Disagreement as Interpersonal Incoherence
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0. Introduction

In one sense of 'disagreement', you and I disagree if and only if one of us believes some proposition, and the other believes another proposition that is inconsistent with the first. Call that disagreement in the narrow sense. While disagreement in the narrow sense is doubtless an important phenomenon, there are a number of types of case that might be described as 'disagreements' in a somewhat wider sense, and that don't immediately seem to fit the narrow definition. Here are some of them.

1. There are *practical disagreements* about what to do, such as when I propose that we go to the movies and you propose that we go to the park.

2. There are *disagreements in attitude*, such as when I love shoegaze music and you hate it, or when you hope that Australia win the cricket match and I hope they don't, or when you approve of Jeremy's new girlfriend and I don't.

3. There are *belief-suspension disagreements* (i.e. cases where you believe something and I suspend judgment about it), such as when you're a theist and I'm an agnostic about the existence of God.

4. There are *disagreements in credence*, such as when you have credence 0.9 that it will rain, and I have credence 0.6 that it will rain.[1]

5. There are cases of *metalinguistic negotiation*, where although we might seem to be expressing inconsistent propositions, what we're in fact doing is negotiating how to use a term, or how to fix the content of a context-sensitive term.[2] For example, suppose that you and I both know that the basketball player Dwayne Wade is 6'4". And suppose that I claim that he is tall and you reply that he isn't. Plausibly, we are not disagreeing over whether Dwayne Wade is tall *given* some fixed, agreed-on precisification of the semantic value of the predicate 'tall'; consequently, there's no

[1] After writing this paper, I discovered that MacFarlane (2014: 122) uses (almost) the same examples for both cases #3 and #4. I suppose they are natural stock examples.
[2] See e.g. Plunkett & Sundell (2013); Stroud (ms.-a).

determinate proposition about which we have inconsistent beliefs. Still, we seem to be disagreeing in a sense. That is captured by the suggestion that we're negotiating over how to use 'tall': I'm effectively proposing that we use 'tall' that include those who are 6'4", whereas you are proposing that (at least in our present, basketball-oriented context) we use it to exclude those who are 6'4". The same kind of thing, plausibly, is going on when Brits engage in interminable disputes about whether cities like Leicester are in "the North" or not, or when New Yorkers discuss whether Albany is "upstate" New York.

These cases seem to involve disagreement in at least an intelligible sense of the term; moreover, as I'll argue shortly, we'll want to include them as cases of disagreement for various philosophical purposes. So let's say, provisionally, that these are instances of disagreement in the wide sense, where disagreement in the wide sense includes (at least) both the instances of disagreement in the narrow sense (i.e. of believing inconsistent propositions), and the further cases above.

But what is disagreement in the wide sense? That is: what makes it the case that, in the above cases, we are disagreeing (in a wide sense)? Clearly, it can't merely be that our attitudes *differ* in some way. Consider the "reaction" buttons on Facebook. When someone posts some piece of disastrous news about the latest political malevolence, some people click "sad" and some people click "angry". But I take it there's *no* good sense in which this constitutes a disagreement. So, in looking for a characterization of disagreement in the wide sense, we're looking for a notion that is wider than inconsistency but narrower than difference. My project in this paper is to offer such a unified characterization of disagreement in the wide sense.

1. Can we do without disagreement in the wide sense?

Above, I offered five different putative types of example of disagreement that are not, on their surface, captured by the narrow sense. But one might worry that I have been too quick to rule out the possibility that disagreement in the narrow sense is the only kind of genuine disagreement.[3] The most promising strategy for defending this view, I think, is as follows: argue that, for every putative case of disagreement in the wide sense, the case *either* (a) fails to constitute a genuine case of disagreement at all *or* (b) actually *does* involve disagreement in the narrow sense after all. To assess the plausibility of this strategy, we need to take this five kinds of case one by one. For the strategy to work, it has to handle all five kinds.

Let us begin with practical disagreement. It is *extremely* natural and common to describe the kind of case I mentioned above – where I propose that we go to the movies and you propose that we go to the park – as disagreements, so I do not think that such cases can plausibly be dismissed as non-disagreements. What about the proposal that they involve inconsistent beliefs? The most obvious way to develop this proposal would say that I believe we *ought* to go to the movies (and not the park), whereas you believe that we ought to go to the park (and not the movies). But it does not seem that we *need* have any such beliefs. I may know that you prefer to go to the movies, and I may not think

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[3] I'm not aware of anyone who explicitly defends this view in the existing literature, though I often encounter it in ordinary conversation. Like me, Sundell (2011: 269ff.) and Stroud (ms.-b) take this view seriously, but ultimately reject it.

there's any special reason to give weight to my preference over yours. In such a case, I do not believe that we *ought* to go to the movies; still, I prefer to do so, and might (hoping to satisfy my preference) propose that we do so. And the same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to you. Thus, it seems that we might have a practical disagreement *without* having any disagreement in belief about what we *ought* to do.

The metalinguistic negotiation case is similar to, or perhaps even an instance of, the practical disagreement case. What seems to be going on in the metalinguistic negotiation case is that we are each proposing that we use a particular conversational standard for 'tall'. Again, one could try to cash this out in terms of my believing that we *ought* to use a lower standard for 'tall' and your believing that we ought to use a higher standard for 'tall'. But again, it's not clear this need be so. I may deny that there's any fact of the matter about what standard for 'tall' we objectively *should* use – I'm just engaged in trying to *change* the standard we're using.

What about disagreements in attitude? Here, I think, it is admittedly slightly less clear, from ordinary usage, that the cases would always be described as 'disagreements'.[4] However, I think that in such cases, there is at least a *sense*, worth marking, in which the parties disagree. One way to bring this out is to consider the dialectic between non-cognitivist or expressivist views on one hand, and simple subjectivist or speaker relativist views on the other, in metaethics. A traditional objection to simple kinds of subjectivism and speaker relativism – on which, crudely, 'X is wrong' as uttered by a speaker S means 'according to S's standards, X is wrong' – is that they render apparent moral disagreements illusory. For if S1's utterance 'X is wrong' means 'according to S1's standards, X is wrong' and S2's utterance 'X is right' means 'according to S2's standards, X is right', the two utterances do not express anything inconsistent.[5] Since Stevenson (1944), it's been suggested that non-cognitivism has an advantage over these views, since it understands S1 and S2's utterances as expressing *attitudes* – roughly speaking, a con-attitude toward X and a pro-attitude toward X, respectively – that, while not inconsistent beliefs, can still be understood as disagreeing with one another in a meaningful sense.[6]

Now, although I am not a non-cognitivist, I think we should concede at least the following to Stevenson: the non-cognitivist proposal does locate a *sense* in which the speakers disagree, in a way that the simple subjectivist proposal (on its own and without further development[7]) does not. The pair of attitudes {believing that by S1's standards X is wrong, believing that by S2's standards, X is right}, in and of themselves, disagree in *no* good sense. But the pair of attitudes {pro: X; con: X} don't fail to disagree completely and utterly in the same way. That suggests that there is at least a *sense* in

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[4] Stroud (ms.-b) accepts that practical disagreement (including metalinguistic negotiation, cf. Stroud ms.-a) is a genuine kind of disagreement, but denies that disagreement in attitude is.

[5] Cf. Moore (1922).

[6] Interestingly, Ayer (1936: 113-4) had assumed that noncognitivism *was* subject to the same objection as subjectivism, and bit the bullet, arguing that the cases of apparent disagreement were, indeed, merely apparent. In so doing, he seems to be taking for granted that the only meaningful kind of disagreement is disagreement in the narrow sense.

[7] Recent contextualist theories, descended from speaker relativism, have attempted to make *further* moves to capture moral disagreement. These proposals center on suggesting that moral utterances do more than *just* communicate their literal, semantic meaning; they typically *mimic* the non-cognitivist's strategy in proposing that they disagreement is *not* disagreement in the narrow sense (rather, it is either the non-cognitivist's own disagreement in attitude (Finlay 2014: ch. 8, 2017), or a kind of metalinguistic negotiation (Plunkett & Sundell 2013; Silk 2017; Khoo & Knobe 2018; Bolinger ms.). Whether such proposals succeed is beside the point here, which is just that the non-cognitivist has located a *kind* of disagreement that is not disagreement in the narrow sense. This point is not diminished if the speaker relativist/contextualist can ultimately do this too. See §5 below for further discussion.

which they do disagree, which suggests that disagreement in attitude is a disagreement in at least some sense worth capturing.[8]

Could disagreements in attitude be understood as disagreements in the narrow sense, then? It might be proposed that when I love shoegaze music and you hate it, it follows that I believe that shoegaze music is good and that you believe that shoegaze music is bad. But again, this doesn't, in fact, seem guaranteed. Maybe you acknowledge that you hate shoegaze music primarily because you associate it with your annoying college suitemate who played Slowdive albums loudly in the room next door while making out with his girlfriend. If so, you might not believe that shoegaze music is bad, as such. Similarly, I find jazz music boring, but I'm aware the defect is my own: I haven't spent the necessary time getting accustomed to jazz music to be able to appreciate and enjoy it. The strategy is still harder to execute for other attitudes like hope. When I hope that Australia lose the cricket match, need I *believe* that it would be good for Australia to lose? Not really: I acknowledge that my hope that they lose is the product of my contingently-produced allegiance to English cricket, and that there's nothing impartially better about a world in which Australia lose than one in which they win. Of course, I might believe that it's good *for me* if Australia lose (and England win), but that belief won't be inconsistent with your belief that it's good *for you* if Australia win. And so again, it's doubtful whether we need have inconsistent beliefs when our attitudes disagree.

What about belief-suspension disagreements? While it isn't *fully* clear to me whether such cases would be described as 'disagreements' in ordinary speech, it does seem to me that for theoretical purposes in philosophy, such cases need to be classified as disagreements. In particular, consider the peer disagreement debate in epistemology. Many philosophers think that when I believe *p* and you believe *not-p* (and we have similar evidence and cognitive abilities), this puts at least some pressure on me to abandon my belief in *p*. If that is so, then it seems that in the same way, when I believe *p* and you suspend judgment on *p*, this puts at least some pressure on me to abandon my belief in *p*. The pressure may be of a lesser degree than in the case of inconsistent beliefs, but it isn't fundamentally different in kind, and it is generated by just the same sorts of considerations. Likewise, those who *deny* that disagreement creates epistemic pressure will think that the point generalizes for both disagreements in the narrow sense and belief-suspension disagreements. So it seems that the notion of 'disagreement' that we need for the peer disagreement debates needs to cover belief-suspension disagreements.

Could belief-suspension disagreements be understood as involving disagreement in the narrow-sense? The best proposal is that in such cases, we disagree about what the evidence supports. So, when you believe in God, you might believe that the evidence (uniquely) supports believing in God, and when I suspend judgment on the existence of God, I might believe that the evidence (uniquely) supports suspending judgment. But once again, this doesn't seem to be *necessary*. Perhaps we are both permissivists, who think that *either* belief *or* suspension is adequately supported by the evidence. (This view may not be right, but we might hold it.) Even more clearly, we may not share the same evidence: in that case, your belief that *your* evidence (uniquely) supports belief, and my belief that *my* evidence (uniquely) supports suspending judgment will not be inconsistent. So again, it seems that we need not have any inconsistent beliefs.

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[8] See also Sundell (2011: 271-2) on how it can be natural to hear differing reports of what we *like* as disagreements.

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This leaves only the case of disagreement in credence. As with belief-suspension disagreements, disagreements in credence need to be classified as disagreements for the purposes of the peer disagreement debate in epistemology: when our credences for some proposition differ, this puts epistemic pressure on us to revise our credences, even when these credences fall short of outright belief in *p* and *not-p* respectively.

Could such cases be understood as involving disagreement in the narrow sense? Following the same kind of line that we pursued with disagreements between belief and suspension, someone might suggest that when you have credence 0.9 that it will rain and I have credence 0.6 that it will rain, I believe that the evidential probability that it will rain is 0.9, and you believe that the evidential probability that it will rain is 0.6.[9] Such a proposal suffers from the same problems as the proposal about belief-suspension disagreement above. Moreover, it suffers from an additional problem that casts doubt on whether disagreements in credence even *typically* (let alone always) involve inconsistent beliefs. The problem of this: most of the time, when I have credence 0.6 in p, I am not very confident at all that the evidential probability of p is exactly 0.6. Rather, when I have credence 0.6 in p, 0.6 is more like my *best guess* or *estimate* of the evidential probability of p. But this doesn't amount to *believing* that the evidential probability of p is 0.6 – just as, when my *best guess* or *estimate* of the number of jelly beans in a jar is 740, this doesn't amount to *believing* that the number of jellybeans in the jar is 740.

I conclude that each of the kinds of disagreement I've mentioned involves disagreement in a good sense, and that none of them can be fully reduced to disagreement in the narrow sense. When I say that they involve disagreement *in a good sense*, I am not excluding the possibility that one *can* use the word 'disagreement' more narrowly, so as to exclude these cases; rather, I am just saying that the term can *also* be used more widely, so as to include them. That is why I have talked of disagreement *in the narrow sense* and *in the wide sense*. Moreover, I have tried to illustrate, throughout this section, how the wide sense of disagreement is philosophically important – in particular, in discussions of disagreement in metaethics and in the epistemology of peer disagreement. For the purposes of such debates, I have contended, we need to recognize the sense in which there can be disagreement without there being disagreement *in the narrow sense*.

The question we now face is whether the various instances of disagreement in the wide sense (where that, we should note, *includes* disagreements in the narrow sense) have anything in common. In other words: is disagreement in the wide sense just a disjunction of many disjoint kinds of disagreement, or is there something that makes these different kinds of disagreement a unified kind? If we can answer in favor of the latter view, that should help to allay any remaining skepticism about whether all disagreement in the wide sense is *bona fide* disagreement – by showing that all such cases

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[9] Holton (2014) suggests that our ordinary talk about chances should be understood as reporting beliefs about probabilities of this sort, rather than *sui generis* credences. His idea, as I read him, is not exactly that credences can be reduced to beliefs about probabilities, but more that credences can be eliminated as a state of mind, with beliefs about probabilities doing at least some of the work they were supposed to do. But the problems I'm about to raise are a problem for his view too, at least to some extent.

Harman (1986: 22-3) also suggests a view of that form, but he does not suggest that credences are or can be replaced by beliefs about probabilities. Instead, his idea is that degree of belief in p can be understood in terms of how easy it would be to stop believing p. That wouldn't help the narrow view of disagreement in the present context, since it wouldn't amount to our having inconsistent beliefs when we have different credences.

have something in common, and by showing that they can be systematized and unified under a single coherent notion of disagreement that plays an important philosophical role.

The methodology here is one of reflective equilibrium. One desideratum is to find an account that at least broadly matches our pre-theoretical intuitions about which cases count as disagreements. Another desideratum is to find an account that picks out a notion that is well-unified and philosophically important. These two desiderata need to be balanced against each other. A good account of disagreement may sacrifice *some* of our pre-theoretical intuitions – especially our less central or less clear intuitions – for the sake of simplicity, unification or theoretical usefulness; in doing so, we essentially make (small) *revisions* to our rough, pre-theoretical concept of disagreement. But these revisions should not be so large as to make our account unrecognizable *as an account of the phenomenon we were originally interested in*. In a nutshell, we are looking for a unified and coherent notion of disagreement *in the neighborhood* of our ordinary concept.

With that, I'll assume in what follows that all the cases I've mentioned *are* well-characterized as cases of disagreement. I've tried to directly justify that assumption with reference to each particular case in this section. But if you aren't yet convinced, I invite you to revisit this issue in light of the positive account that I'll defend in the remainder of the paper. The positive account, I contend, does well in capturing the clearest and moral central cases of disagreement, while also showing that *all* the cases I've discussed form a single, unified kind with those clear and central cases. This, I think, provides *additional* reason to count all such cases as bona fide disagreements. This is exactly what we should want a theoretical account to do: to *resolve* whether to count marginal cases, about which intuitions are disputed or unclear, as disagreements or not.

2. The view

In addition to the narrow and wide senses of disagreement, there's another dimension along which there are two senses of 'disagreement': there is our being in (mental) *states* that disagree with one another vs. our engaging in the *activity* of disagreement (where we *express* our disagreement with one another).[10] The account of what it is to disagree in the narrow sense – that this is to believe inconsistent propositions – focuses on disagreement in the first, state-oriented sense. So will my account of what it is to disagree in the wide sense.[11]

Here is my first pass for what it is to disagree in the wide sense:

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[10] Cf. Cappelen & Hawthorne (2009: 60-61).

[11] Some accounts of disagreement that may seem to be competitors with mine are in fact better understood as characterizations of disagreement in the activity-oriented sense. For example, Sundell (2011) characterizes disagreement as "the relation between speakers that licenses linguistic denial". This may sound (at least possibly) state-oriented, since Sundell talks of what *licenses* linguistic denial. But in response to the objection that linguistic denial may be licensed in some cases of "talking past each other" (which are often seen as not *actually* involving disagreement), Sundell replies that even when we talk past each other, we are still disagreeing in a sense, one that could be described by saying "we were disagreeing, but it turned out to be stupid". But I find it hard to hear this sense of 'disagreement' as a reference to the *state* of disagreement. What was stupid was the *activity* of disagreeing, which the people talking past each other *were* indeed engaged in. But what *made* it stupid is that they weren't actually in a *state* of disagreement.

Disagreement in the wide sense – first pass. You and I disagree in the wide sense if and only if we hold attitudes that it would be incoherent for a single individual to hold together.[12]

That is: disagreement is to the *inter*personal case as incoherence is to the *intra*personal case.

Incoherence, as I'm understanding it here, is a normative notion, at least in the following sense: to charge someone with incoherence is to charge them with (a kind of) irrationality.[13] Incoherence is also a property of *sets* of attitudes. Attitudes are incoherent *in combination*: when they don't rationally "fit together" in the right sort of way. Possible examples include having inconsistent beliefs, having credences that violate the probability axioms, failing to intend the means to one's (believed) ends, and having intransitive preferences, among many others. As these examples make clear, incoherence can involve doxastic attitudes such as belief and credence, practical attitudes such as intentions and preferences, or combinations of the two. For my own part, I don't take incoherence to be a primitive, and I've given a (much) fuller account of what it is elsewhere.[14] Still, I do not want to rely on my account of incoherence, and I think the view of disagreement as interpersonal incoherence could be accepted by someone who accepted a non-identical account of incoherence, or who took incoherence to be a primitive. I'll trust your ability to latch on to the concept of incoherence intuitively here.

Annoyingly, there's also a usage of 'incoherence' on which to say that a putative agent is incoherent is to say that it isn't *possible* for there to be an agent of that kind. It would be more precise to say, in these cases, that the *description* of the agent is incoherent, rather than to say that the agent is incoherent. As should be clear, this isn't what I mean when I call an agent incoherent. While some combinations of incoherent states may be downright impossible to have jointly, not all are. (I will discuss whether the converse relation holds – that is, whether all impossible combinations of states are incoherent – in §3.2 below.)

Let's now run through the individual cases and see how the account explains them.

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[12] Gibbard (2003: 24) seems to subscribe to something like this view; Egan (2010: 255) also accepts a *somewhat* similar definition of what he calls "genuine conflict" (though this, unlike state-oriented disagreement, is a property of *assertions*, and his account is adjusted correspondingly; see also Kölbel 2004: 305, who at least implicates that he accepts a view similar to Egan's). Though my account can be seen as building on Gibbard and Egan's views in certain respects, neither of them undertakes the task I'm undertaking here. First, they both give their give the characterizations in passing, on the way to an argument about something else; neither of them is *primarily* focused, for its own sake, on giving an account of what disagreement is, and so none of them considers objections, offers refinements to the view, and so forth. Secondly, neither of these authors explores the capacity of the view to unify all the cases of disagreement I'm focused on here (indeed, since Egan is giving an account of conflicts between (proposition-expressing) assertions, it's hard to see how his account even *could* be an account of all the cases). Thirdly, at least Egan isn't completely clear on whether he is focusing on whether different mental states can be *rationally* held together or on whether it is even *possible* to hold them together at all, moving between these two formulations. (As I clarify below, my talk of coherence picks out the former property, rather than the latter.) Others who discuss (but don't accept) the first pass of the view include MacFarlane (2014), Marques (2014), and Palmira (2017).

[13] By contrast, some epistemologists use 'incoherence' stipulatively to refer to having doxastic states with certain properties (e.g. having credences that violate the probability axioms), where it's supposed to be an open question whether it's irrational to be incoherent. (See e.g. Foley 1992; Caie 2013).

[14] Worsnip 2018.

First, note that the account correctly counts cases of disagreement in the narrow sense as cases of disagreement in the wide sense. When you and I have inconsistent beliefs, we hold attitudes that are incoherent with one another, and so disagree in the wide sense.[15]

Next, practical disagreement. As I presented the case of practical disagreement in the introduction, I did not try to specify the underlying mental states expressed by our differing proposals about what we should do. Since my account of disagreement is one of the *state* of disagreement, and is framed in terms of the incoherence of the disagreeing parties' mental state, I need to do what the mental states involved in practical disagreement are in order to verify that the account captures such disagreement. My suggestion is that when I propose that we go to the movies, I am at least expressing a preference that we go to the movies (as opposed to the park), and similarly for your proposal that we go to the park. But it is incoherent for a single person to {prefer that we go to the movies rather than the park, prefer that we go to the park rather than movies}. So the account gets the right result here. Arguably, we might also have conflicting *intentions* here, too: I might *intend* that we go to the movies, and you might intend that we go to the park. On their own, those intentions aren't jointly incoherent. But it is incoherent to have both of them *plus* the belief that it's not possible for us to both go to the movies and go to the park. In fact, this seems to be the right result. If neither of us believes that it's not possible both to go to the movies and to go to the park, then intuitively we *don't* have a disagreement. The disagreement comes in when at least one of us does have that belief – which is exactly when our attitudes, in combination, become incoherent. Thus, the account predicts the right result.

Note that, when I'm being careful, I'm formulating the relevant preferences and intentions as preferences and intentions about what *we* together will do. When I prefer (or intend) to spend *my* afternoon at the park, and you prefer to spend *your* afternoon at the movies, we do not have any disagreement.[16] Again, this is predicted by the account,[17] since it isn't incoherent for a single person to {prefer that she goes to the movies (rather than the park), prefer that her friend goes to the park (rather than the movies)}. (I'll discuss an objection to this claim in §4 below.)

Turning to the case of disagreement in attitude, it is incoherent to {love shoegaze music, hate shoegaze music}, to {hope that Australia win the cricket game, hope that Australia lose the cricket game}, or to {approve of Jeremy's new girlfriend, disapprove of Jeremy's new girlfriend}. Again, the account gets the right results here.

It might be objected that one could be ambivalent about these questions in a way that would involve having both attitudes without irrationality (and thus, given my usage, without incoherence). For example, someone might have a "love-hate relationship" with shoegaze music. But I think that such a person is not genuinely best-described both as loving shoegaze music *simpliciter*, and hating shoegaze music *simpliciter*. They might love certain features of shoegaze music and hate others, or have

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[15] Or at least, this is so when a *single* belief of mine is inconsistent with a *single* belief of yours. When it is only some very large set of our beliefs that are inconsistent, there may not be an incoherence in the large set, for preface paradox-type reasons (see Worsnip 2016). But it's not obvious there's a disagreement here, either. Notice that I also defined disagreement in the *narrow* sense such that there need to be two beliefs that are inconsistent with each other taken just on their own.
[16] Here I agree with Stroud (ms.-b).
[17] Contra Marques (2014: 127). She may intend the more sophisticated objection, raised by MacFarlane, that I'll discuss in §4.

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a complex attitude toward shoegaze music that involves aspects of love and aspects of hate but doesn't fully satisfy either description. Once those amendments are made, the person is no longer incoherent, but equally, two people with these attitudes (e.g. one who loves the warm guitar sound of shoegaze music and another who hates the mumbly vocals) need not be disagreeing. So the verdicts about single-person incoherence continue to track the verdicts about multi-person disagreement.

Indeed, if one really is convinced that one can love shoegaze music *simpliciter* and hate shoegaze music *simpliciter* without incoherence, then I think one should also conclude that two people who have these two individual attitudes are not necessarily disagreeing – in which case the example is no threat to the account. The account's central claim is that assessments of whether two people disagree should travel with assessments of whether individuals (with both attitudes) are incoherent – it allows for borderline cases of each of these phenomena, but simply says that they should be resolved the same way for both questions.

What about the case of belief and suspended judgment? Were it possible, it would certainly be incoherent to {believe that God exists, suspend judgment about whether God exists}. Plausibly, it is downright impossible.[18] Likewise with disagreement in credence – it is incoherent, perhaps impossible, to {have credence 0.9 that it will rain, have credence 0.6 that it will rain}. I will come back to the relation between incoherence and impossibility in §3.2 below.

That leaves the case of metalinguistic negotiation. I suggested that metalinguistic negotiation involves a kind of practical disagreement: specifically, a practical disagreement about what standards to use for a term. Given the way I cashed out practical disagreement above them, it's at least the case that (in the example given) I prefer that we use a (relatively) relaxed standard for 'tall', and you prefer that we use a (relatively) stringent standard for 'tall' – and perhaps also that we have corresponding intentions. Again, these preferences (or intentions) are jointly incoherent.

As with the movies/park case above, it's important that the object of these preferences or intentions be a *shared* action. If you and I are in *different* conversational contexts – if, say, I'm at a party of people of mostly ordinary heights at which Dwayne Wade is a guest, and you're watching Dwayne Wade play NBA basketball – then intuitively, when I say "Dwayne is tall" and you say "Dwayne is not tall", we aren't disagreeing in *any* sense.[19] My proposal explains this nicely, for in these cases there is

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[18] This is axiomatic if suspension of judgment is just absence of belief either way, but Friedman (2013, 2017) convincingly argues that this is not so, since one might lack any attitude towards a proposition, without even suspending judgment. Interestingly, Friedman (at least tentatively) makes the further claim that it *is*, in fact, possible to both believe p and suspend judgment about whether p (see Friedman 2017: 305). However, one can accept Friedman's point that suspension of judgment is more than *just* absence of belief while also thinking that absence of belief is *necessary* for suspended judgment, and so while rejecting her claim that suspension of judgment in p and belief in p are composable. Indeed, a view quite close to Friedman's positive account would be that to believe p is to have closed inquiry about whether p in favor of an affirmative answer, whereas to suspend judgment about p is to be leaving inquiry about whether p open – and on this analysis it seems quite plausible that belief in p and suspension of judgment about whether p are *not* composable. In any case, I need not rely on any claim either way about whether belief in p and suspension of judgment about whether p are composable. What matters for me is that the combination is incoherent – something, incidentally, that Friedman accepts (*ibid.*).

[19] Lest there be any confusion, let me clarify that I'm not saying that *all* disagreement needs to take place in a shared conversational context. Rather, I'm saying that *specifically metalinguistic* disagreement, which is specifically about *how to use words*, needs to take place in a shared conversational context, or at least to concern how to use words in a shared conversational context. My account explains why this is so: in the case of metalinguistic disagreement specifically, our preferences about how to use words will only be jointly incoherent if they are *about* how to use words *in the same context*. By

no shared conversation about which we can have conflicting preferences or intentions, as to how the word 'tall' is to be used. I simply prefer to use 'tall' in a relaxed way in *my* context, whereas you prefer use 'tall' in a stringent way in *yours*. There's no incoherence. It's when we're in the *same* conversational context[20] – when your insistence that he's not tall communicates a preference or intention that *we together* use 'tall' in a stringent way – that there we get both interpersonal incoherence, and a sense of disagreement.

Last, the account can explain why the differing Facebook reactions *don't* count as incoherent. When I am angry about the last Trump policy or Brexit development, and you are sad about it, it *isn't* the case that our attitudes would be jointly incoherent when held together, for there's nothing incoherent about being angry and sad about the same thing. And so, the account again makes the correct prediction: there's no disagreement here.

3. Refinements

(a) Single-personal incoherence and vacuous disagreement results

Suppose Anders has attitudes that are incoherent – for example, suppose he believes that it's raining and believes that it's not raining. And suppose that Becky has some completely unrelated attitude – say, she hopes that Priya gets an A on her chemistry exam. Since any superset of an incoherent set will itself be incoherent, the set {believing that it's raining, believing that it's not raining, hoping that Priya gets an A on her chemistry exam} is incoherent. Yet Anders and Becky surely do not (necessarily) disagree.

To deal with this, we should tweak the account slightly so that it holds that, for Anders and Becky to disagree, *both* Anders's attitudes and Becky's attitudes have to play a role in generating the incoherence in the set that combines the two; the incoherence has to come about in virtue of *combining* the two. We can capture this as follows:

> **Disagreement in the wide sense – second pass.** You and I disagree in the wide sense if and only if I hold some attitude or attitudes A1, and you hold some attitude or attitudes A2, such that the combination of A1 and A2 in a single individual would produce an incoherence (that was not already present in either A1 or A2 taken individually).[21]

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contrast, the fact that I'm in one conversational context when I say 'I love shoegaze' and you say 'I hate shoegaze' doesn't diminish the incoherence of these attitudes when put together.

[20] On some technical notions of 'context', the fact that you are I use 'tall' with different standards in mind immediately entails that strictly speaking we are in different contexts. This is not the way I'm using the term; I'm using it in a looser sense to refer to conversational situations, such that when we're engaged in conversation with each other, we share a conversational context. On my usage, metalinguistic disagreement is about how to use a term in a context; the other way of using 'context' would have to say that metalinguistic disagreement is instead about "what context to be in" or similar.

[21] There is another case that I consider to be slightly less intuitively clear, namely one in which two people *each* have the same, incoherent attitudes. For example, suppose that both Anders and Becky believe that it's raining and believe that it's not raining. In this case, the present account *does* say that Anders and Becky disagree, since Anders does have *some* attitude A1 – believing that it's raining – that, when combined with *some* attitude of Becky's – believing that it's not raining – generates an incoherence not present in either A1 or A2. But some may think Anders and Becky cannot disagree if their attitudes are identical. I do not think this is totally clear, however. In this kind of case, Anders in a sense disagrees with

Let me also clarify that I intend this to be read such that the combination of A1 and A2, *in and of itself*, would produce an incoherence.[22] It isn't sufficient that adding A1 and A2 to someone's belief set *might* produce an incoherence, *given their other, pre-existing attitudes*. To see this, consider a case where I believe P and you believe (if P then Q). Now, if our beliefs are combined and added to the attitude-set of some third individual who believes ¬q, then we get an incoherence. But it is clear that *you and I* need not be disagreeing. The incoherence must be between A1 and A2 *alone*.[23]

(b) Impossibility vs. incoherence; attitudes vs. absences of attitudes

Above, I claimed that belief-suspension disagreements and disagreements in credence are explained by the incoherence of {believing p, suspending judgment about p} and {having (e.g.) 0.9 credence in p, having (e.g.) 0.6 credence in p}, respectively. But I also noted that these combinations are, plausibly, *impossible* to have.[24] Provided that the impossibility of a combination of states does not *preclude* us from calling it incoherent, this is not a problem for the view I am defending. However, it does raise the question of *which* impossible combinations of states count as incoherent, and why.

The simplest and most initially appealing answer is that *all* impossible combinations of mental states are incoherent (though, as I've already noted, the converse is not true). Impossibility might then be viewed as the "limiting case" of incoherence. However, if 'mental states' is construed very broadly to include *absences* of attitudes, this could spell trouble for the account of disagreement that I am defending here. Though I think that there is a good sense in which someone who believes p and someone who *suspends judgment* about p disagree with each other, I do *not* think it is necessarily true that someone who believes p and someone who merely *lacks* belief in p disagree with each other.[25] For example, someone who believes p doesn't disagree with someone who's never thought about whether p is true. And yet, it is clearly impossible to {believe p, lack belief in p}. So, if mere absences of attitudes are being understood as "mental states", and all impossible combinations of mental states count as incoherent, then this combination *is* incoherent, which spells trouble for the view of disagreement as interpersonal incoherence. Similar points hold for other absences of attitudes: for example, I don't think that someone who is sad about X necessarily disagrees with someone who is

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himself, by both believing that it's raining and believing that it's not raining (and likewise for Becky) – or, we might say, a "part" of Anders disagrees with another "part" of Anders. If that's so, I don't find it so bad to say that Anders disagrees with Becky – or the a "part" of Anders disagrees with a "part" of Becky. However, if one wants to rule this case out from counting as disagreement as well, one could slightly strengthen my tweak and say not only that the incoherence produced by combining A1 and A2 must not have already been present in either A1 or A2 taken individually, but that it must not have been already present in either party's *total* set of attitudes taken individually.

[22] Thanks to an anonymous referee for pushing me to clarify the points raised in this paragraph.

[23] One might wonder whether sometimes, the incoherence of some set {A1, A2} is relative to which agent holds the attitudes in question – for example, to their cognitive capacity. If that is so, we have to answer whether the account should say that it's sufficient for disagreement that the set would be incoherent for *one* agent, or whether it needs to be incoherent for *all* agents, or *most* agents, or the *average* agent, or whatever. I leave this open.

[24] As I noted in fn. 18 above, Friedman (2017) disputes this, at least for belief-suspension combinations. If she is right, then the issue I'm about to raise for my own view does not arise (at least in this case).

[25] Here I'm taking for granting the (aforementioned, fn. 18) point that suspension of judgment is more than just absence of belief either way. For example, the person in the example I give, who has never thought about whether *p*, lacks belief in either *p* or *not-p*, but is not suspended about whether *p* either.

not sad about X (for example, if the latter person doesn't know about or hasn't thought about X), and yet such a combination of states is clearly impossible.

I think it would be somewhat *ad hoc*, however, to claim that impossible combinations of states only count as *incoherent* when they (solely) involve positive attitudes. There can, more generally, be incoherences that involve absences of attitudes rather than (solely) positive attitudes. For example, it is incoherent to intend to Φ, believe that Ψ-ing is necessary for Φ-ing, but *fail* to intend to Φ. If there can (in general) be incoherences involving absences of attitudes, and all cases of impossible combinations of positive attitudes are incoherent, it's hard to see why it wouldn't also be the case that impossible combinations that involve absences of attitudes are incoherent. To deny this seems like a move designed only to save the perfect correspondence between disagreement and incoherence.

A better strategy, I think, is to clarify the account of disagreement so that it is restricted to incoherences that are solely between positive attitudes. On this view, you and I only *disagree* if we have each *positive* attitudes (and not mere absences of attitudes) that would, in combination, be incoherent. Indeed, this is plausible not only when the combination is both impossible and incoherent, but also when the combination is incoherent but not impossible. For example, if I intend that we go to the park, and believe that to do this we must finish our meeting by 2pm, but you fail to have an intention to finish our meeting by 2pm, simply because you haven't thought about what we're doing this afternoon, it does not seem that we disagree. (By contrast, if you have positively resolved to *not* finish our meeting by 2pm, it does seem like we disagree in a good sense.) So, I think there are independent reasons to want to restrict the account of disagreement, quite generally to incoherences between *positive* attitudes. Once we do this, we can accept that all impossible combinations of states (even construed broadly to include absences of attitudes) are incoherent. The restriction to positive attitudes comes in, not in which impossible combinations of states are incoherent, but in which incoherent combinations of states are disagreements.

Thus, the final view is:

> **Disagreement in the wide sense – final pass.** You and I disagree in the wide sense if and only if I hold some (positive[26]) attitude or attitudes A1, and you hold some (positive) attitude or attitudes A2, such that the combination of A1 and A2 in a single individual would produce an incoherence (that was not already present in either A1 or A2 taken individually).

4. A MacFarlane-inspired objection

I now want to discuss an objection to the view I've given. The objection is inspired by John MacFarlane (2014: 123-128), though as I'll explain in a moment, the way I'll initially present it oversimplifies the dialectic between MacFarlane and me.

In discussing both practical disagreements and metalinguistic negotiation above, I suggested that there needs to be a shared object of preference or intention for us to have a disagreement. Thus, if I prefer that *I* go to the movies, and you prefer that *you* go to the park, then we don't have a disagreement, and nor would our attitudes be incoherent in combination.

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[26] I.e. not mere absences of attitudes.

But, the MacFarlane-inspired objection suggests, this is the wrong way to understand preferences (and desires, etc). Here I have formulated preferences as propositional attitudes, where the word 'prefer' takes a propositional complement, and preference has the truth of that proposition as its object. But 'prefer' naturally takes an infinitival complement, such that the object of the preference appears to be an action – as in "I prefer to go to the movies". Understanding my preference this way, and yours similarly, it seems that our preferences *would* be incoherent for a single individual to hold: it *would* be incoherent to {prefer to go to the movies (rather than the park), prefer to go to the park (rather than the movies)}. In that case, my account seems to give the *wrong* verdict, namely that we disagree in this case.

Clearly, though, I *can* have preferences about what you do. While having my preference to go to the movies, I could also have the preference that you go to the park. This makes it plausible that "I prefer to go to the movies" is elliptical for a preference that *I* go to the movies. Still, the problem may not be gone yet. Perhaps preferences and desires regarding myself are to be understood as *de se*, where this is turn involves understanding them as fundamentally and ineliminably first-personal. The idea here is that if I prefer that I go to the movies, and you prefer that you go the movies, the content of our preferences are the *same* proposition, albeit in my case "centered" on me, and in your case "centered" on you. Now go back to the case where I prefer that I go to the movies and you prefer that you go to the park. If the contents of our preferences are understood as *centered* propositions, then it seems that the right way to represent someone who has *both* states would be as {preferring that *she* goes the movies (rather than the park), preferring that *she* goes to the park (rather than the movies)}. So the bad result – that the account predicts disagreement where there is none – is back.

Now (and this is where I'll explain how the foregoing presentation simplified the dialectic), MacFarlane himself doesn't actually take this objection to show that one cannot define *a* notion of disagreement in terms of coherence. He acknowledges that there is *a* sense of disagreement that is understood roughly in the way I've suggested that we should understand it. Nevertheless, he does suggest that the sense in which we disagree in virtue of having attitudes that would be jointly inconsistent is "rather thin" (MacFarlane 2014: 123). Moreover, he suggests that it is "not going to give us everything that we might have wanted in a notion of disagreement" (*ibid.*: 126). He makes it clear that he doesn't *just* mean that we can also define disagreement in (what I was calling) the narrow sense, but that we need yet *another* notion of disagreement. Moreover, he thinks that it will be this *other* notion of disagreement will be the one that matters for the debate (that he is ultimately interested in) between contextualist, expressivist, relativist etc. semantic views about predicates of personal taste, normative terms, etc: it's the kind of disagreement that they need to be able to *preserve* in aesthetic and normative disputes.

In fact, though, I think MacFarlane understates the force of his objection, if it succeeds. Any sense of 'disagreement' on which we count as disagreeing when I prefer that *I* go to the park and you prefer that *you* go to the movies – even if the two of us are in different parts of the world and have never met – would, I think, not really be a respectable sense of the term 'disagreement' at all. In my view, there's *no* good sense in which we count as disagreeing in such a case. If you lack clear intuitions about this, the point can be brought out even more sharply by considering disagreement in belief. If one thinks that our self-regarding *preferences* have centered propositions as their contents, there's no

reason not also to think that our self-regarding *beliefs* have centered propositions as their contents. But, as MacFarlane explicitly says (*ibid*.: 125), on this view, when Andy believes that he is eating a sandwich, he believes the centered proposition *I am eating a sandwich*, and when David believes that he is not eating a sandwich, he believes the centered proposition *I am not eating a sandwich*, and these two centered propositions are inconsistent; someone who believed both of them would be incoherent. But it is even clearer than in the case of preference that there is *no* good sense, not even a weak one, in which Andy and David disagree. Thus, I think that MacFarlane's position is unstable: if it succeeds, it shows not just that the notion of disagreement as incoherence is a "weak" one, but that it is not a recognizable sense of 'disagreement' at all.

Now, one might think that this only strengthens MacFarlane's objection to my view. However, I don't think this is quite right. For one thing, note that before we say anything about incoherence or disagreement, it's *already* highly unintuitive to say that Andy and David believe inconsistent propositions, in any good sense. This speaks against interpreting the contents of their beliefs as centered propositions – at least on the understanding of centered propositions that MacFarlane is employing – and by analogy, against interpreting the content of our preferences this way in the movies/park case. And in that case the objection to my account disappears entirely.[27] Indeed, note that if we *did* understand the contents of Andy and David's beliefs as centered propositions, they would come out as disagreeing *even in the narrow sense*. So such an interpretation would not just be a problem for my view, but *for the orthodox account of disagreement in the narrow sense too*. The objection proves too much.

Moreover, and relatedly, consider MacFarlane's own account of disagreement (in the sense of 'disagreement' that he takes to matter. His view, roughly, is that we disagree just when our attitudes cannot be jointly satisfied (for the case of conative attitudes) or cannot be jointly accurate (for the case of cognitive attitudes).[28] As he acknowledges, though, this account *doesn't* capture some of the cases of disagreement that I began with. In particular, it doesn't capture the thought that we disagree when you believe and I suspend judgment (MacFarlane 2014: 126, n. 10); and as far as I can see, it also doesn't in any obvious way (or for anything MacFarlane says) capture disagreement in credence.[29] As

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[27] By the letter of some of what MacFarlane says, he might in principle be OK with this possibility. He notes that he hasn't argued against the view that the contents of desires and beliefs are uncentered propositions (MacFarlane 2014: 124, 126), and simply suggests that it is still good to distinguish the notion of disagreement as joint incoherence from the alternative notion of disagreement that he goes on to define. But once we understand the contents of desires and beliefs as uncentered propositions, it isn't clear that his description of the notion of disagreement as joint incoherence as "weak", nor his motivation for looking for a different notion of disagreement, remain in place.

[28] Marques (2014: 128) accepts essentially the same view.

[29] Palmira (2017, 2018) tries to extend MacFarlane's accuracy-based account to credences, appealing to the "accuracy scoring" for credences discussed by Joyce (1998) and others. Palmira actually offers at least two different accounts, which it seems to me are not equivalent.

The first is easier to see as an extension of MacFarlane's view. Suppose we think of MacFarlane's view as explaining disagreement in *outright* belief in the following way if I believe p and you believe not-p, the two *cannot* both be accurate, because what *makes* the belief in p accurate (namely *p*'s truth) also makes the belief in not-p inaccurate. If I've understood Palmira, the idea is to extend this to credences by saying that credences A and B (in some proposition p) disagree when what makes credence A accurate also makes credence B inaccurate (see the official definitions of the view on Palmira 2017: 302 and Palmira 2018: bottom of 192). Since accuracy for credences comes in degrees, we need to understand this as saying that credences A and B disagree when what makes credence A *more* accurate also makes credence B *less* accurate. But this raises a problem. Given some determinate value for credence A, credence A only two possible accuracy scores: one when p is true, and one when it is false (and likewise for credence B). Now suppose, for example, that credence A =

we saw above, these are important cases in the epistemology of peer disagreement that we should want an account of disagreement to capture.

Now, *if* MacFarlane's position – acknowledging *a* notion of disagreement as incoherence, but insisting that we *also* need a (more important) notion of disagreement as preclusion of joint satisfaction/accuracy – were a stable one, then this might not be such a big problem. He could simply note that these cases, though not disagreements in the latter sense, are disagreements in the former sense. However, as I argued above, it isn't stable in this way: MacFarlane's objections, if they succeed, don't just play down the importance of the notion of disagreement as interpersonal incoherence, but eliminate it entirely. But then, his view loses any way of classifying the belief/suspension disagreements, and the disagreements in credence, as forms of disagreement at all. And so the objection would, in a way, also be a problem for his own view.

Let me draw these responses to MacFarlane together in a way that defends my own view slightly more directly. Our account of disagreement should (i) capture the cases of disagreement in credence, and of belief/suspension disagreements, as being disagreements *at least in one good sense*, without (ii) capturing spurious cases, like that of Andy and David, as being disagreements in *any* good sense. Even if the sense in which the former sets of cases are disagreements is "weak", it's not so weak that it should let the latter set of cases in too: there is a clear, principled difference between the former and the latter. Our account should capture the thought that the former set of cases are disagreements in at least *some* sense that the latter aren't.

As long as we assume that the contents of self-regarding attitudes are centered propositions, though, it seems we cannot do this: that is, we cannot satisfy both (i) and (ii). If we make this assumption, and then follow the letter of MacFarlane's view and embrace a pluralism according to which there is *both* a notion of disagreement as interpersonal incoherence, and a notion of disagreement as preclusion of joint satisfaction/accuracy, then we satisfy (i) but not (ii).[30] (Moreover, we get the result that the former cases are disagreements *only* in the sense in which the latter cases are.)

0.9 and credence B = 0.6. The only thing that can make credence A *more* accurate (holding its value, 0.9, fixed) is for *p* to be true rather than false. But it is also true that credence B, 0.6, is more accurate when *p* is true than when it is false. Thus, on the only sensible interpretation of the claim that "what makes credence A more accurate also makes credence B less accurate", that claim is false. But, then, the credences do not disagree on the present account. That is, I think, the wrong result, but it can be made worse. For more generally, the account will predict that two credences disagree iff they are on different sides of the midpoint of 0.5. So it *will* say that credence 0.51 and credence 0.49 *do* disagree, despite being much closer together than credence 0.9 and credence 0.6. This comparative verdict seems to me intolerable.

Palmira's other account (Palmira 2018: first full sentence of 192) gets round this problem. It says that two credences for *p* disagree just to the extent that there is a large *distance* between their accuracy scores (across both the world in which *p* is true and that where it is false). Here disagreement itself is graded depending on the distance (Palmira claims that his first, official account makes disagreement graded, but since it's stated as an "if and only if" claim, it's unclear how this is so.) Since the distance between the accuracy scores of two credences is a function of the distances between the credences themselves, this gets the much more intuitive result that two credences disagree more and more, the great the distance between the credences themselves. But it's much less clear how this second account is an extension of MacFarlane's view about disagreement about outright belief. MacFarlane's idea for the case of outright belief was that two outright beliefs disagree iff what *makes* one accurate *makes* the other inaccurate. But as we just saw, this proposal fails when extended to credence, and the second view only gets the cases right by giving it up. But Palmira explicitly wants to avoid a *disjointed* account of disagreement for outright belief on one hand and credence on the other. Thus, his view faces a dilemma: *either* it constitutes a genuine extension of MacFarlane's view of outright belief, but fails extensionally, *or* it succeeds extensionally, but fails to constitute a genuine extension of MacFarlane's view, yielding a disjointed account.

[30] *Pace* Palmira (2017, 2018) – see the previous footnote.

On the other hand, if we (still employing centered propositions) reject the notion of disagreement as interpersonal incoherence entirely, then we satisfy (ii) but not (i). (And thus, trivially, we get the result that the former cases can't be disagreements in a sense that the latter aren't, since the former cases aren't disagreements at all.) It seems, then, that the only notion of disagreement that can capture these desiderata here is a notion of disagreement as interpersonal incoherence (that is, my view) that understands the contents of attitudes as *uncentered* propositions. But again, once we understand the contents of attitudes as *uncentered* propositions, MacFarlane's objection to the view disappears, and the motivation for his own, additional notion of disagreement is questionable.

One might object that this only shows that it would be *convenient* if the contents of attitudes were uncentered propositions, not that they *are*. But I'm not sure this is the right way to think about things. First, it might be largely a pragmatic decision whether to think of and represent the contents of attitudes as centered or uncentered propositions. And it might only be that we should think of them as uncentered *for the purposes of understanding disagreement*; maybe centered propositions are a useful model in other contexts. Secondly, if that's not right and the contents of attitudes either *are* centered propositions or *are* uncentered propositions, then I don't see why the present considerations don't provide an argument against centered propositions, and for uncentered ones. For it simply isn't true, for example, that Andy and David believe inconsistent propositions, or that they disagree in the narrow sense, or that they disagree in the same sense that you and I disagree when you believe and I suspend, or our credences differ. And so, if the view that the contents of attitudes are centered propositions has this result, this seems to be a *reductio* of that view.[31]

5. A metaethical consequence

As I mentioned earlier, it's been thought to be an advantage of expressivism over some forms of contextualism (also known as 'subjectivism' and 'speaker relativism') that expressivism can capture a kind of disagreement that contextualism can't. We can put the basic point in terms of the theory of disagreement that I've given. Suppose Peter, a utilitarian, says, "it's right to torture terrorists to save millions", while Christine, a Kantian, says, "it's wrong to torture terrorists to save millions". The kind of simple, invariantist cognitivist semantics for moral utterances typically favored by realists (and error-theorists) produces the result that Peter and Christine disagree in the narrow sense. Neither expressivism nor the form of contextualism that makes the semantic content of moral claims

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[31] Compare Cappelen & Hawthorne (2009: 96-8), who suggest a similar argument against *tensed* propositions, which are, centered on a time much as the 'centered' propositions we've been considering as centered on an *agent*. MacFarlane (2014: 127-8) claim that their argument equivocates, but I don't think that is so. Cappelen & Hawthorne argue that since (1) my believing a proposition and your disbelieving it constitutes a disagreement, but (2) we are not disagreeing when I believe that it is raining in Boston now and you disbelieved that it was raining in Boston two weeks ago, and (3) a view whereby beliefs have tensed propositions as their contents represents you as disbelieving the same proposition that I believe in this case, the view that beliefs have tensed propositions as their contents must be mistaken. MacFarlane objects that premise (1) is true only on the notion of disagreement as interpersonal incoherence, but premise (2) is only true on the notion of disagreement as preclusion of joint satisfaction/accuracy, the argument equivocates. But this is not so. First, both (1) *and* (2) are plausibly true on the notion of disagreement in the *narrow* sense. Secondly, as I've been urging, there's really *no* good sense of 'disagreement' in which (2) is false, the notion of disagreement as interpersonal incoherence included.

dependent upon the speaker's moral standards replicate that result.[32] But that leaves open whether these views can preserve the thought that Peter and Christine disagree in the *wide* sense.

On a toy form of expressivism, Peter expresses approval of torturing the terrorist, while Christine expresses disapproval of torturing the terrorist. Those attitudes would be jointly incoherent for a single individual to hold, so our account confirms that, on this theory, Peter and Christine disagree in the wide sense. By contrast, on a toy form of contextualism that makes the content of moral claims dependent on the speaker's moral standards, Peter's claim expresses the belief that, by utilitarian standards, it's right to torture the terrorist, while Christine's claim expresses the belief that, by Kantian standards, it's wrong to torture the terrorist. These beliefs *wouldn't* be incoherent for a single individual to hold, so it seems that, on this view, Peter and Christine don't disagree even in the wide sense – or, at least, their utterances don't express that disagreement. It's a shortcoming of this view if it can't even deliver the result that Peter and Christine disagree in the *wide* sense.

Now, there is a widely-employed contextualist maneuver to resist this sort of objection, which is to say that Peter and Christine are engaged in metalinguistic disagreement about how to use 'wrong' – just as in the example I used earlier of our (apparent) dispute about whether Dwayne Wade is tall.[33] But there's a problem with this response, which we can sharpen in light of the discussion in the previous section. Suppose Peter and Christine are not in dialogue at all. In that case, there is no shared context for them to have conflict intentions or preferences about. Peter can prefer and intend to use 'wrong' one way in *his* context, and Christine can prefer and intend to use 'wrong' another way in *her* context. That doesn't constitute a disagreement, given the way that I argued that we should understand self-regarding preferences and intentions in the previous section, and *pace* the objection from MacFarlane that I considered and rejected. The case is like the one where I intend that *I* go to the movies, and you intend that *you* go to the park: there is no question of what *we together* will do for us to disagree about.

But intuitively, Peter and Christine *do* disagree, even if they are not in conversation with one another. So it seems that the strategy of explaining Peter and Christine's disagreement in terms of metalinguistic disagreement is insufficiently general.[34] Moreover, note that this constitutes a distinct asymmetry with our paradigm case of metalinguistic disagreement, the dispute about Dwayne Wade. There, as I said earlier, the prediction that we only disagree when we occupy a shared context seems to be, intuitively, the *right* one. When we're in a shared context – actually engaged in a *negotiation* about how to use 'tall' is our context, we seem to be disagreeing. But when I'm just using 'tall' in one way in my context, and you're using 'tall' another way in our context, we *don't* seem to be disagreeing, even though our utterances ("Dwayne Wade is tall" and "Dwayne Wade is not tall", on their surface, negate one another. By contrast, Peter and Christine intuitively disagree whether they're in a shared context or not. This suggests that Peter and Christine's disagreement differs from paradigm cases of metalinguistic disagreement.

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[32] There are forms of contextualism that *don't* make the semantic content of moral claims dependent upon the speaker's moral standards (see Worsnip forthcoming for a taxonomy).

[33] For versions of this strategy, see Plunkett & Sundell (2013); Silk (2017); Khoo & Knobe (2018); Bolinger (ms.).

[34] Here I'm echoing and developing a criticism of that strategy made by Finlay (2017: 195).

It might be objected that Peter and Christine should be understood as each preferring that wrong' is used in their favored way in *all* contexts – in which case they do have a disagreement. But while it's certainly possible that they have these preferences, it's an *ad hoc* linguistic proposal that their utterances *express* such a state. According to the metalinguistic proposal by utterance is 'Dwayne Wade is tall', as well as asserting the content that Dwayne Wade is tall by the standards I'm employing, also pragmatically communicates a preference or intention to use those standards in my present context, but not necessarily in all contexts. If 'it's wrong to torture' is to be treated similarly, it's unclear why it would communicate a preference or intention to use the relevant standards in *all* contexts.

To be clear, this problem doesn't necessarily spell the end for contextualism, or even for versions of contextualism that make the semantic content of moral utterances dependent on the speaker's moral standards. But it is a problem for using the metalinguistic strategy to defuse this view's problem with disagreement. There may be other strategies for the contextualist to appeal to: for example, Finlay (2014, 2017) argues that the contextualist should co-opt the expressivist's own way of explaining the disagreement, incorporating a "quasi-expressivist" dimension into the contextualist view, whereby 'it's wrong to torture' expresses a conative attitude not about how to use 'wrong', but about *torture* itself.[35] It does reinforce, however, the expressivist's advantage over a simple contextualist view, if the contextualist's best option for defusing the problem is to adopt a view that is in effect a kind of hybrid of contextualism and expressivism.

6. Conclusion

I want to highlight two broader upshots of the view I have defended here. The first, which is already hinted at, is that coherence is a philosophically important property. It's important for understanding what disagreement is, and explaining when it is present and when it is not. Notice that this philosophical role for coherence is entirely independent of the controversy about whether it's *valuable* to be coherent, or whether we have any reason to be coherent.[36] Even if agents have *no* reason to "care" about coherence in the sense of aiming to make their attitudes more coherent, philosophers (and others who want to understand the mind) have reason to care about coherence in the sense of paying attention to theorizing it. For, on my view, we can settle whether an apparent disagreement is actual by answering the question of whether the underlying mental states involved are jointly incoherent with one another.

This leads into the second, and still broader, upshot. The account defended here provides a case study of a general phenomenon,[37] where some apparently descriptive question – in this case: are

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[35] The difference with traditional expressivism is that the quasi-expressivist contextualist will (i) say that the utterance *also* expresses a straightforward propositional content, and (ii) say that the utterances *pragmatically* communicates the conative attitude rather than having it as its semantic content.

[36] As famously pursued by, among many others, Kolodny (2008).

[37] A whole raft of work in psychology and experimental philosophy – much of it due to Joshua Knobe and collaborators – illustrates a wide variety of supposedly descriptive questions where our judgments are affected by normative considerations. In and of itself, that is consistent with an error theory where it's always a mistake or bias to let our judgments be affected by normative considerations in this way. But Knobe himself has shown sympathy toward the view that at least in some cases, a vindicatory story can be told about why normative judgments *should* have such an influence (see, e.g., Hitchcock & Knobe 2009, for the case of letting one's moral judgments affect one's judgments about causation).

two subjects disagreeing? – in fact turns on a normative question – in this case: are their states such that holding them together would be incoherent?[38] First-order normative judgment is pervasive and unavoidable, even for such basic questions as determining whether people disagree with one another.

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[38] Here I use 'normative' in a broad sense, intended to be neutral on the aforementioned dispute about whether there is really good reason to be coherent. The point is just that judgments about the coherence of states are not purely descriptive ones.

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