1. Introduction

Crispin Wright (2001) argues that some subject matters are liable to generate a specific kind of epistemic indeterminacies, so-called quandaries. The concept of quandary is a key to solving three distinct philosophical problems, it is claimed. First, it provides a reason for an intuitionist revision of logic as to subject matters liable to generate quandaries. Second, it allows for an account of vagueness that avoids Sorites paradoxes. Finally, it partakes of a coherent relativism, which makes room for faultless disagreement. Of these three topics only the last one will be discussed in this paper.

Max Kölbel (2003) provides a critique of Wright’s account of faultless disagreement and explores a truth relativism of another kind. Recently Wright (2004) suggested a similar relativist view to be explored.

One purpose of this paper is to raise objections to the relativist perspectives suggested by Kölbel and Wright. They have criticised the main alternatives to relativism, and some of those objections will be brought up for discussion.

My objection to truth relativism is roughly that it threatens to leave us with a deflated concept of proposition. It is argued that a suitable concept of content has to make sense of what it means for two persons to disagree in terms of opposing belief attitudes to the same content. My concern with Kölbel’s view is that the very idea of what it means for two statements to express the same content seems be traded for perspective-dependent truth.

Wright (2004) argues that correspondence truth isn’t apt for relativization and settles for some coherence notion of truth. I question Wright’s reason for claiming that correspondence truth is incompatible with relativism. I will also question that Wrights version of relativism can escape the objections raised against indexical relativism by, among others, Wright and Kölbel. The worry, as in Kölbel’s case, is that the residual concept of content threatens to be too thin to be the object of opposing opinions involved in a disagreement.
My comments are tentative, most of them fairly common, and perhaps none is unique. I start with a general characterization of disagreement about disputes of fact and disputes of inclination respectively, followed by an exposé of different views on disagreement in disputes of inclination, and their takes on Wright’s so-called simple dilemma. I conclude by discussing relativism.

2. Genuine disagreement

Assume David thinks that the moon is made of green cheese and Benny disagrees. Benny and David agree with most other people that their disagreement is of the kind where both couldn’t be right. As it happens they share with common sense the view that there is always a fact of the matter as to the stuff objects are made of.

Consider the question if ‘common sense’ can thereby insure that at least one of them has made a mistake? It depends on what is meant by committing a mistake. Benny is right and David is wrong for sure, but it is arguable to which extent truth is required from a belief, for that belief to be rationally justified, and in that sense not committing the thinker to a cognitive mistake. Neither common sense, nor sister philosophy, has a firm grip on this issue, it seems.

A related question is to which extent truth is epistemically constrained. (M) and (EC) below suggest principles connected to truth, concerning the two issues just mentioned. Suppose A and B are persons, and P that which is believed, judged, claimed, and sometimes evaluated for truth, etc. Let’s talk of P as a proposition.

(M) If A believes P, and not-P is true, then A has made a (cognitive) mistake. A modified version of (M) that does not invoke truth is (M*): If A believes P, and not-P (is the case), then A has made a (cognitive) mistake.

(ES) T (P) iff P

Wright (2001, 2004) submits to (EC) as representing an epistemic constraint on truth. Let us add the equivalence scheme (ES) and two derived principles to our list to make explicit how mistakes are inferred (Cf. Kölbl 2003). ‘T’ is short for ‘true’.

(ES) T (P) iff P

---

1 Propositions in possible world semantics are seen as functions from worlds to truth-values. You could also view propositions as structured abstract objects, in terms of ordered n-tuples of objects and properties, or sets of objects. These views are utterly different in many respects. I have no clear opinion as to which of these is best suited to be plugged into a relativistic truth theory; perhaps none of them will do without radical revision.
If we want to say that David could have been fully justified in forming his cheese belief, then we have to reject (M), and accept that there could be false beliefs that aren’t committing the believers having those beliefs to cognitive mistakes. Simplifying a bit, we could assume that what it means to commit cognitive mistakes equals what it means to form unjustified beliefs, and add the assumption that it is possible to have justified false beliefs.

(EC) might seem to collaborate with (M) in the sense that it appears to make it impossible to believe not-P if T(P), without committing some kind of cognitive mistake, as it is feasible to know P according to (EC). Assume that ‘ought’ implies ‘can’. It would follow that if there were truths virtually impossible to reach we shouldn’t be blamed for not doing so. However (EC) seems to tell us that we can reach them, thus we are responsible for holding false beliefs.

One might try to escape this problem by distinguishing between justified beliefs and ideally justified beliefs. ‘Ideally justified’ refers to an epistemic situation in which all kind of ideally possible perfections, with respect to what the standard prescribes, are made. I will not try to define the kind of possibility involved, just notice that one might opt for a conception of ideally possible which is distinguished from physical, and perhaps even metaphysical possibility. Let us assume that the epistemic standard endorses a margin of error as to human exercising of the standard in forming beliefs, and excludes it in its model of ideal belief formation. Based on such a distinction between the ideal case and the actual case endorsing a margin of error, (EC) could be refined in different ways by somehow connecting it to the ideal case and the normal case. ‘Cognitive mistake’ could be defined with reference to the normal case, and the normal case with reference to the ideal case.

Let us assume we can make a distinction between justified and unjustified beliefs within a margin of error. That would give space to a conception of (justified within margin of error) non-mistaken false beliefs. Truths are still feasibly knowable, with the restriction though imposed by a margin of error on our abilities to avoid arriving at false but justified beliefs. (EC) could be adjusted to this analysis in either of the following ways.

(EC*) If T(P) then P is ideally knowable, although within a margin of error it is feasible to arrive at either a justified belief that not-T(P) or that (P).
(EC**) comprises a), b), and c):

a) If T(P) then it is feasible to arrive either at a justified belief that P, or at a justified belief that not-P.

b) Justification is defined with reference to a margin of error in contrast with the ideal case. That justification operates within a margin of error is defined in terms of a) in the sense that justification never implies truth. That is essentially what it means that justification is susceptible to error in this view.

c) The ideal case is not metaphysically possible. Hence truth is not defined in terms of ideal justification. Truth belongs in the actual world and is a fortiori possible.

(EC*) connects truth to knowledge under ideal justification, but knowledge is also practically possible within a margin of error by way of normal justification.

(EC**) is a radical version of (EC*). The basic idea is that if a proposition is true then it should be is feasible to form justified opinions with regard to that proposition. This is a rather weak epistemic constraint on truth. It doesn’t guarantee that truth will be known, though it guarantees that truth might be justifiably believed, as well as falsity.

A development of this approach would amount essentially to the development of a theory of justification that accounted for the margin of error hypothesis. Ideal verification is ex hypothesi impossible, in the sense that the margin of error is (ideally or metaphysically) necessary. (EC**) is close to metaphysical realism in the sense that even perfectly justified opinions, in the restricted sense, might be false, and ideal theories in the unrestricted sense aren’t even metaphysically possible. This means that the traditional anti-realist objection to metaphysical realism has no bite on this view. On the other hand it is weakly epistemic in the sense that there are no truth-apt propositions which are definitely out of cognitive reach. Besides, as it stands (EC**) doesn’t explicitly make any metaphysical assumption concerning mind or theory independent truth-makers.

(M) and (EC*) set aside, most people would agree that faced with the disagreement, David and Benny should reckon that one of them must be wrong. Not doing so would amount to commit a cognitive mistake even if (M) weren’t accepted.

Assume, for the sake of argument, that both Benny and David were justified in some restricted non-ideal sense, in their respective moon beliefs at a certain time $t_1$. At some later time, say $t_2$, they find out that they disagree, and we have the situation described above. To make things simpler we might assume that both guys (justifiably) knew at $t_1$ that
they were justified in their beliefs. Are they still after t2 justified believing that their beliefs are justified?

Let us make a further simplification. Assume that both David and Benny know about each others’ beliefs that they are justified (within margin of error WE could add), although they don’t know about each others’ evidence and specific methods of justification. Under the circumstances described, common sense and philosophy should agree that it is blameworthy to not reconsider to which degree one is now justified to stick to one’s former belief. At t2 Benny and his disputer should reckon that their beliefs might have become unjustified. The reason is simply that one should know that restrictedly justified beliefs might be wrong, and more importantly, might become unjustified because of new information; it is part of common sense’s epistemic rules for justification, I would say.

As my reasoning goes, the disputants of our example would no longer at t2 know that their beliefs are justified. Presumably that gives them stronger or weaker reasons to try to find out whether they still are thus justified. I will not explore how such evaluations of the strength of reasons might be accomplished. In fact, I have no clue which parameters should be taken into account.

At t2 neither David nor Benny knows anymore that their beliefs are justified. Does that mean that Benny no longer knows that the moon isn’t made by cheese? It is not uncommon, not even among philosophers, to reject the conditional: if we know something, then we also know that we know something. That line of reasoning (KK) has been shown to generate paradoxes. Besides, it is true to common sense that we sometimes come to know things the right way without thereby automatically collecting and evaluating information about the learning process. Prima facie, we should say in such situations, which might be quite frequent as far as I know, that we are not justified to believe that we justifiably believe that X, since we ex hypothesi don’t even have a specific belief about the belief that X. Prima facie, I wouldn’t want a philosophical epistemology to rule out the possibility of such ‘unreasoning’ knowledge by definition.

Return to the specific case again. We want to know whether the disputants are epistemically obliged to find out at t2 whether they are still justified to continue to believe what they justifiably believed at t1, for one of them to be qualified as a knower at t2. If we affirm that they are thus obliged, we appear to subscribe to some epistemic rule that might be thought to imply (KK). That is not the case, however, but let me explain what might be the concern.
First, notice that if we distinguished between justified knowledge in some *practically restricted* sense and ideal knowledge, then the fact that some situations might *oblige disputants* to search for *current* imperfections in their *formerly* good-enough-to-be-justified beliefs shouldn’t upset anyone. This perspective doesn’t entail that a soon as we are justified in a belief we are also justified to believe that belief to be justified.

Second, in the example concerning Benny and David, I made the assumption that they both *knew* about their beliefs being *justified* in the normal restricted sense; hence that none of them was committing a cognitive mistake in the *practical* sense at *t1*. In addition, they knew it about each others’ beliefs as well, although they didn’t know how it was accomplished. Imagine a situation in which Benny hadn’t met David or any other person disputing his view. Further we may assume that Benny hasn’t reflected upon his justification for believing that the moon is a cheese, but nevertheless it is a justified belief. Compare with the author’s belief that his house is made of stone and wood. I don’t scrutinize my cognitive apparatus or my evidence before claiming that in an everyday context. Notice that if I did I *might come* to the conclusion that my belief was justified before my examination started but that the assessment in itself *revealed reasons for a change of opinion*. I suspect that it is hardly ever possible, at least not in practice, to assess a former justification of X without thereby impose further tests of X. The margin of error explains way further tests of a claim might reveal that formerly confirming test results shouldn’t be accepted as such *anymore*. It is important to see that this does not impose an obligation to reassess every justification made, which would constitute a regress of justifications. It just says that, while you might have been wrong even though you were justified at *t1*, if you for some reason reassess your former justification then you might become justified to disagree with your former judgement. KK doesn’t follow, which it might have if the margin of error analysis included a rule that prescribed reassessment of every first-order justified belief for that belief to ‘stay justified’ so to speak and thereby qualify as knowledge. It is not necessary to assume such a rule to make the position coherent. That would constitute a reductio of the position, since it is an obviously absurd consequence that nothing would count as knowledge. We would get a constantly growing sequence of reassessed justifications, never ending up in knowledge.

Back to Benny and David. I made assumptions about them knowing about each other and themselves that they were justified in their beliefs about the moon. They were made for the sake of the argument I said, but which argument? What is shown by the example? It
indicates that in case of a disagreement, in a dispute about matters of fact, neither disputant need have made a mistake before the disagreement was recognized by the disputants, but as soon as a disputant finds out that no mistake has been committed, that disputant would commit a mistake by not considering that his opponent’s justification for his view might prove his own view to be unjustified. Possibly both disputants find out that none of their justifications are good enough.

As to Benny I conclude that he no longer knows that the moon is not a green cheese, but reassessing his former justification in the light of David’s justification for the opposite belief might lead him to the conclusion that he was right, and still is, but this time for partly new reasons. They started at t1 with justified beliefs, but when they epistemically entered the disagreement, at t2, those beliefs suddenly became unjustified.

3. Faultless vs. straight disagreement

Let us now look at a different situation, in which it seems plausible to take, what appears to be a disagreement, to be faultless. Imagine that David thinks that green cheese is cheesy and that Benny disagrees. Most people would think about that case, and concerning matters of inclination in general, that they might very well be faultless. Moral issues, issues of taste, religion, politics, and humanities, even of natural science, might be considered suitable for faultless disagreement, all depending on your philosophical inclination. The phenomenon of linguistic vagueness, variation of moral standards, alleged incommensurabilities between competing scientific views, and some longstanding fights on different topics within philosophy, are all well-known cases that have motivated theorizing about cognitive conflict and disagreement between disputants, belief systems or theories.

I need more precise accounts of the kind of disagreements here discussed to carry on the analysis. I borrow Max Köbel’s (2003) account of faultless disagreement, in which we have a situation where there is a thinker A, a thinker B, and a proposition (content of judgement), P, such that:

a) A believes (judges) that P, and B believes (judges that) not-P.

b) Neither A nor B has made a mistake.

As a complement I suggest the following tentative account of what we can call ‘straight disagreement’:
a) A believes (judges) that P, and B believes (judges that) not-P.

b) Either A or B holds a false belief, since either P, or not-P (as a matter of fact).

c) If the thinkers correctly reckon that they are involved in a straight disagreement, they would commit a cognitive mistake, if they didn’t thereby consider it a fact that at least one of them had to be wrong. In other words, they would commit a mistake if they just agreed to disagree.

d) If a disputant is restrictedly justified (to some undefined degree) to believe that the disputant opposing his/her view was restrictedly justified to hold that opposing view before entering the disagreement, that constitutes (to some undefined degree of strength) a reason to not continue to believe his formerly justified belief.

Notice that the account of the cognitive mistake involved in straight disagreement is different from (M), which if accepted without restrictions makes every false belief into a mistake. This proves that some distinction between restricted justification and ideal justification could be useful. It corresponds to the common sense view that one might be blamed if one accepts to disagree concerning disputes of fact, even if there is no available evidence that either A or B has made a mistake. That would constitute a cognitive mistake in connection with restrictedly unjustified beliefs, as conceived in the account of straight disagreement above.

A special case would be if no further evidence will ever determine which view is justified in a dispute, even at the end of inquiry. Assume it is a scientific dispute which couldn’t be solved, by any possibly accessible evidence. Should the disputants withdraw their attitudes toward these theories? Wright (2004 p. 13) observes that a scientific realist would assume that at least one of the theories must be false, but still, if the theories were equally useful (explaining, predicting, etc) it would be rational for them to stick to their first choices.

Notice that one anti-realist response would be to discard both theories for not being truth-evaluable, at all, since their propositions aren’t decidable. What response is given by (EC**)? First, what is considered rational to do with the theories in a broader pragmatic sense does not necessarily differ between the views under discussion. The anti-realist can stick to the presumably truth-value less, or semantically indeterminate, theory for pragmatic reasons. One problem though might be to account for its pragmatic value, since its propositions aren’t decidable. (EC**) has the same pragmatic consequences. But notice that (EC**) denies a presupposition of the setup. There is no such thing as a scientific dispute which couldn’t be solved, by any possibly accessible evidence, except for within a
margin of error. It means that it might actually happen that a dispute between two rival theories never ends, but the error-margin makes it possible that other results would have been confirmed than those which were in the case where the dispute was sustained. This is just to say that (EC**) doesn’t accept any idealization of justification. There are no ideally verified rival theories.

What has been argued so far is that with certain informational restrictions, with respect to the concept of justification, and to the disputants’ informational states in disputes, there could be no faultless disagreements. I have not discussed disputes between disputants who don’t have information about the opponent’s justification status but still neglect to look for it. Such neglect would amount to a cognitive mistake, if A had reasons to believe to a certain degree that B is justified. But then, on the other hand, it could be said that A already has some information as to the opponent’s justification, of the kind discussed above.

In the truly extreme case, in which entering the disagreement A gets no information at all with bearing on the opponent’s being justified or not, there will be no further reason for A to reconsider his or her opinion than is already offered by recognizing the logical possibility of negating one’s opinion. But that is truly an extreme case.

4. Simple deduction and four responses
Is faultless disagreement possible in any area? Consider Crispin Wright’s (2001, 2004) simple deduction. It concerns an arbitrary judgement that P. The proposition involved is supposed to be ‘minimally truth apt’ and thus (ES) is valid for P. Kölbel (2003) makes the presence of (ES, 1, 2) explicit and derives mistakes from false beliefs by way of a rule similar to (M). The reader could use (M*) at line (5) and (7) to derive the mistakes. Or she could use (ES1-2) and (M) to derive them. The argument proves an arbitrary disagreement to not be faultless. The arbitrariness guarantees that no disagreements are faultless, concerning truth-apt propositions. The point is that e.g., matters of inclination and ethical matters are presumably truth apt.

(Simple deduction)
The simple deduction (Wright 2001, 2004; Köbel 2003) aims to present a reductio of the assumption that an arbitrary disagreement is faultless, thus a proof that no disagreements are faultless. Wright (1992) distinguishes between discourses exerting cognitive command from discourses that are merely minimally truth-apt. The essence of the distinction is that between merely satisfying a set of basic platitudes involving the truth predicate, (See Wright, 2001, footnote 10, p. 54.) versus satisfying a further objectivist criterion of cognitive command, in short CC.

In case of a dispute whether P or not, if the discourse exhibits CC, there is a fact of the matter whether P or not, i.e., the disagreement involves some mistake. If, on the other hand, P is truth apt without CC holding there could be faultless disagreement about P. The distinction was thought to provide for a distinction between disputes of fact and disputes of inclination. Benny and David disagree about the moon stuff and about cheese being cheesy. The former represents a subject matter exhibiting CC, the latter a subject matter which is merely apt for truth. A mistake is committed in the first case but not necessarily in the second, according to this view.

In the simple deduction, P is arbitrary and the disagreement could concern any topic, such as the application of a vague predicate to a borderline case, or a dispute of inclination, etc. Classical logic validates the inference that all disputes about all truth-evaluable judgements involve cognitive mistakes and the distinction between being subject to cognitive command versus merely exhibiting truth aptness is threatened. There seems to be no faultless disagreements, and therefore no real disputes of inclination. Wright (2001) and
Kölbel (2003, 2004:1) discuss four typical responses to this issue. (I use Wright’s terminology.)

Rampant realism: To be a rampant realist about a subject matter means that one accepts the conclusion that there are no faultless disagreements, and embraces that there is a fact of the matter as to the subject matter at issue, about which either A or B is making a mistake. Applied to matters of taste, Cheese is cheesy, as an absolute matter of fact, independently of what Benny, David and all the rest of us think.

Indexical relativism: What seem to be contradicting attitudes, i.e., A judges that not-P, and B judges that P, are not in fact contradictory, because of a hidden constituent in content, indexed somehow (in logical form or elsewhere) and supplied in a systematic way by the context in which the utterance is made. The result is that the propositions, granted and denied respectively, aren’t the same.

Expressivism: Subject matters which are considered merely minimally truth apt aren’t truth apt at all. The meta-ethical label of that position concerning evaluative and normative judgements is ‘expressivism’.

The quandary view: A and B disagree about a common truth-evaluable claim, but ‘there need to be nothing about which either disputant is mistaken, nor any imperfection in their grasp of what it is that is in dispute’. (2001 p. 53). Both A and B are in a quandary as to whether there is a matter of fact in the dispute at issue.

Let me briefly discuss some typical objections to these positions. (Most of these are from Kölbel (2003, 2004:2vi), Wright (2001, 2004).)

**Realism**

Rampant realism has no problems with the ‘simple deduction’ since the conclusion that there are no faultless disagreements is accepted. But rampant realism is false for obvious reasons, when it comes to matters of inclination at least. It is just ridiculous to claim that either David or Benny is making a mistake since there is one fact of the matter as to the cheesiness of green cheese. The so-called epistemic view of vagueness isn’t thought to be that obviously false, at least not for those who think that Williamson’s (*Vagueness* etc) and Sorenson’s cases for that position aren’t obviously false. The same would be true for an ‘epistemic’ version of moral realism, which would not be an obviously false doctrine. Applied to ethics, it has the consequence that some ethical truths are unknowable in principle, which might even constitute a plausible opinion from a utilitarian perspective.
Expressivism

Realism saves disagreement in disputes of inclination but makes it absurd. Expressivism with regard to a subject matter leaves no room for mistaken beliefs or disagreements in that area, as there is no propositional content to which disputants may direct opposing attitudes or be mistaken about. In that way the position briskly sidesteps the simple deduction.

One objection is that it seems to be a fact that we are sometimes mistaken in e.g., matters of inclination. Consider the cheese case again. Assume that David dislikes the taste of green cheese to the extent that he would feel sick if he tasted it. But he doesn’t know that and judges that ‘green cheese is delicious’ because he has a false memory of having very much enjoyed the taste of eating it once. Independently of how such mistakes are conceived, in explicit terms of truth or not, we don’t want that kind of intra-personal mistake to disappear as a consequence of moves we make to eliminate interpersonal mistakes for the purpose of not falling prey to the simple deduction.

Further, there are well known problems to account for the seemingly logical relations between judgements which are not truth evaluable. But, as Kölbel (2004:2) notices, it is not shown that those problems couldn’t be overcome by way of a more sophisticated expressivism, as e.g. Blackburn’s (ref).

Indexical relativism

According to indexical relativism there is no real disagreement in matters of inclination since the disputants assert different truth-evaluable propositions although surface syntax can be misleading. The indexicalist assumes an implicit reference to a standard; or set of evaluative or normative principles, concerning, e.g., ethical matters, esthetical matters, matters of taste, or some other area of discretionary matters. The standard could be constituted by social factors, mental factors etc., and it could be possessed individually or group wise. There must be endless ways to think of groups and group membership and changes in standards and all other parameters in different combinations. I will neglect that kind of complications in what follows.

Indexical relativism suggests that the logical form of the sentence ‘X is F’ is roughly (cf. Kölbel 2004:2):

(IR) X is F relative to Y
Y is a variable ranging over something like ethical or esthetical standards, moral codes, preference orders, etc. The expression ‘according to Y’ isn’t represented in the surface grammar of ‘X is F’, but is supposed to be part of some syntactical deep structure or logical form of the expression.

There are two main versions of indexical relativism with different analyses of how the relativization to Y is realized. (cf. ibid)

The difference could be represented by the following explications of (IR)

\[(IR^*) \text{ X is F according to my Y} \]

\[(IR^{**}) \text{ X is F according to that Y which is shared by our G} \]

The hidden expressions are supposed to be indexical. As such they have standing indexical meanings or (Kaplan style) characters. Character could be thought of in terms of linguistic rules, known by competent speakers using the expressions, rules that inform the communicators how to assign specific contents to those expressions when applied in context. Formally a character could be modelled as a function from contexts to contents. If one assumes that characters are compositional, then it is natural to take the character of a truth evaluable sentence, as a whole, to be a function from contexts to propositions, and the latter as functions from possible worlds to truth-values.

The character of ‘my’ indexes the speaker of ‘X is F’. The character of the complex expression ‘our--G’ is ranging over some relevant group of individuals. It is not equivalent to the character of ‘our’ in English. Different groupings have been suggested, as e.g., intended audience plus speaker, language community, society, cultural community etc. The central idea is that a shared Y is contextually picked out as a referent in the proposition.

What about Benny, David and the cheese? Let us assume that the Y-factor indexed is their respective individually possessed taste. Don’t bother about constitution, if it is social or individual, conventional or biological, or a combination. Assume that the logical form is roughly ‘…according to my taste’. We have two utterances, ‘Cheese is delicious according to my taste’ and ‘Cheese is not delicious according to my taste’ uttered by two different persons. It is very clear that although the standing meanings, that is, the characters are one and the same, the contents aren’t. Therefore no dispute is involved in this situation, hence no real disagreement that could be faultless. I am prima facie sympathetic to some

---

2 See e.g., David Kaplan, 1979, On the logic of demonstratives, *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 8, 401-412.
indexical version of content relativism with regard to matters of inclination and perhaps in ethical matters as well.

One objection is that it seems that we in fact disagree over a subject matter in those cases where indexical relativism says that we don’t. A suggested line of defence in response to that objection is that what seems to be real disagreement as to the subject matter at issue is indeed a disagreement, not about the subject but a dispute as to how a certain (shared) standard should be applied in a certain case. It boils down to a dispute about facts and as such couldn’t be faultless.

The simple deduction is handled by denying that the propositions concerning the subject matters in the supposed disagreement are the same. Apart from that, concerning an arbitrary Y-dispute there could be a real disagreement as to the application of the Y-factor involved. As noticed by Kölbel (2004:2), this is not a very plausible option for the individualist version for obvious reasons, but it is for the group version.

Take an analogous example from the colour domain. You claim a fish to be red but not orange, and I disagree and claim it to be orange. Assume that we share a complete semantic colour space. All colours are either already tagged or taken care of by linguistic principles for labelling yet unclassified nuances. No semantic vagueness obtains as to orange vs. red. However, we are imperfect in our discriminatory capacities. Sometimes we are not sure where to place a certain colour sample in that space. This could be considered a case of sharing standards but disagreeing over their application. One of us is correct, the other is not. One could ‘easily’ create similar examples, substituting, e.g., ethical standards, or shared taste functions, for colour space.

This view, plausible as it stands, faces a serious objection concerning situations in which the disputants don’t share the Y-factor. Kölbel gives the following example (2004: 2, p. 4.)

($) Blair ought to go to war.

($$)The moral code shared by you (your audience), me (the speaker), and Blair requires Blair to go to war.

An utterance of ($) expresses the same proposition that an utterance of ($) according to (IR**), prominent defenders of which are Harman and Dreier. Kölbel remarks that there are Russellian and Strawsonian readings of the descriptive meaning of ‘…according to Y’.

Applied to expression ‘The moral code shared by…’ in ($$), the Russellian reading gives us a definite description claiming roughly that there is a unique moral code satisfying a
certain descriptive condition. As such it is a proposition which is true or false. The result if there is no unique thing that satisfies the description of being such and such a moral code etc is a false claim, making ($$) as a whole false.

The Strawsonian reading takes the existence of the code referred to as a semantic presupposition, i.e., if there is no code that fits the descriptive condition connected with ($$) then the whole utterance is meaningless. No assertion is made. Kölbel (ibid) claims that Harman and Dreier are flirting with a Strawsonian reading.

Here comes the objection above referred to as a serious one. Assume A and B are involved in a dispute over ($), A assenting and B dissenting. Assume that A and B don’t share standards. The Strawsonian reading makes the utterances that ($) and that not-($) equally meaningless, and there is no communication.

That is a truly absurd consequence. It is obvious that we somehow communicate in this kind of situation. Kölbel (ibid) stresses the point that it is a bullet that his own position, genuine relativism, doesn’t have to bite. I shall argue in the next section that genuine relativism is threatened by a similar problem of communication breakdown, since the proposition involved is too meagre to carry the relevant information.

Let me just notice that the Russellian version seems problematic in a similar way. Disagreements would turn into false claims in case of moral codes not being shared by the disputants. That would be good if Blair were rational. If Blair dared to dispute his opponents, and if indexical relativism were true, then Blair ought to conclude that his response, that he ought to go to war, to my claim that he shouldn’t go to war, would be false because we don’t share standards.

**The quandary view**

There is one position left to discuss before relativism can be approached. That position is Wright’s so called ‘true relativism’, a reasonable presentation of which deserves a paper of its own. I shall just briefly sketch the view and attend to a couple of objections recently raised by Kölbel (2003) and Wright (2004). Let’s return to the simple deduction, the conclusion of which is:

\[(Q) \text{not-}(A \text{ is not mistaken and } B \text{ is not mistaken})\]
In classical logic we can infer \((Q^*)\) by double negation elimination. \(\text{not-}A \& \text{not-}B\) gives us \(\text{not-}(A \text{ or } B)\) the negation of which give us \(\text{not-}\text{not-}(A \text{ or } B)\) which is classically equivalent to

\[(Q^*)\] Either A or B has made a mistake.

Wright argues that some judgements concern topics where quandaries might obtain. It means roughly that we don’t know if there is a fact of the matter at issue, and we don’t know if there is a way to find out whether there is a fact of the matter. Wright thinks that we typically are in a quandary when applying vague predicates in borderline cases. He has also argued that that we are in a quandary about disagreements concerning inclination (2001). In such cases we don’t know if there is a mistake or not involved and we don’t know if it is possible to find out. In short we don’t know if there is a fact of the matter.

Wright applies his quandary concept to make a case for intuitionist logic for subject matters liable to generate quandaries. The idea is simply that a quandary situation could be characterized in terms of missing evidence for the bivalence principle. The reasoning goes roughly as follows:

1. Assume that a certain class of statements are subject to some *evidential constraint on truth*. Some version of (EC) is true. Loosely speaking, in intuitionist mathematics truth never transcends constructive provability. Matters of taste or inclination can be thought of in terms of knowability of the *existence* of the relevant properties. If nobody could ever know *what it feels like* to sense the taste of green cheese and correspondingly *what it feels like* to sense the *dislike* of that taste, that would indicate there were no qualities of the kind at issue to claim truths about.

2. Assume that some statement in the class at issue presents a quandary. That means we *don’t know* about that statement *whether it can be known or not*, i.e., proved or not, sensed or not etc, and the same for its negation.

3. Presented with a quandary-statement, accepting (EC), *we aren’t justified* to claim that the statement at issue is *either true or false*, or that there is a fact of the matter. In other words, *for all we know* we aren’t entitled to claim that bivalence holds for the *class* of statements to which the quandary statement belongs.

Wright takes this objection to bivalence as an argument in support of intuitionist logic abandoning the law of the excluded middle. Notice that the inference from \(Q\) to \((Q^*)\) is
not valid in such a logic. The question is if (Q) intuitionistically interpreted makes room for faultless disagreement. Wright has set up three conditions to be met for a faultless disagreement according to ‘the ordinary view’, presumably what common sense prescribes. These are roughly described in the following way (Wright, 2004, p. 1):

Contradiction – truth apt propositions are disputed by disputants holding genuinely incompatible views.

Faultlessness – nobody need to be mistaken or otherwise at fault.

Sustainability – antagonists may, rationally, stick to their respective views even after the disagreements come to light and impress as intractable.

A bit simplified – if we are in a quandary whether P or not, we cannot have a justified opinion as to whether P has a truth-value or not. Applied to the simple deduction, line 3 presents a quandary. Therefore we have to abandon the double negation elimination step from (Q) to (Q*). Thus, the conclusion (Q) intuitionistically interpreted represents our justified ignorance as to whether the assumption that no one has made a mistake has a truth-value. If the disputants so far can be judged to have been justified in their respective views, they have no reason to abandon their views. They would have if (Q) had given them reason to believe that at least one of them was wrong. But they have no such reason. Hence they can rationally stick to their respective opinions. In that sense they are faultless because epistemically entering the disagreement they have got no reason thereby to suppose that they are mistaken. Further, that means they have no reason to change opinion. Sustainability and faultlessness go hand in hand and contradiction is part of the assumption. The conditions provided by the ordinary view are in balance with the simple deduction in its intuitionist reading.

Kölbel makes the following objection to the quandary view. Assume that Bob and Paul dispute whether Grace Kelly is prettier than Mai Zetterling. It is certainly possible that Bob has forgotten what Mai looked like, and therefore makes a mistake. ‘So it is not faultless disagreement. However in order to do justice to our – as it turns out false – intuition that neither of them is mistaken, we can refuse to assert that one of them is mistaken. It is unclear to me how this ameliorates the situation.’ (Kölbel, 2003, p. 62.)

Kölbel (ibid) observes that the disagreement is actually not faultless. He remarks that Goldbach’s conjecture and propositions concerning the application of vague predicates in borderline cases might be typical quandaries, but matters of taste and inclination are not (ibid, footnote 9, p. 62). Propositions like ‘Grace Kelly is prettier...’ are not quandaries. As
I interpret Kölbel, he thinks that since mistakes clearly could be made and corrected in matters of inclination there is no evidence that the propositions involved are quandaries. They are decidable matters. And Kölbel’s searching question is: If propositions involved in disagreements are not quandaries, how can it then become a quandary whether the disagreements are faultless or not?

Let me briefly describe what I assume Wright (2004) intends as a reply to this objection. He notices that no one knows whether Goldbach’s conjecture or its negation is metaphysically possible, borderline cases of vague predicates may give raise to weak qualified opinions, and matters of taste may give raise to strong ones. (2004, p. 9) He asks in what sense the notion of quandary marks a similarity between the different kinds of statements. The answer in short is that it is classes of statements that are sensibly ascribed quandaries. Although Kölbel is right that one may have many competent opinions in, e.g., matters of taste, his conclusion fails. The reason is that evidence is certainly missing that all such opinions are knowledgeable or have a determinate best opinion. ‘That would guarantee that all disputes of inclination have a winner. We have no such guarantee.’ (2004, p. 10)

Is this response relevant? To some extent, I would say. It is true that the quandary view is most natural to conceive of in terms of classes of statements, united by e.g., sharing some method of verification, confirmation, proof, etc., settling those issues which are decidable. It is even difficult to understand what quandary means without such classes and methods, since the quandary cases are defined precisely in terms of not being justifiably assumed to be justifiable according to those truth-constituting methods. Therefore the fact that there are determinate best opinions as to Mai Zetterling being prettier than Grace Kelly, is not telling against the quandary view.

On the other hand, one might argue that no particular proposition concerning taste made by any particular individual is ever liable to a quandary, vagueness disregarded. Let us assume that Bob and Paul disagreed about Mai being prettier than Grace. Assume that none of them made the kind of mistake discussed above. Both of them knew their opinion to be well grounded, e.g., they don’t have false memories of Mai Zetterling’s appearance. Wright has to say that now we have a quandary. It is interesting to notice that exactly when the faults have been eliminated then quandary enters the scene. It is exactly when both guys claim that they are sure about who’s prettiest. This indicates that the propositions
disputed aren’t quandaries for the disputants. They are well informed and determined in their opinions.

A response could be that it is not the propositions disputed that are quandaries. It is whether there is a faultless disagreement or not that presents a quandary. Kölbl questions that it is possible to generate a quandary as to the faultlessness of disagreement from propositions which are not quandaries for the disputants. If Kölbl (2003) meant his argument to be thus interpreted I have to say that I am sympathetic, but I guess no bullet is unbitable. Wright has to say that it is exactly when the obvious mistakes are removed that quandaries might occur. This means that almost all matters of taste; all propositions in the area will be quandaries since they are all liable to generate qualified competent opposing opinions between some persons. If they could they must be quandary propositions. They are quandaries because contradictory judgements could be rationally sustained by competent judges.

It turns out that Wright himself has a serious objection to the intuitionist take on disputes of inclination. The view provides no evidence that rampant realism is false. ‘[S]ince the Ordinary View is inconsistent with rampant realism, no justice can have been done to it by an account that is inconsistent with the possibility that rampant realism is correct.’ (Wright, 2004, p. 14) It cannot explain why realism fails. As far as the quandary view goes, it is only justified to be agnostic about rampant realism. Agnosticism about realism seems to embody a weaker position than the Ordinary View is intuitively assumed to prescribe, namely, that there are faultless disagreements in the sense of no mistakes being involved. Rampant realism is logically compatible with the quandary view, which means that it has no means to account for what is mistaken by that view. Wright is not satisfied with quandary agnosticism concerning rampant realism, even though it might be a coherent perspective. He wants a theory that better meets the demands of the Ordinary View, hence the suggestion that relative truth is explored. We shall now attend to relativism to see if faultless disagreement could be better understood in such terms, first Kölbl’s proposal and then Wright’s.

5. Kölbl’s relativism
Kölbl suggests that truth should be relativized to perspective. (2003, 2004:1,2) He still wants truth to be a property of propositions, thus that the truth-value of the proposition that
P varies with perspectives. How does that make room for faultless disagreement? He introduces a relativist principle connecting mistakes to believing false propositions.

(T*** ) It is a mistake to believe a discretionary proposition that is not true as evaluated from one’s own perspective.

For the sake of uniformity, truth is in general relativized to perspectives.

(TR) It is a mistake to believe a proposition that is not true in one’s own perspective.

Faultless disagreement is claimed to be possible only in those areas in which it is possible to possess more than one perspective. Objective areas are characterised by only admitting the possession of one shared perspective. To be in possession of a perspective with respect to an area of subject matter consists roughly in knowing a set of a priori rules for belief formation, reasoning and communication about propositions within that area. These rules are learned as the concepts and beliefs that constitute the contents are learned. Some areas exhibit what Wright would call cognitive command, other don’t, as regulated by a priori rules.

These a priori rules constrain the relation of perspective possession. With respect to taste, e.g., the rules would prescribe a certain emotional response in the believer for correct application, of a certain taste predicate. This typically commits me to a fault if I believe that anchovies are delicate only if eating anchovies doesn’t, in a normal case, evoke the correspondent positive emotional response in me, a delicate(ness)-response one might say.

In matters of taste this makes room for possessing different perspectives, by exhibiting different normal taste-relevant emotional responses, as defined by the rules of language and belief formation. The difference between perspective relativism and indexical relativism is not that the latter doesn’t take emotional responses into account. But while indexical relativism places them in content, perspective relativism places them outside.

Kölbel makes use of Kaplan’s distinction between character and content, mentioned in section 4, to illustrate his view. Content is relativized to context by way of constant linguistic rules, character. Truth-values of propositions are described as relative to possible worlds. He then goes on to claim that his relativism has that in common with possible world semantics that the truth-value rather than the content is relativized, not to possible worlds but perspectives. The same proposition can be evaluated differently with respect to
different perspectives. He emphasizes that two people communicating will always share a world but not necessarily a perspective (2003, p. 72).

The following would be a natural way to get truth relative to perspective:

\[(0) \text{P}(W, \text{Persp}) = \text{truth-value}\]

It says that a proposition is a function from a world and a perspective to a truth-value. That would give us variation with perspective in truth-value, at the same world. It will also give us variation in truth from a perspective depending on variation in worlds. It has not been investigated, as far I know, how (0) relates to standard modal semantics.

Notice that (0) does not fit what Kölbel says about perspectives, according to which. ‘…a perspective is a function that assigns truth-values to propositions’ (2003, p. 70). That is better represented by (i) below.

\[(i) \text{Persp}(W, P) = \text{truth-value}\]

Persp is now a function with two argument places, worlds and propositions, assigning truth-values to pairs of worlds and propositions. But it sounds odd to talk of those pairs as truth-bearers. However, that may be just verbal quibbling. Notice that neither (0) nor (i) fit nicely into a possible world reading of propositions which makes propositions into functions from worlds to truth-values, indicated by (ii)

\[(ii) \text{P}(W) = \text{truth-value}\]

Kölbel opts for a concept of propositional content that varies in truth-value with perspectives but at the same time is true and false about or at the relevant world which could be the actual one, or speaking in modal terms some world accessible from the world at which the utterance is made. The (Kölbel’s) structure of (i) seems ill-suited for this framework. Neither P nor W can be constructed in a standard way. I don’t want to imply that Kölbel is unaware of that. In fact he claims it to be an important dissimilarity between possible world relativization of truth and his view; ‘Any two people communicating with each other will always be at the same possible world. By contrast, two communicators can possess different perspectives.’ (2003, p. 72) I dwell upon this because it is a simple way to illustrate where the problem of defining content is located. The concept of relative truth has to be accompanied by a suitable concept of content. Kölbel’s discussion indicates to me that his concept of content should meet at least the following conditions.

1. Propositions are truth apt (truth-bearers)
2. The truth-value of propositions varies with perspective.

3. A sentence type S expresses the *same* proposition P *independent* of in which *perspective* it is uttered, which distinguishes the position from indexical relativism.

4. Propositions enter logical inferences.

5. Propositions are targets for beliefs and other attitudes.

6. If ‘a is F’ is true in perspective Y, and false in perspective Z, and not-(Y = Z), then the *same* proposition is *true* respectively *false* about the *same subject matter*, as viewed from different perspectives.

7. The following *is not* a description of the *truth-conditional meaning* of the proposition in (6) as evaluated from the perspectives of Y respective Z:
   
   a) ‘a is F’ as expressed by the utterance U1 of sentence S, in perspective P1 is true iff (in perspective P1) *a is F*.
   
   b) ‘a is F’ as expressed by the utterance U2 of sentence S, in perspective P1 is true iff (in perspective P2) *a is F*.

   Let me start by explaining (6) and (7). It is truly simple. By ‘subject matter’ in (6) I am referring to the world or the fact or whatever that is assumed to be that *of which* the utterance is true or false. To deny (6) would be virtually the same as denying that S expresses the same content in Y respectively Z. To claim that S expresses the same proposition but different contents would amount to deflating the concept of proposition involved to a degree which would make it implausible that the other conditions (1-5) could be met.

   If (7) were *false* we would get a similar problem. Notice that (7) expresses (and denies) a prima facie reasonable truth-condition to meet the other constraints on perspective truth in (1-6). But if truth-conditions equal truth-conditional *meaning* in the way suggested by (7), then meaning would be relativized to perspective, and U1 and U2 would have different content. Truth-conditional content would not equal propositional content. It is very unlikely that the residual concept of propositions would satisfy (1-6). That concept of proposition wouldn’t be suitable to plug into a theory of genuine faultless disagreement as characterized by Köbel and Wright.
My questions to Kölbel concern how subject matter should be defined so as to not violate (6), respectively how the truth-conditions for perspective dependent claims should be accounted for without committing the mistake of (denying) (7). In an abstract sense it is already provided by (6) and (7), but I am asking for more than just a list of whished for properties.

We like to think that logical relations are based on content relations, such as between sentences, judgements, beliefs, perceptions, decisions, actions etc. To dispute that P is to contradict what someone else judges, as to content. A contradiction in content normally equals logical contradiction. Truth relativism of the kind here discussed, contradicts exactly that aspect of the relation between truth and content.

A theory of truth that makes the residual concept of content ineffective as to understanding the relation between ‘same content’ and elementary inferential relations i.e., logic, isn’t worth fighting for. How could we say that A and B disagree without saying that they contradict each other logically, and vice versa, without deflating the concept of content. Kölbel and Wright want to say that in a faultless disagreement, what A thinks is contradicted by B, in the sense that it is the same proposition confirmed respectively denied, but there is no logical contradiction involved. Logical contradiction is only intra-perspectivally situated, but contents are floating between or above perspectives, not respecting the law of contradiction inter-perspectivally. In fact, that is about all substantial information we have about relative truth and its corresponding concept of content.

About (7), Kölbel has to claim that even though perspective constitutes some kind of condition for truth it is not a truth-condition in the normal sense of being captured by the semantics for the utterance or sentence or whatever, since it is not what the sentence expresses. It is not part of the proposition. That shouldn’t be too hard to accomplish in a formal model but the model should also respect (1-6), and I am missing an argument showing why we should think that it is even theoretically possible, except in a purely formal theory where normal conditions of adequacy associated with semantics are not yet tested for.

6. Wright’s relativism

Wright (2004) first gives an informal characterization of ‘true relativism’ similar to Kölbel’s. He emphasises that it isn’t propositional truth conditions that vary as a function
of standards, or perspective, but rather whether those truth conditions are *satisfied* or not. (2004, p 18). We are told that true relativism is ‘...a thesis that kicks in at the level of content, rather than speech acts. Or if it is not, then it is merely a slightly more sophisticated cousin of the simple indexical relativist proposal...’ (ibid).

The subject matter is restricted to *local* relativism rather than global and the issue if truth in general is relative is not discussed. His first question concerns if local relativism about truth is coherent. Coherence presupposed, further questions are if true relativism can ‘accommodate each of Contradiction, Faultlessness and Sustainability at all, whether it can do so without undue metaphysical cost, and in particular in a way which allows for more robust understanding of Faultlessness than could be assured by the intuitionistic proposal’ (2004, p. 17) It is argued that relative truth at the level of propositions is in fact unintelligible if truth is thought of in robust correspondence terms. His line of reasoning is basically as follows. (2004, p. 19)

Assume that a proposition is an *articulated* abstract entity which is *internally* related to an *articulated* aspect of a non-propositional reality, making it true in case reality in fact equals that *articulated* non-propositional aspect of reality, false otherwise. In this picture there is *no place left for a third parameter* to which truth could be relative. The point is illustrated by the following example. Take the congruence in form between a head and shoulders sculpture and the model who posed for it. Only relative to conventions of representation could it be judged if and how *accurately* the sculpture represents the model. The relevant form of *relativity* enters the picture only after the *representational conventions* are fixed. However, in this case and in general, representational accuracy is an *internal relation* between a conventionally fixed system of representations and the represented objects. There is no place for a third term in the truth relation.

Wright concludes that relative propositional truth is incompatible with correspondence truth, since the internal relation leaves no room for a third parameter, the one truth is supposed to be relative to. He points out that some coherence notion of truth might escape this problem and fit the relativist scheme better, and goes on to describe a version in terms of superassertability. Before discussing Wright's particular proposal, let me first make a few general observations about two different versions of truth relativism and in addition to that, a point concerning the relation between relative truth and correspondence truth.

It is sometimes argued that there are epistemic values attaching to theories, such as coherence, simplicity, and instrumental efficiency, which determine what is rational to
assert. If these standards were relative to communities, cultures, paradigms, theories, or whatever, then relativism about rational assertability would follow. Assume that truth is somehow epistemic and varies systematically with standards of rational assertability. Putnam’s internal realism\(^3\) was suggesting a view in this spirit in my opinion. This view has two distinct readings, one allowing for correspondence truth and the other not.

First, assume that the same sentence ‘S’ is true according to some standard but not to others. The truth-value varies with standard. Assume that the T-schema ‘‘S’’ is true iff S’ is valid independently of truth standards. That is, the relativism under discussion doesn’t change this fact about the use of the truth predicate. But it motivates the following informal explication of the T-schema. On a fact centred (or world, reality, etc) interpretation of truth we should say that ‘‘S’’ is true iff it is a fact that S’.

Facts vary with epistemic standards, and thereby truth. It is possible to imagine a fact-centred interpretation of truth relativism, according to which truth is dependent on correspondence to facts and facts in turn dependent for their existence on epistemic standards. This pictures a situation in which the existence of worlds or facts or objects is relative to the use of certain epistemic standards. Call this position ontological truth relativism, since the primary relativization occurs at the metaphysical level. The fact-centred interpretation can say something about what it means that the same sentence with the same meaning is true according to one standard and false according to another in terms of facts. As is well known, there is no contradiction involved in such cases. The same sentence, with one truth conditional meaning, is supposed to be true, respectively false by reference to different facts, or different worlds if you like.

I cannot see why this view should be incompatible with correspondence truth, since the internal relation between the proposition and the propositionally articulated aspect of reality is not affected by variation in standards. In that sense I disagree with Wright’s claim that correspondence truth and relative truth are incompatible. On the other hand, Wright could say that ontological truth relativism doesn’t make the property of truth relative, rather the property of being a truth-maker. I would of course agree to that, but on the other

---

hand, I think that relative truth-makers might be what has been intended by talk about relative truth, in some cases. Apart from that, it is worth mentioning this view since it might constitute an alternative to indexical relativism about matters of inclination or ethical matters.

Assume that Crispin Wright dislikes stewed rhubarb, hence is in, or better has access to a world in which stewed rhubarb is not delicious; it is a fact in that world. That fact might very well supervene (using a modern term) on Crispin’s affective or taste relevant emotional dispositions, the latter not being a constituent of the proposition expressed by Crispin uttering ‘Stewed rhubarb is not delicious’. Similarly, the fact that stewed rhubarb is delicious, in another world accessed by Tim Williamson, might supervene on his affective responses as to the taste of stewed rhubarb, without thereby partaking of the propositional content of Tim’s utterance ‘Stewed rhubarb is delicious’.

On this picture, I have no problem to understand what it means to assume that content stays fixed while truth varies. Crispin and Tim would express opposing attitudes to the same proposition but as it were target different worlds, due to different perspectives. One serious objection though, would be that the supervening properties, exemplified by deliciousness above, aren’t very robust. What reasons do we have to postulate them with regard to matters of inclination or ethics, independently from inclinations to dislike indexical relativism?

There is an alternative conception of relative truth. Call it verification centred relativism. I will subsequently place Wright’s suggestion in this category. No ‘truth-making’ facts come into the picture. The truth of ‘S’ is determined by an epistemic standard determining the relevant procedure of truth confirmation. Ex hypothesi, there are several possible standards. ‘S’ is true according to one standard, and its negation according to another. I have problems to see how this view could be made without a corresponding modification of the T-schema. Here are two alternative modifications that first come to mind.

(ND) ‘S’ is true with respect to (standard) Q iff ‘S’ is confirmed in accordance with Q.

(D) ‘S’ is true with respect to (standard) Q iff that S is confirmed in accordance with Q.
First, let me remark that neither Wright\textsuperscript{4}, nor Köbel as far as I know, would subscribe to a bi-conditional truth characterization of this kind. (ND) and (D) serve the purpose of being straw men, helping me to illustrate problems that have to be overcome by the less crude versions of these authors.

Notice the structural similarity to the formula that occurred in condition (7) in the former section. Q occurs at the right hand side as part of a truth condition. But (ND) is not disquotational. It substitutes one predication about ‘S’ at the meta-language level for another meta-language predication, in this case ‘confirmed in accordance with Q’, for ‘truth’. Hence there is no problem concerning propositional content, since truth is characterized without disquotation. Truth equals some operation of confirmation at the level of sentences. It means that there is no traditional semantic level as to content. Loosely speaking, ‘same content’ must be defined in a non-disquotational way. If truth is handled at the syntactical level, there would be no reason to involve classical semantics. There is no concept of propositional content left to deflate. Confirmational relations between sentences substitute for worldly truth conditions. The specific problem as to condition (7) above is avoided since there is no truth conditional meaning internally related to the proposition that could vary with Q.

It is well known that if ‘content’ is defined in terms of some kind of confirmational relations between sentences, as e.g., is done in inferential role semantics, there are significant problems to define a concept of ‘same content’. A related difficulty concerns how to distinguish between correct and incorrect inferences if you have defined content in terms of inferential relations between sentences. What class of seemingly correct inferences are to be picked out as valid to start with, as grounds for determining the content of the sentences involved?

This may indicate a general problem for those coherence models of truth that don’t allow for a disquotation characterization of how the truth-predicate is to be properly applied.

That makes them ill-suited to account for disputes of inclination. The trouble concerns how to distinguish between faultless and straight disagreements to start with. Suppose that Crispin utters ‘This is stewed rhubarb’; and that his claim is true relative to a standard of confirmation somehow associated to the utterance. To fit, e.g., an inferential role semantics approach the standard must somehow regulate or comprise all valid inferential steps that contain the uttered sentence. Crispin infers ‘This is not delicious’ and Timothy infers ‘This is delicious’. Of course there are different further assumptions involved leading to the different conclusions, but those are also getting their content from their membership in their respective inferential patterns. Thus, how could Tim and Crispin dispute the very same content? If they are both correct in their judgements then their respective inferential patterns differs, thus the content of the premises ‘this is stewed rhubarb’, ‘this is the taste of stewed rhubarb’ etc. Hence, what seem to be opposing views about the deliciousness of stewed rhubarb aren’t really, since the meaning of ‘stewed rhubarb is delicious’ is different for them. This problem is general for all theories that identify content with some in a broad sense prima facie inferential relation.

Let us have a look at (D) which is disquotational. Since that S occurs on the right hand side of the schema in (D) it is part of a truth condition broadly speaking. But notice the slide in that S, between a fact and proposition. Is it a fact or a proposition that is confirmed? Presumably a proposition expressing that something is a fact. Thus in (D) a sentence is claimed to be true if the proposition expressed is confirmed. This seems to be exactly what a true relativist needs. There is a truth predicate indexed as to the relativization factor (Q) on the right hand side of the bi-conditional. On the left hand side there is a content which is confirmed according to a standard.

\[ \text{Con}(P, Q) = \text{confirmation value} \]

Con is a function that takes a proposition and a confirmational standard and gives a value, confirmed or disconfirmed.

Correspondingly we could write

\[ \text{Con} (P, Q) = \text{True} (S, Q) = \text{truth-value} = \text{confirmation value} \]

However, supporters of rational assertability theories of truth don’t really think of the standards themselves as truth-makers. Let us skip the straw men and have a look at some real suggestions. Wright (2000) distinguishes between Peircian biconditionals and Putnamian biconditionals.
(PI) P is true ↔ Q → Z(P)
(PU) P is true ↔ Q_p → Z(P)

P ranges over propositions, Q expresses a general epistemic characterization, in terms of e.g., epistemically ideal conditions, coherence conditions, and Z(…) stands for the condition on propositions hypothesized by Q. → expresses a subjunctive conditional. The index on Q_p expresses that the epistemic conditions hypothesized by Q are local, in the sense of being uniquely tied to the proposition ascribed truth, and not expressing a general characterization of conditions to be fulfilled by true propositions.

Wright points out that Putnam claims never to have accepted anything as strong as (PI) even though many have interpreted him that way. (PU) should be more in line with Putnam’s i-realism. Let us see what (PU) would say about a cat being on a mat.

It is true that the cat is on the mat iff, if the conditions for confirming that the cat is on the mat were ideal, then it would be rationally assertible that the cat is on the mat.

If Wright is correct about Putnam’s internal realism it is a (ND) position, although a complicated one. The reader has to think (PU) to be relativized to variation in standards in the reasoning that follows. Notice the possible slide between ‘the proposition saying that …’ and ‘the fact that…’ As (PU) stands, there are propositions on both sides of the bi-conditional. That makes it possible to escape the problems about truth-conditions on the right hand side becoming a part of the propositional content as expressed by (7) in the previous section.

On the other hand, if the contents of individual propositions are determined by assertability conditions, then we will have significant problems to say which common content is disputed in a faultless disagreement.

It is time to have a look at Wright’s recent suggestion about relative truth. He notices that the whole point of the Putnamian and Peircean proposals as to idealization of assertability is the supposed convergence in the ideal case. Hence, ex hypothesi, in the ideal limit there couldn’t be rival propositions equally assertible. (2004, p. 20) My comment to that is that one might take internal convergence, with respect to shared standards of assertability, to be accompanied by external divergence between not shared standards. This view is more intelligible with respect to global relativism, according to which two incompatible
worldviews might be associated with different assertability standards. However, as mentioned above, Wright focuses on local relativism.

Wright suggests that we explore relative truth where ‘superassertability’ is substituted for ‘assertability in the ideal limit’. For a class of statements, to be superassertible means to be assertible in a gathered state of information, and to remain assertible no matter what improvements or enlargements are made to that state of information. In short, there is no convergence in the ideal limit. This is locally applicable.

Suppose, Hero and Heroine disagree about a matter of taste. If their respective judgements are superassertible, then they are assertible as to their respective current state relevant information, and no possible future information would change that. Apart from that, superassertability means that their current states of information don’t allow for a pooling of their respective current state of information that results in new a state of information which settles the disagreement. Their opinions wouldn’t qualify as superassertible if such pooling would thus change assertibility.

Wright gives the following example: ‘…Hero and Heroine may be respectively be in position to assert P and to assert not-P just by differing in their non-cognitive responses to things; and because their responses are non-cognitive their may be no clear sense to the idea of ‘pooling’ their respective bodies of information and determining what is warranted by the result.’ (Wright 2004, p. 21).

Wright remarks (2004, p. 21) that the basic form of assertability condition for taste judgements is non-cognitive, ‘relishing eating rhubarbs for instance’. Hence, he considers it plausible to assume that there may be no way to pool their states of information so that the integrated state determines what is warranted in a new way.

He notices that one’s state of information could be enlarged by adding the datum that others might not share my non-cognitive responses. If that datum per se is not conceived of as a defeater there is no immediate threat to superassertability, he claims. I must confess that I don’t really see why we should accept that constraint on pooling. Is it not question begging?

He then goes on to discuss what it could mean that Tim and Crispin dispute the same proposition. Thus it concerns Contradiction in Wright’s terms: ‘What makes it the same content that, as it may be, is superassertible for Tim but not for me?’ His interesting answer is that Tim and Crispin share a common understanding of the proposition that rhubarb is
delicious, if they have ‘a common conception of what entitles a thinker to assert it – her
22) Among these consequences are desires and priorities of choices involving rhubarbs.
‘…that Tim and I are involved in genuine disagreement is borne out by the fact that we
agree about the, loosely described, consequences of each other’s views and then sustain
our disagreement through our respective acceptance or rejection of those consequences and
the course of action involved. Tim orders the crumble; I don’t.’ (2004, p 23).

This is a very reasonable description of what is involved in disputes of taste. There is some
conception of what it means for rhubarbs, or any taste for that matter, to be delicious. This
conception guarantees that the disputants in this example know that among the basic
assertability conditions for claiming that rhubarbs are delicious are that the one who makes
the claim must enjoy eating rhubarbs. As I said, it is a clear description of what is involved
in disputes of inclination, but where is relative truth?

Remember Wright’s remark about enlarging one’s state of information by adding to it that
others may differ in non-cognitive responses. He assumed that datum not to be a defeater
of superassertability. My question to Wright is how it can be part of the conceptual content
of deliciousness (in terms of understood assertability conditions) that anyone who claims
something to be delicious must enjoy eating it, and not be the case that that information is
relevant for evaluating the disputant’s claim with regard to truth or correctness. If it is thus
relevant, why not consider it part of truth-conditional meaning? To repeat, if it is thus
relevant then the information is already, as it were, conceptually included in what they
know. The information about cognitive responses differing already is included it seems.

Isn’t the best way to account for Tim’s and Crispin’s, ex hypothesi, conceptually
guaranteed knowledge about each other’s like and dislike of rhubarbs, to place the
cognitive responses at the level of content, within truth conditions?

This objection is based on loose considerations about content relations between concepts
and contents, here spelled out in terms of assertability conditions known by competent
speakers. That means Wright could bite the bullet and define content in a way that evades
this objection. The question is how that should be done. That was my main concern already
in the previous section, which concluded that we have no clear model to evaluate. I take it
that Wright wants to give us exactly that model, but it seems that his proposal doesn’t take
us all the way.
In conclusion, both Köbel and Wright have suggested very interesting alternatives to indexical relativism, worth further exploration, but both proposals still have problems to overcome concerning how to define content in a way that meets the demands generated specifically by faultless disagreement, and by rational reasoning in general.

7. References

iii Wright, C., 2004 Realism, Relativism and Rhubarb, talk at the conference Truth and Realism, June 17-20 2004, St. Andrews, Scotland, (UK), held at Lower College Hall, 19 June 2004, at 4.30 p.m.
Manuscript, distributed at, VI Summer School in Analytic Philosophy on Realism, June 25 - July 2 Venice, Italy.
5 Köbel, M., 2004:1, Wright on Disputes of Inclination, current research online, Köbel’s homepage.