Gettier and Contextualism

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Last year I presented the following argument to the effect that (as Travis 1996 claims, and against Whiting 2011) contextualism and deflationism are incompatible.

1) If contextualism is true and if the context of T-schema, either disquotational (DS) or propositional (PS), is not required to be fixed between the left and the right side hand side, then any instances of T-schema would be trivially falsified by contextualist cases.
2) If contextualism is true and if the context of T-schema (either DS or PS) is required to be fixed between the left and the right side hand side, then T-schema would rule out the possibility of accidental truth (as analyzed as *cross-contextual truth*).
3) There are accidental truths.
4) Therefore, in either case, if contextualism is true, any instance of T-schema is *false*.
5) The validity of T-schema is a necessary, if not sufficient, condition of deflationism.
6) Therefore, contextualism and deflationism are incompatible.

However, the paradigmatic examples of accidental truth assumed in this argument (in particular, in premise 3 were Gettier cases. Thus the assumption there was that the belief or the corresponding statement of the subject in the Gettier case (hereafter Gettier belief or Gettier statement) was true.

While this assumption is widely accepted by epistemologists (even those who claim that the Gettier belief is knowledge), it seems arguable (or even more consistent to claim) at least for thoroughgoing contextualists, that (as a response to premise 3) the *Gettier statements are actually false* because of the context in which the subjects of the Gettier belief are situated (note that, this is not a specific version of contextualism *à la* DeRose, or epistemic contextualism). Moreover, deflationists may accept premise 2 and ask, "What's wrong with ruling out accidental truths?" Perhaps, they may claim, accidental truths are not genuine truths (or if you please, *true* truths), but merely *derivative* truths, and therefore any serious theory of truth may ignore such truths. However, it still follows from this view that the Gettier beliefs and statements as not instances of *genuine* truth. Thus both contextualists and deflationaists have reason or at least motivation to deny that the Gettier statements are (genuinely) true. Let us call this *no-accidental truth response*, or NAT.

On the other hand, there can be another extreme response from the opposite direction. One may instead claim that the relevant utterances in the

familiar contextualist cases are all accidentally true, rather than false (as claimed by contextualists). If this response is true, then it would falsify our premise 1. Again, not only deflationists, but also contextualists may agree with this claim, if the contextualist dissociates the notion of truth and the context-relative content, as we have argued we should. Let us call *all truth response*, or AT.

In this paper we shall explore these extreme options, and argue that both the proponents of NAT and AT fail to do justice to our notion of *disagreement*. Agreement/disagreement is a primitive distinction in our communication and debate, in which our practice of the truth/falsity attribution is embedded. Thus in the case of genuine disagreement, we have disagreement over the *truth value* of the relevant statement. If there is no disagreement, on the other hand, *a fortiori* there should not be disagreement over the truth value.

However, the proponent of NAT must claim that there is a disagreement in Gettier cases, between the relevant statement or belief of the subject and that of the person who possesses relevant knowledge in that situation, which is highly counterintuitive. For example, the subject in the Gettier situation says, "Smith has a Ford", and the person who *knows* that Smith has a Ford would agree. There seems no relevant disagreement here, even though there is no genuine *agreement* either (due to the contextual gap). In this sense, accidental truths lie between genuine agreement and genuine disagreement.

Also, the proponent of AT must claim that there is no disagreement in the relevant contextualist cases. That is true in such cases, where apparent disagreement due to the contextual gap should be dissolved when the context is clarified. For example, A claims that there is no milk in the fridge, in the sense that it can be used for coffee, whereas B claims that there is milk in the fridge, in the sense that it must be cleaned up. However, for any such contextualist case, there should be also the corresponding genuine disagreement case. Thus suppose that both A and B are true here. But another person, C, who claims that there is milk in the fridge in the sense of A, must be *disagreeing with* A, and therefore what C says should be judged *false* if what A says is true. We cannot say what C says is *also true*, if accidentally, otherwise we would effectively eliminate genuine disagreement in such cases.

Thus as long as there is a gap between genuine agreement and genuine disagreement, NAT is not tenable, and as long as there is genuine disagreement, AT is not tenable. Consequently, as long as we respect the intuition about the ordinary facts about agreement and disagreement, contextualism and deflationism are not compatible.