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1. INTRODUCTION: TWARDOWSKI AND KOKOSZYŃSKA

Kazimierz Twardowski in his 1900 paper "On So-called Relative Truths" argued that "the claim that there are relative truths cannot be defended", for "there are no propositions[1] which would be true only in certain circumstances, under certain conditions, and with the change of those circumstances and conditions would cease to be true".[2] He admits that the view that relative truths exist is very widely held and argues that the reason for this is the fact that philosophers do not put enough attention to the distinction between the proposition and the sentence expressing that proposition. According to him sentences may be relatively true (in a derivative sense), but propositions if true, are true absolutely. Sentences are often ambiguous or elliptical, and as a result express different propositions at different contexts of use. Hence, one might say that sentences have different truth-values in different contexts. On the other hand, each of the propositions expressed on those occasions has its truth value absolutely. Twardowski considers i.a. the following examples:

1. The scent of this flower is pleasant,

[1] Twardowski uses the Polish term „sąd" which may be translated into English either as "judgment" or as "proposition". In the English translation the term "judgment" was used. It is clear that Twardowski thinks that "sąd" is psychological in nature, nevertheless, it seems to me that "nie ma sądów, które byłyby prawdziwe tylko w pewnych okolicznościach, pod pewnymi warunkami …", should be translated as above.

[2] Twardowski 1900; 4.

2. It's raining,

3. Cold baths are healthy,

4. It is morally acceptable to kill defective infants.

Twardowski aims to show that — contrary to a common opinion — propositions expressed by these sentences are not relatively true. All of these sentences are — according to him — incomplete. The first should be read as "The scent of this flower is pleasant *to me*", the second as "It's raining *here and now*"[3], the third as "Cold baths are *usually* healthy"[4], while the fourth as "It is morally acceptable to kill defective infants, *born in the conditions in which Spartans lived*". The interpretations we have just given are not good enough, however. The renderings of the examples 1. and 2. contain indexical expressions. Twardowski takes indexicals to be ambiguous[5], hence sentences containing them are also ambiguous. In order to get rid of ambiguity one should replace indexicals with adequate disambiguations. For instance, 2 should be replaced with 2' "On 1 March 1990 according to the Gregorian calendar, at noon Central European Time, it is raining in Lwów on High Castle Hill and in its vicinity".[6] This last sentence is no longer ambiguous. It expresses a complete proposition, which is either true or false depending on the actual state of affairs. And the truth-value that it has is possessed by it "always and for ever".[7] The idea is thus that once we wholly disambiguate and decontextualize[8] propositions we will see that they have their truth-value absolutely.

Maria Kokoszyńska defines relative truth as follows:

> To say of a sentence X having a well defined meaning (we call it a proposition) that it is only relatively true, means — if relativity of truth is rightly understood — that the sentence X is true with respect to something and its negation is true with respect to something else.[9]

"Truth" is thus an incomplete predicate that names a relative property of X. Moderate relativism says that there are some propositions such that they are true with

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[3] Nota bene there is an ongoing debate concerning the question of whether the sentence "It's raining now" is actually *semantically* incomplete and need completion to "It's raining here and now". See e.g. F. Recanati, *Literal Meaning*, OUP 2004.

[4] We could interpret it as meaning „Cold baths are *always* healthy", but then it would be straightforwardly false.

[5] Susan Haack criticises him for doing so (see "Profesor Twardowski and the relativist menace", p. 27). It is worth noticing that Kokoszyńska in her paper written 51 years later claims that usually it is pointed out that "I am hungry" is an ambiguous sentence, which has different meanings according to the individual who has uttered the sentence. See Kokoszyńska 1951; 121. She goes on to add however that there is a more intuitive analysis according to which "I", "here", "now" have a single meaning, "though in different situations they happen to denote (together with the accompanying situations) different objects." Kokoszyńska 1951; 123.

[6] See Simons 2008; 6.

[7] Twardowski 1990; 3.

[8] See Simons 2008; 6.

[9] Kokoszyńska 1951; 93.

respect to something, while their negations are true with respect to something else. Radical relativism says that every proposition is like that. Kokoszyńska considers several theories of truth ((i) psychological according to which "true" means "believed"; (ii) sociological according to which "true" means "believed by scientists"; (iii) pragmatical in which "true" means "useful for thinking" or "useful for action" or else "a statement the belief in which brings contentment"; (iv) consistence-theory in which "true" means "consistent with"). According to the author of "A refutation of the relativism of truth" all of these theories lead to relativism of truth (the first three to the moderate form of relativism, the last one to the radical version of it), but all of them are false theories of truth. [10]

While discussing examples containing indexicals, such as "I am hungry" and "It is warm here" Kokoszyńska makes an extremely interesting remark. She argues as follows:

> There is another way in which expressions containing deictic terms could also be dealt with and which seems more convincing. This way consists in considering such expressions as "I am hungry", "It is warm here" etc. as being no full sentences, but only part of ones. The other part of the respective sentence is the situation in which those words are formulated (…). The expression "I am hungry", pronounced by an individual, forms a sentence (which is true or false) only if taken together with that individual. [11]

The reason why I think this passage so remarkable is that it is a clear *anticipation* of nonindexical contextualism formulated by MacFarlane at the beginning of 21st century (see below).

Kokoszyńska claims that expressions "I am hungry" and "It is warm here" cannot be regarded as examples of relative truths, because they are neither true or false:

> What is true or false is the whole consisting of such an expression and the corresponding situation which accompanies it — the whole which is in different cases different. Such a whole is not true in some conditions and false in others, but simply true or false. [12]

Hence, "I am hungry" is neither true nor false (thus neither relatively true nor relatively false), while the complex consisting of the utterance "I am hungry" together with a certain situation is if true, true absolutely. [13]

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[10] Kokoszyńska also argues at length that "true sentence" should not be regarded as synonymous with "theorem of language". See 1951; 105nn.

[11] Kokoszyńska 1951; 122. She credits Ajdukiewicz with this observation. See 1951;122, note 42.

[12] Ibid; 124. Incidentally, Kokoszyńska claims that "I am hungry" and "It is warm here" are not sentences. It seems to me that the grounds for denying sentencehood to these expressions are too weak. It would be better to say that they are sentences, but do not express (complete) propositions.

[13] Kokoszyńska argues further that the genuine concept of truth is such for which Tarski-biconditionals hold. Such a concept does not lead to the relativism of truth in our sense (although it does lead to the relativisation of truth for sentences). Cf. Ibid; 138. MacFarlane claims that relativists may introduce a monadic predicate for which a version of equivalence schema holds. See MacFarlane 2007b; 13.

Susan Haack has many objections concerning arguments put forward by Twardowski, but she agrees with his conclusion. She argues that "though some true propositions make sense only understood as relative to place, time, culture, legal system, etc., truth is not relative"[14]. She also notices that some prefer to talk about propositional functions in such cases and claim that such propositional functions have truth-value only if they are completed and become full propositions.

2. MODERN VERSION OF RELATIVISM ABOUT TRUTH: JOHN MACFARLANE

2.1. Contextualism and nonindexical contextualism

Thus, both Twardowski and Kokoszyńska try to convince us that there are no relative truths. Any proposition is true absolutely (if true at all). Also Haack agrees with this conlusion. So are they right? Are there no relative truths?

John MacFarlane thinks differently. He has recently proposed two different views: relativism about truth (2003) and nonindexical contextualism (2007a and 2009). Nonindexical contextualism may be seen as a rival to standard (indexical) contextualism. MacFarlane begins with a quote from Kaplan:

> If c is a context, then an occurrence of φ in c is true iff the content expressed by φ in this context is true when evaluated with respect to the circumstance of the context.[15]

He notices that two distinctive roles that context plays may be distinguished: content-determinative role and circumstance-determinative role. The former helps determine which proposition is expressed by an occurrence of φ, the latter tells at which circumstance of evaluation we should evaluate this proposition. As an illustration MacFarlane uses the sentence "Socrates is sitting". Imagine that this sentence is uttered twice: once at the time when Socrates was alive and sitting and once on the 1st of June 2010. If we take the context to play the content-determinative role, we will say that those two utterances express two different propositions. One utterance expresses the true proposition *that Socrates is sitting at the time t* (i.e. one of the times when he was sitting), while the other expresses the false proposition *that Socrates is sitting on the 1st of June 2010*. Since the sentence "Socrates is sitting" expresses two different propositions in two different contexts we are compelled to conclude that it is indexical (contextually dependent) and has different contents at different contexts (scil. at different times). The propositions expressed are different, they may have different truth-values, but each has its truth-value eternally. Therefore such a view is called eternalism. On the other hand, one may argue that the sentence "Socrates is sitting" is not indexical and always expresses the same proposition,

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[14] Haack, The whole truth and nothing but the truth, p.11.
[15] Kaplan, 1989; 522.

namely the proposition *that Socrates is sitting*. The truth-value of that proposition depends on the time of utterance. Thus any truth-value the proposition has it has it temporally. Hence the name of this view: temporalism. According to temporalism the circumstances of evaluation (i.e. the circumstances in which we evaluate the truth-value of the proposition) are not just possible worlds, but pairs consisting of possible worlds and times. A given proposition may be true regarding the circumstances $<w_1, t_1>$, but false in the circumstances $<w_1, t_2>$. So knowing the possible world in which the evaluation is to be done is not enough.

For eternalists contexts play the content-determinative role, for temporalists their role consists in determining the circumstances of evaluation. Standard contextualism is akin to eternalism, while nonindexical contextualism is akin to temporalism.

According to nonindexical contextualists the circumstances of evaluation for a tensed sentence like "Socrates is sitting" consist of pairs <world, time>, while for indexical tensed sentences like "I am hungry" and "It is warm here" they will consist of triples <world, time, individual/place>. The similarity of this view to the view offered by Kokoszyńska is striking. Nonindexical contextualist says — just like Kokoszyńska did — that sentences such as "I am hungry" and "Socrates is sitting" have no truth-value unless we supply the relevant circumstances.

MacFarlane argues that in addition to times, places and individuals as elements of the circumstances of evaluation, we should have "count-as" parameter, that deals with other types of context-dependency. All contextualists claim that the majority of natural language expressions are context-dependent. The most common examples include gradable adjectives (such as "tall", "rich", "bald"), expressions like "ready" and "strong enough", quantifier expressions, knowledge ascriptions "S knows that p". Standard contextualists will argue that the sentence S: „Chiara is tall" contains an indexical expression "tall" which has different contents in different contexts. In c_1, where the heights of 7-years old are discussed, S *means that* Chiara is tall for a 7-year old and is true, while in c_2, where the height of professional basketball players is relevant, S *means that* Chiara is tall for a basketball player and is false.

Contextualism has been met with strong resistance. In particular it has been argued that the claim that "tall", "ready", "know" are all indexical is counterintuitive and imputes 'semantic blindness' to competent speakers, who did not notice it until contextualists arrived. Moreover, specific arguments have been offered with the aim to show that expressions like "know", "ready" and "tall" cannot be regarded as indexical. Herman Cappelen and Ernie Lepore in their book *Insensitive semantics* designed three tests for indexicality (inter-contextual disquotational indirect reports test; collective description test; real context-shifting argument test) and tried to show that only very few expressions pass it.[16] Jason Stanley appeals to linguistic arguments to point that terms like "know" should not be treated as indexical expres-

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[16] See Cappelen, Lepore 2005; 87nn.

sions.[17] MacFarlane in turn suggests that contextualists are forced to accept some odd consequences. Consider the following conversation[18]:

Sam (in context c_1): I *know* that my car is in the driveway.

Barry (in a different context c_2, in which it is well-known that many car thieves have been active lately): Sam said that he *knew* that his car was in the driveway.

Janet: No, he didn't.

Intuitively what Janet is saying is false, for it seems to us that Sam did say that he knew that his car was in the driveway, but according to contextualism Janet's remark is true. The reason for this is that "know" as uttered in c_1 is not the same expression as "know" uttered in c_2. These two expressions refer to two different relations of knowing (one might say that "know" in c_1 means "know according to epistemic standards of c_1", whereas "know" in c_2 means "know according to epistemic standards of c_2"). Thus, Janet is right that Sam did not say that he knew according to epistemic standards of c_2 that his car is in the driveway and we are compelled to agree that what she said is true.[19]

Therefore it might seem that nonindexical contextualism is a better option. It does not postulate such a global indexicality, it does not claim that "know" is similar in kind with "here" and it allows us to say that Janet's remark is false. According to nonindexical contextualists both expressions "know" (one uttered by Sam and one by Barry) have the same content and refer to the same relation. However, since they are uttered in relevantly different contexts (in this case contexts that have different epistemic standards), the truth-value of sentences containing them is different. Sam's utterance is evaluated at $\langle w_1,$ epistemic standards $s_1 \rangle$, Bill's at $\langle w_1,$ epistemic standards $s_2 \rangle$. Sam may count as knowing that his car is in the driveway according to the lower standards of c_1, but not according to the stricter standards of c_2. Thus "S know that p" has the same content in various contexts, but its truth-value may change, if it is evaluated at different circumstances.

Similar analysis is offered for predicates. For instance, "Chiara is tall" has the same content in various contexts, but circumstances of evaluation consist of a possible world, time and count-as parameter. The "count-as" parameter is a function from properties to intensions (which are functions from worlds to extensions).

The "count-as" parameter is so-called because it fixes what things have to be like in order to *count as* having the property of tallness (or any other property) at a circumstance of evaluation.[20]

This parameter is "determined in complex ways by other features of the context, including the topic of conversation and the speaker's intentions"[21]. In a context c_1

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[17] See Stanley 2004.

[18] MacFarlane 2009; 239.

[19] This is like arguing that John said that I am hungry on the grounds that he said "I am hungry".

[20] MacFarlane 2007a; 246.

where we're discussing 7-year olds, the count-as function may assign the property of being tall the same intension as that which it assigns to the property of being tall-for-a-7-year-old, whereas in a context c_2 where we're discussing basketball players, the count-as function may assign the property of being tall the same intension as that which it assigns to the property of being tall-for-a-basketball-player.[22]

As a result in order to determine the truth-values of sentences "Chiara is tall", "Mark is rich", "John is ready" or even "Mary weights 60 kg" and "The leaves are green" we need circumstances of evaluation that contain the relevant count-as parameter (count-as-tall, count-as-rich, etc.). If the context is not specific enough, the above sentences will be devoid of truth value.

2.2. Relativism about truth

Nonindexical contextualism is not relativism about truth according to MacFarlane.[23] He argues that in order to obtain a relativist view a further context must be introduced: a context of assessment. Relativism about truth is "the view that truth (of sentences or propositions) is relative not just to contexts of use but also to *contexts of assessments*"[24]. The claim that truth is relativised to circumstances of evaluation (even such 'rich' ones as we have just discussed) does not make one a relativist about truth. In order to have relativism the additional standard has to be initialised by a feature of the context in which the speech act is *being assessed*.[25] As a result we obtain a doubly contextual predicate "true at context of use C_u and context of assessment C_a".[26]

For instance, one may define the main tenet of *aesthetic contextualism* as follows:

S is true at a context of use *C* iff there is a proposition *p* such that:
    (a) *S* expresses *p* at *C*, and
    (b) p is true at a world of C and the aesthetic standards of the speaker at C;
whereas according to *aesthetic relativism* the following holds:

S is true at a context of use C_u and context of assessment C_a iff there is a proposition *p* such that:
    (a) *S* expresses *p* at C_u, and
    (b) p is true at a world of C_u and the aesthetic standards of the assessor at C_a.

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[21] I argue elsewhere that it might be regarded as fixed by Lewisian conversational core. See Odrowąż-Sypniewska 2010.

[22] MacFarlane 2005; 246.

[23] It is worth noticing that Recanati calls this view "radical relativism". See Recanati, 2008.

[24] MacFarlane 2005; 321.

[25] MacFarlane 2005.

[26] MacFarlane 2005; 325.

In general, nonindexical contextualism claims that p is true at c iff p is true at $<w_c, s_c>$, where w_c = the world of c and s_c = the speaker's standard of taste at c (or, the standard of taste picked out by the speaker's intentions and the objective situation at c), while relativism is the view according to which p is true as used at c_u and assessed from c_a iff p is true at $<w_{cu}, s_{ca}>$, where w_{cu} = the world of c_u and s_{ca} = the assessor's standard of taste at c_a (or, the standard of taste picked out by the assessor's intentions and the objective situation at c)[27].

MacFarlane thinks that relativism is the best view as far as future contingents are concerned. He assumes that the world is objectively indeterministic and considers the sentence "There will be a sea battle tomorrow". He argues that we have two opposing intuitions in such cases: the indeterminacy intuition which tells that the assertion is neither true nor false and the determinacy intuition which says that the assertion is either true or false, but we do not know which is the case. The author of "Future contingents and relative truth" claims that the two intuitions look incompatible, but in fact both can be satisfied. In order to do this one has to assume that the truth-value of an utterance depends on the context from which the utterance is being assessed. The assertion "There will be a sea battle tomorrow" is neither true nor false as assessed from today, and true (or false) as assessed from tomorrow. MacFarlane notices that relativisation of propositional truth is compatible with the absoluteness of utterance-truth:

> …to say that an utterance is true is to say more than that the proposition it expresses is true: it is to say that this proposition is true *with respect to the world at which the utterance occurs*.[28]

MacFarlane argues that there are two kinds of context-sensitivity: use-sensitivity (where a sentence is use-sensitive if its truth-value varies with the context of use) and assessment-sensitivity (where a sentence is assessment-sensitive if its truth-value varies with the context of assessment). In other words:

> A proposition p is assessment-sensitive iff for some contexts c_1, c_2, c_3, p is true as used at c_1 and assessed form c_2 but not true as used in c_1 and assessed form c_3.[29]

Relativism is the view that there is at least one sentence which is assessment-sensitive.[30] So is relativism true? MacFarlane does not assert that it is but argues that "quite a good case can be made for the assessment sensitivity of the future tense, epistemic modals, knowledge attributions, predicates of personal taste, and other constructions".[31] The examples he gives (besides "There will be a sea battle tomorrow") are as follows:

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[27] MacFarlane, 2007b; 11-12.

[28] MacFarlane 2005; 328.

[29] MacFarlane, 2007b; 12. Here MacFarlane talks about propositions not about sentences, but the difference is irrelevant for our considerations.

[30] MacFarlane 2005; 328.

[31] MacFarlane 2005; 338.

1. Oyster mushrooms are *delicious*.
2. That joke was *funny*.
3. It is *cruel* to amputate a thief's hand.
4. Goldbach's Conjecture *might* be false.
5. It is *likely* that Joe and Sue are on the 6:10 train.

MacFarlane argues that relativism is the only view that allows to explain disagreement in subjective domains. For if we take subjective assertions of taste to be objective assertions about the person who utters them, then the disagreement is lost. If I say "Oyster mushrooms are delicious", and you reply "No, they aren't", we would both think that you are disagreeing with me. If however my statement really means "Oyster mushrooms taste good to me" and yours means that oyster mushrooms do not taste good to you, then we are just expressing our own personal tastes and not disagreeing. Other strategies of objectivising such sentences are not more promising[32].

Similarly, nonindexical contextualism is unable to explain the perceived disagreement. According to nonindexical contextualism proposition that oyster mushrooms are delicious is *not about* the speaker's taste, nevertheless it *concerns* the speaker's taste.[33] The assertion "Oyster mushrooms are delicious" made by me and the contradictory assertion made by you, may both be true, since they concern the taste of the respective speakers. Such utterances will be true relative to their different contexts of utterance, and context of assessment on this account plays no role. Hence, again the sense of disagreement is lost. In order to give justice to the felt disagreement we have to introduce assessment sensitivity. On the relativist account both contexts have to be taken into account, so two contradictory assertions cannot be true together. Relative to the contexts of utterance and our (i.e. the assessors') context of assessment only one of them may be true.

3. IS RELATIVISM ABOUT TRUTH INTELLIGIBLE?

MacFarlane notices that the most common strategy for relativists is to adopt such a conception of truth that makes it obviously relative. So relativists often resort to coherentist or pragmatic conceptions. He thinks however that "although these (…) definitions of truth capture the 'relative' part of 'relative truth'", they do not "capture the 'truth part'".[34] As we have seen, Kokoszyńska couldn't agree more with this objection. However, MacFarlane argues that there is a notion which is a notion of truth and which allows for relativisation. He claims that truth is what we commit ourselves

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[32] See also Lasersohn 2005.
[33] MacFarlane 2007b; 10.
[34] MacFarlane 2005; 329.

to in making assertions and what we aim at in belief. Nonrelativist commitment to truth may be defined in the following way:

> To commit oneself to the truth of the proposition (at some context c) is to undertake commitments to 1. providing grounds for thinking that p is true-at-c in response to a legitimate challenge, 2. retracting the assertion when p is shown to be untrue-at-c.[35]

Relativist commitment to truth might be defined along similar lines:

> To commit oneself to the truth of the proposition p (at some context c) is to undertake commitments to 1. vindicating the assertion in response to a legitimate challenge, i.e. providing grounds for thinking that p is true as used at c and assessed from the context in which one is meeting the challenge, 2. retracting the assertion when p is shown to be untrue as used at c and assessed from the context one occupies in considering the retraction[36].

Hence, relativised doubly-indexed concept of truth may play the role usually ascribed to truth. If we think of this role as constitutive of the concept of truth, then assessment-relative truth captures both the 'relative' and the 'truth part' of the 'relative truth'.

4. CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was mainly expository. I wanted to show that relativism about truth had not been refuted by Twardowski and Kokoszyńska. Even if one agrees with their arguments, one may still argue that there are truths that require relativisation not only to contexts of utterance but also to contexts of assessment. Even if we think that the former kind of relativisation does not lead to relativism about truth, it is clear that the latter does. One of the examples discussed by Twardowski may serve as an illustration. He claims that

4. It is morally acceptable to kill defective infants,

is not an example of relative truth, because it is incomplete. And after completion to

4'. It is morally acceptable to kill defective infants, *born in the conditions in which Spartans lived*",

it has its truth-value absolutely. One might argue however, that 4' is still relative and has no truth-value on its own. According to various contexts of assessment it will have various truth-values. We may say that assessed from the Spartans' point of view it was true. Nevertheless, from today's point of view we may deem it false.[37]

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[35] MacFarlane, 2007b; 14-15.
[36] MacFarlane, 2007b; 15.

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