

# Evaluative predicates and the attitude of "*finden*"

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## Empirical judgments

- (1) Anne: Bielefeld is in North Rhine-Westphalia.  
Berta: No, it isn't. It is in Lower Saxony.

either Anne or Berta must be wrong → **genuine disagreement**

For empirical judgments, there is (in principle) an empirical method to decide whether they are true or false

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## Judgments of taste

- (2) Anne: This painting is beautiful.  
Berta: No, it isn't. It is ugly..

Intuition (main stream)

- (i) Berta's claim is the negation of Sue's claim  
(ii) Anne and Berta may both be right → "**faultless disagreement**"

Relativist semantics (Kölbel 2004, Lasersohn 2005, 2009, Stephenson 2007):

Truth is not dependent on what the world is like, but instead on a **judge**

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## Judgments of taste (2)

- (2) Anne: This painting is beautiful.  
Berta: No, it isn't. It is ugly..

Counter argument (e.g. Stojanovic 2007)

Disagreement is **never faultless**

Faultless disagreement would require a **bird's eye point of view**, neither available for Anne nor Berta.  
For Anne and Berta their disagreement in (2) is genuine.

"Faultless disagreement" embedded under German *finden* ('find', 'consider')

- (3) Anne: Ich finde dieses Bild schön.  
'I find this painting beautiful.'  
Berta: Ich nicht.  
'I don't.'

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## Hypotheses

1. Faultless disagreement is a delusion evoked by
  - the implicit switch to a bird's eye perspective
  - the conflation of two dimensions of judgments:
    - (i) empirical vs. evaluative sentences
    - (ii) universal vs. private statement
2. German *finden* ('find' / 'consider') shifts universal statements to private ones
3. In discourse, private statements constitute public commitments which are not meant to enter the common ground

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## The plan

- Four positions on 'faultless disagreement': Lasersohn (2005, 2009), Stephenson (2007), Stojanovic (2007), Nouwen (2007)
- Fifth position: Kant (1790) on aesthetic judgments
- The delusion of "faultless disagreement"
- The *finden* attitude
- Discourse pragmatic analysis

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## Lasersohn (2005, 2009)

Can faultless disagreement be explained by **implicit arguments** referring to the speaker?

- (4) Anne: Licorice is tasty [to me].  
Berta: #No, it isn't tasty [to me].

No, with implicit arguments the contents would be different – no denial.

- the truth of taste propositions is relative to a **judge** (in addition to the world)
  - possible that  $[[\text{tasty}(\text{the-licorice})]]^c(w)(j) = \text{true}$
  - while  $[[\text{tasty}(\text{the-licorice})]]^c(w)(k) = \text{false}$
- perspectives:
  - autocentric** (the one who assesses the sentence) (default)
  - exocentric** (some other individual)
  - acentric** (bird's eye view -- no judge / no truth value.)

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## Stephenson (2007)

- agrees with the faultless disagreement intuition
- makes use of Relativist Semantics to interpret epistemic modals (*It might be raining.*)
- extends / modifies Lasersohn's framework

$[[\text{tasty}]]$ (licorice, <b>PRO</b> <sub>j</sub> )	judge-dependent
$[[\text{tasty}]]$ (licorice, <b>pro</b> )	silent pronoun
$[[\text{tasty}]]$ (licorice, $[[\text{to John}]]$ )	explicit experiencer
- (5) Anne: How's that new brand of cat food you bought?  
Berta: I think it's tasty, because the cat has eaten a lot of it.
  - distinguish between the agent of *think* (=judge) and the experiencer of the cat food:  
Sue (**PRO**) thinks the cat food is tasty **pro-cat**

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## Stephenson (2007) (cont.)

### Embedding of the judge parameter in a **theory of conversation**

- common ground: a set of world-time-**judge** triples
- for all triples in the common ground, the judge element represents **the group of participants** in the conversation
  - the notion of the judge is neutralized for propositions in the CG
- "**norm of assertion**"
  - in order to assert S, A has to believe that S is true as judged by herself
  - A may try to convince the group of conversational participants
- if A's assertion is **accepted** by the other speakers and added to the common ground, it has the same effect as adding the proposition that S is true as **judged by the group of conversational participants**.

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## Stojanovic (2007)

- Disagreement is never faultless
    - either the two parties genuinely disagree
    - or the two parties are both right, but their apparent disagreement boils down to a misunderstanding.
- (6) a. Anne: **Licorice is tasty.**  
b. Berta: **No, it isn't. It tastes terrible.**  
c. Anne: **It is tasty. And it's not just that I find it tasty; it's tasty *tout court*.**  
c'. Anne: **OK. To my taste, Licorice is tasty; that's all I'm saying.**
- No difference in truth value between a contextualist and a relativist account.
  - If there were faultless disagreement, relativism would fail to account for it. Speakers of English are semantically competent with predicates of taste. If they were judge-dependent, we would be aware of that, and thus not have the intuition of disagreement.

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## Nouwen (2007)

- **Impersonal** approach to taste -- not making use of relative truth or indexicality.
  - Relativistic analyses suffer from over- or undergeneration with respect to judge dependency,
- (7) Anne: **How's that new brand of cat food you bought?**  
Berta: **I think it's tasty, because the cat has eaten a lot of it.**  
→ No way to block Stephenson's PRO such that it cannot be filled by the cat
- Berta': **#I find it tasty, because the cat has eaten a lot of it.**  
→ **find** obligatorily shifts the judge to its subject (whereas **think** is ambiguous)

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## Nouwen (2007) (cont.)

### Taste **predicates are vague**

→ ignorance (Williamson 1996).

→ there is no method of finding out what is in the extension of **tasty**

### Two options:

- "Either we do not say anything, because we recognise that there is no way to find out the ultimate truth,
- or we boldly assert sentences which are based on whatever (private) evidence is available to us." – "Talking about taste then becomes a game of arrogance."

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## Broaden the range of taste predicates

The discussion in the literature is restricted to *tasty*, and *fun*

More taste predicate      *gut* 'good'  
                                  *schön* 'beautiful'  
                                  *wunderbar* 'wonderful'  
                                  *wichtig* 'important'      etc.

Lasersohn (2005)

"... predicates like *good* and *beautiful* would immediately raise fundamental issues for ethics and aesthetics"

"If one is studying semantics for its own intrinsic interest, it seems best to set such programs aside."

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## Kant (1790)

Kant (1790) Kritik der Urteilkraft (see also Zangwill 2007, SEP)

→ A judgment of taste claims **universal validity**

empirical judgments		
judgments of taste ("das Schöne" -- beauty)	subjective (evaluative)	universal
judgments of agreeableness ("das Angenehme -- niceness")		private

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## Kant: judgments of agreeableness (D)

In Ansehung des *Angenehmen* bescheidet sich ein jeder: daß sein Urteil, welches er auf ein Privatgefühl gründet, und wodurch er von einem Gegenstande sagt, daß er ihm gefalle, sich auch bloß auf seine Person einschränke. Daher ist er es gern zufrieden, daß, wenn er sagt: der Kanariensekt ist angenehm, ihm ein anderer den Ausdruck verbessere und ihn erinnere, er solle sagen: er ist *mir* angenehm; [...]

implicit experiencer argument:  
"The canary wine tastes nice [to me]"

Darüber in der Absicht zu streiten und das Urteil anderer, welches von dem unsrigen verschieden ist, gleich als ob es diesem logisch entgegengesetzt wäre, für unrichtig zu schelten, wäre Torheit;

no disagreement

in Ansehung des Angenehmen gilt also der Grundsatz: **ein jeder hat seinen eigenen Geschmack.**

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## Kant: judgments of agreeableness (E)

As regards the agreeable, every one concedes that his judgement, which he bases on a private feeling, and in which he declares that an object pleases him, is restricted merely to himself personally. Thus he does not take it amiss if, when he says that Canary-wine is agreeable, another corrects the expression and reminds him that he ought to say: "It is agreeable to *me*." [...]

implicit experiencer argument:  
"The canary wine tastes nice [to me]"

To quarrel over such points with the idea of condemning another's judgement as incorrect when it differs from our own, as if the opposition between the two judgements were logical, would be folly.

no disagreement

With the agreeable, therefore, the axiom holds good: **Every one has his own taste .**

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## Kant: judgments of taste (D)

Mit dem Schönen ist es ganz anders bewandt. Es wäre [...] lächerlich, wenn jemand, der sich auf seinen Geschmack etwas einbildete, sich damit zu rechtfertigen gedächte: dieser Gegenstand (das Gebäude, was wir sehen, das Kleid, was jener trägt, das Konzert, was wir hören, das Gedicht, welches zur Beurteilung aufgestellt ist) ist *für mich* schön.

no experiencer argument for *schön*  
*\*Dieses Bild ist schön für mich.\**

[...] Reiz und Annehmlichkeit mag für ihn vieles haben, darum bekümmert sich niemand; wenn er aber etwas für schön ausgibt, so mutet er andern eben dasselbe Wohlgefallen zu: er urteilt nicht bloß für sich, sondern für jedermann, und spricht alsdann von der Schönheit, als wäre sie eine Eigenschaft der Dinge.

genuine disagreement

Er [...] *fordert* [Einstimmung in sein Urteil] von [anderen]. Er tadelt sie, wenn sie anders urteilen, und spricht ihnen den Geschmack ab [...] und sofern kann man nicht sagen: ein jeder hat seinen besondern Geschmack.

universal claim -- normative

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## Kant: judgments of taste (E)

The beautiful stands on quite a different footing. It would, on the contrary, be ridiculous if any one who plumed himself on his taste were to think of justifying himself by saying: "This object (the building we see, the dress that person has on, the concert we hear, the poem submitted to our criticism) is beautiful for me."

no experiencer argument for *schön*  
*\*Dieses Bild ist schön für mich.\**

[...] Many things may for him possess charm and agreeableness-no one cares about that; but when he puts a thing on a pedestal and calls it beautiful, he demands the same delight from others. He judges not merely for himself, but for all men, and then speaks of beauty as if it were a property of things.

genuine disagreement

[...] he demands this agreement [in his judgement] of them. He blames them if they judge differently, and denies them taste, [...] and to this extent it is not open to men to say: "Every one has his own taste."

universal claim -- normative

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## Kant's three types of judgements

### (i) empirical judgments

### (ii) judgments of agreeableness

(i) subjective (non-empirical) relating to niceness – "das Angenehme"

(ii) private (non-universal)

no disagreement possible

implicit/explicit experiencer

*'The canary wine tastes nice [to me]'*

### (iii) judgments of taste

(i) subjective (non-empirical) relating to beauty – "das Schöne"

(ii) **universal** (→ normative)

license genuine disagreement

no experiencer argument

*'This painting is beautiful. [\*to me]'*

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## Making use of Kant's insight

Kant's distinction between private and universal subjective judgments is a precise account of what happens in natural language

- subjective (evaluative / non-empirical) sentences
  - (i) with (implicit / explicit) experiencer argument → private claim
  - (ii) without experiencer argument → universal claim
- universal statements:
  - proposed to be accepted as part of the common ground
  - (reflects normativity since there is no method to check)

Anna: *Das Bild ist schön.*

*'This painting is beautiful.'*

Berta: *Nein, es ist nicht schön.*

*'No, it is not.'*

→ their disagreement is genuine – there is no faultless disagreement

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## Implicit / explicit experiencer arguments

Judgments of agreeableness vs. judgments of taste  
– is there a correlation to lexical items?

Unlike Kant's suggestion, it will be assumed that even sensory taste may give rise to genuine disagreement.

- (8) a. *Lakritze schmeckt gut.*                    subjective + universal  
b. *Lakritze schmeckt [mir] gut.*            subjective + private  
→ for predicates licensing experiencer arguments:  
ambiguity
- c. *Lakritze schmeckt mir gut.*            subjective + private  
d. *Lakritze schmeckt Fritz gut.*            empirical + universal

No ambiguity for predicates excluding experiencer arguments?  
No – they can be embedded under *finden*.

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## The mistaken intuition of "faultless disagreement"

Two explanations for the intuition of "faultless disagreement"

- (a) implicit switch to a bird's eye perspective  
Laserson (2009) "It is perhaps worth noting that it is only when we adopt an acentric stance that faultless disagreement really seems faultless."
- (b) universal subjective judgments can always be shifted to private subjective judgment by embedding under "*finden*" (Stojanovic: 'misunderstanding')

Anna: *Ich finde das Bild schön.*  
'I find the painting beautiful.'

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## The *finden* attitude (1)

cf. also Nouwen (2007), Saebo (2009)

### (i) agent of *finden* is identical to the implicit experiencer argument

- (9) a. *Ich finde, Lakritze schmeckt gut.*  
b. *Lakritze schmeckt mir gut.*  
'I find licorice tasty. / Licorice is tasty to me.'

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## The *finden* attitude (2)

### (ii) sentences embedded under *finden* must be universal

- (10) a. *\*Ich finde, Lakritze schmeckt mir gut.*  
'I find licorice tasty for me.'

### (iii) sentences embedded under *finden* must be subjective (non-empirical)

- (11) a. *Ich finde, Lakritze schmeckt gut.*  
'I find licorice tasty.'  
b. *\*Ich finde, der Tisch hat drei Beine.*  
'I find the table has three legs.'  
c. *\*Ich finde, Lakritze schmeckt Sue gut.*  
'I find the licorice tasty to Sue.'

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### The *finden* attitude (3)

#### (iv) First person *finden* attitude cannot be denied

(12) Anne: Ich finde, Lakritze schmeckt gut.  
'I find licorice tasty.'

Berta: # Nein, tust du nicht.  
'No, you don't.'

(13) Anne: Cecile findet, Lakritze schmeckt gut.  
'I find licorice tasty.'

Berta: Nein, tut sie nicht.  
'No, she doesn't.'

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### The *finden* attitude (4)

#### (v) First person *finden* sentences do not allow for disagreement

(14) Anne: Ich finde, Lakritze schmeckt gut.  
'I find licorice tasty.'

Berta: # Nein, das stimmt nicht. # Du irrst dich.  
'No, that's wrong.' / 'You are wrong.'

Berta': Ich finde Lakitze schmeckt eklig.  
'I find licorice disgusting.'

→ The *finden* attitude turns a universal subjective judgment into a private subjective judgment

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### The *finden* attitude (5)

#### (vi) *finden* but not *glauben* requires personal experience.

(15) a. Ich finde, Lakritze schmeckt gut.  
b. Ich glaube, Lakritze schmeckt gut.  
'I find / believe licorice is tasty.'

(16) a. Ich finde, das Bild ist schön.  
b. Ich glaube, das Bild ist schön..  
'I find / believe the painting is beautiful.'

(17) a. Ich finde, das Katzenfutter ist lecker.  
b. Ich glaube, das Katzenfutter ist lecker.  
'I find / believe the cat food is tasty.'

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### Two dimensions of judgments

	empirical sentence	evaluative (subjective) sentence
universal statement	<i>Dieser Tisch hat drei Beine.</i> <i>This table has three legs.</i>	<i>Dieses Bild ist schön.</i> <i>This painting is beautiful.</i>
	<i>Lakritze schmeckt Fritz gut.</i> <i>Licorice is tasty to Fritz.</i>	<i>Lakritze schmeckt gut.</i> <i>Licorice is tasty .</i>
	<i>Fritz findet Lakritze schmeckt gut.</i> <i>Fritz finds Licorice tasty.</i>	
private statement		<i>Lakritze schmeckt mir / [mir] gut.</i> <i>Licorice is tasty to me / [to me].</i>  <i>Ich finde Lakritze schmeckt gut.</i> <i>I find Licorice tasty.</i>

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## Two dimensions of judgments

	empirical sentence	evaluative (subjective) sentence
<b>universal statement</b>	<p><i>Dieser Tisch hat drei Beine. This table has three legs.</i></p> <p><i>Lakritze schmeckt Fritz gut. Licorice is tasty to Fritz.</i></p> <p><i>Fritz findet Lakritze schmeckt gut. Fritz finds Licorice tasty.</i></p>	<p><i>Dieses Bild ist schön. This painting is beautiful.</i></p> <p><i>Lakritze schmeckt gut. Licorice is tasty .</i></p>
<b>private statement</b>		<p><i>Lakritze schmeckt mir / [mir] gut. Licorice is tasty to me / [to me].</i></p> <p><i>Ich finde Lakritze schmeckt gut. I find Licorice tasty.</i></p>

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## Two dimensions of judgments

	empirical sentence	evaluative (subjective) sentence
<b>universal statement</b>	<p><i>Dieser Tisch hat drei Beine. This table has three legs.</i></p> <p><i>Lakritze schmeckt Fritz gut. Licorice is tasty to Fritz.</i></p> <p><i>Fritz findet Lakritze schmeckt gut. Fritz finds Licorice tasty.</i></p>	<p><i>Dieses Bild ist schön. This painting is beautiful.</i></p> <p><i>Lakritze schmeckt gut. Licorice is tasty .</i></p>
<b>private statement</b>		<p><i>Lakritze schmeckt mir / [mir] gut. Licorice is tasty to me / [to me].</i></p> <p><i>Ich finde Lakritze schmeckt gut. I find Licorice tasty.</i></p>

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## Private subjective judgments in discourse (1)

- (18) Anne: **Ich finde, Lakritze schmeckt gut.**  
'I find licorice tasty.'
- Anne': **Lakritze schmeckt mir gut.**  
'Licorice is tasty to me.'
- Berta: **# Nein, das stimmt nicht.**  
'No, that's wrong.'
- Berta": **# Ja, das stimmt .**  
'Yes, that's true.'

→ Private subjective judgments neither license **disagreement** nor **agreement**.

→ Private subjective judgments are **not meant to enter the common ground**

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## Private subjective judgments in discourse (2)

- (19) Anne: **Ich finde, Lakritze schmeckt gut.**  
'I find licorice tasty.'
- Berta: **Ich nicht.** coherent  
'I don't.'
- (20) Anne: **Lakritze schmeckt gut.**  
'Licorice is tasty.'
- Berta: **Nein, das stimmt nicht.** rejection  
'No, that's wrong.'
- Anne: **Na ja, ICH finde, Lakritze schmeckt gut.** "retreat to privacy"  
'Well, licorice is tasty to ME.'

→ a notion of common ground providing for **individual commitments**

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## Farkas & Bruce (2010)

A discourse structure K contains

- a set of propositions CG which have been confirmed by all participants in the conversation – "common ground"
- a set of propositions  $DC_X$  for each participant X made up of those propositions that X has publicly committed to and are not part of the common ground.

$DC_A$	CG	$DC_B$
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- discourse participants may **agree to disagree**:

A: p →  $p \in DC_A$   
B: not p →  $\neg p \in DC_B$

A: Let's not pursue this further  
B: o.k.

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## Private subjective judgments in discourse (3)

- An individual discourse commitment of a discourse participant X is a set of propositions  $DC_X$  – propositions X has publicly committed to which are not part of the common ground.

$DC_A$	CG	$DC_B$
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- universal judgments (empirical as well as subjective) are assertions, which have to be confirmed to enter the common ground
- private subjective judgments are individual discourse commitments embedding under *finden*: another way to agree to disagree:

Problem: private judgments are not beliefs

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## Conclusion

- Subjective sentences may constitute universal judgments  
private judgments
- Universal judgments
  - are meant to be shared / enter the common ground
  - may give rise to genuine disagreement
- Private judgments
  - are not meant to be shared
  - disagreement is harmless
- There is no "faultless disagreement"
  - there is no need for judges in semantics
- Distinguishing universal and private judgments requires a discourse model separating the participants' discourse commitments from the cg

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