets say, being a connoisseur):

- (6) A believes the wine tastes good.  
    B believes the wine tastes good.  
    A and B believe the same thing.

Such an inference holds with any propositional attitude or speech act verb. Evaluative predicates, in licensing the inference, thus differ from other context-dependent expressions such as demonstratives, with which the inference is not valid:

- (7) John believes that Mary is there (in New York).  
    Bill believes that Mary is there (in Boston).  
    John and Bill believe the same thing.

### 1.3. Third-party assessments and eavesdroppers.

... See cat-food examples and others below.

## 2. Lasersohn’s analysis: the “judge” parameter.

As we discussed in Week 7, Lasersohn makes use of Kaplan’s distinction between *character* and *content*, and between *context* of utterance and *index* of evaluation. Lasersohn adds a *judge* to the *index* of evaluation, which becomes a triple  $\langle w, t, j \rangle$  of world, time, and judge. (As Stephenson notes, the addition of the judge to the index makes Lasersohn’s indices “centered worlds”, inviting potential application to doxastic alternatives as well. This will come up when we discuss *tasty* vs. *might*.)

The extension of an expression  $\alpha$ , computed by first applying character to context and then applying the resulting content to an index, is then  $[[\alpha]]^{c; w, t, j}$ , where  $c$  is the context and  $\langle w, t, j \rangle$  is the index.

- (2)  $[[\text{fun}]]^{c; w, t, j} = [\lambda x_e . x \text{ is fun for } j \text{ in } w \text{ at } t]$   
 $[[\text{tasty}]]^{c; w, t, j} = [[\text{taste good}]]^{c; w, t, j} = [\lambda x_e . x \text{ tastes good to } j \text{ in } w \text{ at } t]$   
 $[[\text{taste terrible}]]^{c; w, t, j} = [\lambda x_e . x \text{ tastes terrible to } j \text{ in } w \text{ at } t]$

On the other hand, the extension of a normal, non-judge-dependent predicate such as [*be a*] *doctor* does not depend on the judge, as shown in (3).

$$(3) \quad [[\text{be-a-doctor}]]^{c; w, t, j} = [\lambda x_e . x \text{ is a doctor in } w \text{ at } t]$$

Neither *tasty* nor *doctor* are expressions that depend on the context of utterance; so they have **the same content** in every context. (On a contextualist account, if one “filled in” an “implicit argument”, *tasty* would have different contents in different contexts.) Thus they contrast with indexicals like *I* and *you*.

$$(4) \quad \begin{aligned} [[I]]^{c; w, t, j} &= \text{the speaker of } c \\ [[\text{you}]]^{c; w, t, j} &= \text{the addressee of } c \end{aligned}$$

On Lasersohn’s account, in the case of the addition of an explicit modifier in *fun for Sam*, the preposition *for* is an intensional operator that shifts the judge parameter to the object of the preposition. I present the simplified syncategorematic treatment of Stephenson (2007).

$$(5) \quad [[P \text{ for } y]]^{c; w, t, j} = [[P]]^{c; w, t, y}$$

Attitude predicates such as *think* or *believe* take propositions as arguments, but in effect only operate on the world and time.

$$(6) \quad [[\text{think}]]^{c; w, t, j} = [\lambda p_{\langle s, \langle i, et \rangle \rangle} . [\lambda z_e . \langle \forall w', t' \rangle \text{ compatible with } z \text{'s beliefs in } w \text{ at } t, p(w')(t')(j) = 1] ]$$

Lasersohn makes the assumption that speakers typically take an *autocentric perspective* – taking themselves as judge – both when making assertions and when assessing the assertions of others. But this is not absolute; in contexts where another’s perspective is salient, they may make and assess assertions from an *exocentric perspective*. Two relevant kinds of examples are the cat food example of von Fintel and attitude reports.

(7) Mary: How’s that new brand of cat food you bought?  
Sam: I think it’s tasty, because the cat has eaten a lot of it.

(8) Mary: Has anyone tried the cake?  
Sam: Sue has. She thinks it’s tasty.

### 3. Stephenson on similarities and differences between *tasty* and *might*.

#### 3.1. Parallels between predicates of personal taste and epistemic modals

Stephenson (2007) notes that there are many similarities between predicates of personal taste and epistemic modals like epistemic *might* and *must*. Since Lasersohn’s analysis already has a judge parameter, she explores the possibility of using the same parameter in the analysis of the epistemic modals.

Kratzer (1977) analyzed the epistemic reading of (9a) approximately as (9b).

- (9) a. It might be raining.  
b. In some world compatible with what is known in the actual world, it's raining.

As Stephenson notes, the same context-dependence issue arises here as for the predicates of personal taste: known by *whom*? If it's taken to mean *known by the speaker*, that's too weak (MacFarlane 2006); if it's taken to mean *known by everyone* or *known by people in general*, that's impossibly strong. The question of exactly whose knowledge is relevant is a very difficult one and has generated a considerable literature; see Stephenson (2007) for quite a few references.

Stephenson shows parallels between the behavior of epistemic *might* and *must* and the behavior of *tasty* and other predicates of personal taste.

**Faultless disagreement:** We illustrated that in Section 1.1, where we also mentioned that filling in an explicit reference to whose knowledge is at issue makes faultless disagreement impossible: so here too, it would seem that the implicit restrictor should *not* become part of the semantic content.

### 3.2. Stephenson's extension of Lasersohn's system to epistemic modals

The most direct extension of Lasersohn's account, proposed in (Stephenson 2005) and summarized in Stephenson (2007), is simply to identify the person whose knowledge is relevant for an epistemic modal with the judge.

- (10)  $[[\text{might}]]^{c; w, t, j} = [\lambda p_{\langle s, \langle i, et \rangle \rangle} . \text{there is some world } w' \text{ compatible with } j\text{'s knowledge in } w \text{ at } t \text{ such that } p(w')(t)(j) = 1]$

$$[[\text{must}]]^{c; w, t, j} = [\lambda p_{\langle s, \langle i, et \rangle \rangle} . \text{every world } w' \text{ compatible with } j\text{'s knowledge in } w \text{ at } t \text{ is such that } p(w')(t)(j) = 1]$$

This view can explain the parallels in behavior of epistemic modals and predicates like *tasty* that were presented in section 3.1, including faultless disagreement and the natural shift to exocentric perspective when epistemic modals are embedded in attitude reports.

### 3.3. A problem: important differences between might and tasty

Stephenson notes two important differences between predicates of personal taste and epistemic modals.

- linkage to subject of attitude reports: optional vs. obligatory
- independence of judge parameter for *tasty* from that for the modals

We saw how the judge for *tasty* need not be the subject of an attitude, in the cat food example in (7) above. But when *might* is embedded in an attitude report, the judge of *might* cannot be anyone other than the attitude holder.

- (11) Mary: Wow, the dog really likes the dog food you're feeding him.  
 Sam: (#) Yeah, I think it might be table scraps.

Sam's sentence in (11) cannot, despite the salience of the dog's perspective, be interpreted to mean that the dog food might, for all the dog knows, be table scraps. (We're to imagine a dog who has a preference for people-food.) So the sentence is anomalous, since it can only be understood with Sam as the judge, and Sam knows that what he's feeding his dog isn't table scraps.

The independence of the *tasty*-judge from the epistemic *might* judge can be seen in an example which Stephenson credits to Danny Fox (p.c.):

- (12) The cat food might be tasty.

Tasty here can mean 'tastes good to the cat', but might can only be given a judge-dependent interpretation. It can't be attributing an epistemic attitude to the cat.

### 3.4. Stephenson's revised analysis

Stephenson (2007) keeps the Lasersohn-style analysis for the epistemic modals, but changes the analysis for the predicates of personal taste. She argues in favor of giving them an implicit argument after all, but keeping judge-dependency by inventing a new kind of silent  $PRO_j$  that refers to the judge. She rejects Lasersohn's analysis of *for* as a judge-shifting operator, and treats *for x* or *to x* with predicates of taste as arguments. (For Lasersohn, they were modifiers.) (p.12, her (38), (39).)

- (13)  $[[tasty]]^{c; w, t, j} = [[taste\ good]]^{c; w, t, j} = [\lambda x_e . [\lambda y_e . y\ tastes\ good\ to\ x\ in\ w\ at\ t] ]$   
 $[[taste\ terrible]]^{c; w, t, j} = [\lambda x_e . [\lambda y_e . y\ tastes\ terrible\ to\ x\ in\ w\ at\ t] ]$   
 $[[fun]]^{c; w, t, j} = [\lambda x_e . [\lambda y_e . y\ is\ fun\ for\ x\ in\ w\ at\ t] ]$

- (14)  $[[PRO_j]]^{c; w, t, j} = j$

She also assumes, crucially, that a predicate of personal taste can take a null referential pronoun referring to a contextually salient individual. We will return to this issue below – I believe this is correct for many “implicit datives”, especially in episodic contexts.

“The difference between epistemic modals and predicates of personal taste, then, is that epistemic modals are inherently judge-dependent, whereas predicates of personal taste become judge-dependent only if they take  $PRO_j$  as an argument.” (Stephenson 2007, 12)

She further assumes that attitude predicates like *think obligatorily* shift the judge parameter of the embedded clause to the matrix subject. (Moltmann, to be discussed below, notes interesting differences among different attitude verbs, some wanting or

allowing subjective content and others wanting a judge-independent proposition. *Think* easily takes subjective content; *find* and *consider* with small clauses insist on subjective content. *Believe* prefers (regular) propositions.) She implements it using the notion of doxastic alternatives (Chierchia 1989, Lewis 1979a), and treating *think* in terms of *de se* attribution. (Her numbering of examples.)

(41)  $\text{Dox}_{w,t,x} = \{ \langle w',t',y \rangle : \text{it is compatible with what } x \text{ believes in } w \text{ at } t \text{ that he/she/it is } y \text{ in } w' \text{ at } t' \}$

(42)  $[[\text{think}]]^{c; w,t,j} = [\lambda p_{\langle s, \langle i, et \rangle \rangle} . [\lambda zc . \forall \langle w',t',x \rangle \in \text{Dox}_{w,t,z} : p(w')(t')(x) = 1 ] ]$

(The shift of the judge parameter for the embedded clause is signaled by the boldface **x** in (42).)

Unlike the lexical entry she used before, this meaning for *think* operates on the world, time, and judge parameters. It has the effect that a sentence of the form “x thinks that S” is equivalent to “x thinks that S is true as judged by x.” In many cases this will be equivalent to “S is true as judged by x” because of what Lasnik refers to as epistemic privilege.

A challenge she notes to her claim that with epistemic modals the relevant knowledge is never simply that of some salient individual, as it can be for *tasty* (the cat food examples, for instance.)

(59) [Context: Ann is planning a surprise party for Bill. Unfortunately, Chris has discovered the surprise and told Bill all about it. Now Bill and Chris are having fun watching Ann try to set up the party without being discovered. Currently Ann is walking past Chris’s apartment carrying a large supply of party hats. She sees a bus on which Bill frequently rides home, so she jumps into some nearby bushes to avoid being spotted. Bill, watching from Chris’s window, is quite amused, but Chris is puzzled and asks Bill why Ann is hiding in the bushes. Bill says:]

I might be on that bus. (Egan, Hawthorne & Weatherson, 2005, no. 16)

Her solution to this is to treat the given sentence as elliptical for

(60) Ann is hiding in the bushes because I might be on that bus.

And she further assumes that when a *because* clause expresses a person’s reasons or rationale for something, the judge parameter is shifted to the person whose reasoning is involved. (She has some footnotes about some of the interesting issues raised by such a proposal, since there is no necessary syntactic locality involved here.)

(There’s more discussion, including interesting discussion of the pragmatic aspects of faultless disagreement, but I’ll stop here.)

#### 4. Moltmann on generic *one* and kinds of first-person-oriented content.

Moltmann (In Press-b) argues that there are two different kinds of first-person oriented content that need to be distinguished. The first kind consists of attitudes *de se* in a broad sense; the second kind consists of contents that give rise to intuitions of relative truth. She gives arguments for distinguishing them. She offers a novel account of propositional content in general, based on the notion of an attitudinal object, which she argues clarifies the difference between contents of attitudes *de se* and contents that give rise to intuitions of relative truth.

Central to her account and to all of her recent papers on this topic (Moltmann 2005, 2006, In Press-a, In Press-b, In Press-c) is a notion of first-person-based genericity, a form of genericity most explicitly expressed in English by sentences with generic *one*. (In American English, generic *you* is much more common in the same function.)

She makes an interesting distinction between two classes of context-dependent elements.

- (1) Expressions exhibiting intuitions of relative truth: predicates of personal taste, epistemic modals. These give rise to both faultless disagreement and sharing, and she calls these “Type 1 expressions” in (Moltmann In Press-a).
- (2) Expressions that can give rise to sharing but NOT to faultless disagreement, which she calls Type 2 expressions.

from her p. 8:

Later we will see that two further features distinguish the two kinds of expressions: type 1 expressions exhibit what I will call obligatory and a quasi-first-person-orientedness, whereas type 2 expressions exhibit optional sharing and no quasi-first-person orientedness. We can thus summarize the features of the two kinds of expressions as follows:

(14) type 1 expressions (predicates of taste, epistemic modals, predicates of aesthetic evaluation, generic *one*): faultless disagreement, (obligatory) sharing, quasi-first-person orientedness

type 2 expressions (*de se* interpreted pronouns, relational adjectives (*right, left, local, neighbouring*): (optional) sharing, no faultless disagreement, no quasi-first-person-orientedness

Abstract of her account (p.1 of the same paper):

I will argue that the sentences that apparently give rise to relative truth should be understood by relating them in a certain way to the first person. More precisely, such sentences express what I will call *first-person-based genericity*, a form of generalization by which the speaker quantifies over every one *x* in the relevant domain as someone he identifies with, allowing the predicate to apply to *x* as if it applied to the speaker himself. This account differs from standard relative truth theories in crucial respects: it is not the truth of the proposition expressed that is relative to the first person; the proposition expressed by a sentence with a predicate of taste rather has absolute truth conditions.

Instead it is the propositional content itself that requires a first-personal cognitive access whenever it is entertained. Thus, if two agents disagree about a sentence like *chocolate tastes good* without either ‘being at fault’, this is disagreement about a sentence that has absolute truth conditions and thus is either true or false. But the content of the sentence can be grasped (and thus entertained and evaluated) only in an essential first-personal way, namely by applying the predicate to everyone in the domain as if to oneself (and thus allowing two agents to have different first- personal grounds for applying the predicate). On the proposed account, it is conditions on grasping the content, rather than truth conditions that is peculiar to sentence giving rise to intuitions of relative truth.

This account, I will argue, avoids a range of problems that standard relative truth theories face and explains a number of further peculiarities that such sentences display. The account goes along with an independently motivated view on which truth conditions of sentences are not given by mind-independent propositional contents, but rather by mind-dependent ‘attitudinal objects’ (as I will call them), or kinds of such objects, that is, objects of the sort John’s belief that S or the belief that S..

First-person-based genericity is expressed explicitly in English by sentences that contain the generic pronoun *one* as in (1a) or its empty counterpart, so-called arbitrary PRO as in (1b):

- (1) a. One can see the picture from the entrance.
- b. It is possible PRO<sub>arb</sub> to see the picture from the entrance.

Sentences (1a) and (1b) have a natural reading on which they express a generalization on the basis of the speaker’s own, perhaps unique, experience or action. That is, (1a, b) are naturally used as an expression of the speaker’s own ability to see the picture from the entrance and at the same time express a generalization: for every normal x, x can see the picture from the entrance.

The key observation is that the same intuitions of relative truth that are displayed by sentences with evaluative predicates or epistemic modals arise with sentences such as (1a) and (1b). In previous work I have developed an account of generic *one* on which generic *one* expresses (contextually restricted) quantification over individuals insofar as the relevant agent identifies with them. In this paper, I will argue that this analysis can and should be carried over to sentences with predicates of personal taste, as well as possibly other sentences containing predicates of aesthetic and moral evaluation or epistemic modals. I take first- person-based genericity to be the source of faultless disagreement in general, for whatever expressions it may arise.

However, not all types of sentences for which a relativist treatment has been proposed are to be analysed in terms of first-person-based genericity. Expressions that involve first-person- based genericity need to be distinguished from expressions that are to be treated in just the same way as *de se* interpreted pronouns (such adjectives like *left* or *local*). The latter do not give rise to faultless disagreement and do not involve first-person-based genericity.

\*\*\*\* (end of extract)

Notes to add in class – about generic *one* vs generic *they*.

## 5. Super-equi and other puzzles about implicit datives

This has to be mostly deferred to a later time; I'll say a few words about it without a handout to at least introduce the topic.

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