There is a considerable literature (including Björnsson and Almér, 2011; Crespo and Fernández, 2011; Sæbø, 2009; Stojanovic, 2007) on exchanges such as (1).

(1) A: This soup tastes great B: No, it’s horrible

What are A and B disagreeing about? What, if anything, gets entered onto A’s and B’s dialogue gameboards as a commitment resulting from this exchange? There is a variety of approaches to these cases which start from a notion of proposition defined in terms of truth in possible worlds and relativize this notion in some way to context possibly involving A’s and B’s beliefs, e.g. by adding a judgement index or argument.

We will argue instead that we should turn this around: we start from a notion of judgement, taking our inspiration from rich type theories, that is the judgement that an object a is of type T, a : T. An assertion represents our judgement about a situation being of a certain type. In a large number of cases there is, in addition to this judgement by an agent, also a putative fact of the matter: the situation actually is, or is not, of the type. When there is a fact of the matter a view of this can be entered as a commitment on the gameboard. Otherwise, we can only enter information about the judgement.

We cast this analysis in terms of TTR (type theory with records, Cooper, 2012) where judgements can be internalized within the theory as Austinian propositions (Ginzburg, 2012). We propose two types of Austinian propositions (2). (2a) is the type of subjective Austinian propositions which, in addition to a situation and a type, requires an agent. It is true just in case the agent judges the situation to be of the type. (2b) is a type of Austinian proposition which requires the presence of a situation and a type but leaves open whether there is an agent or not. Thus it includes both objective propositions (with just a situation and a type, true just in case the situation is of the type) and subjective propositions. Some support for the type (2b) perhaps comes from cases where the issue of whether there is a fact of the matter is unclear (3). This dialogue leaves underspecified whether A’s commitment is to a subjective or objective proposition.

If these are the two types of proposition available, we have a prediction about attitude predicates. They select for either (i) subjective propositions, using the type (2a) or (ii) either kind of proposition, using the type (2b). Case (i) is well-known from the literature: English find, German finden, Norwegian synes, Swedish tycka (see, e.g., Sæbø, 2009 for discussion). English think seems a clear example of an attitude predicate that occurs with both types of proposition. At first blush, however, predicates like English believe and Swedish tro seem to select uniquely for objective propositions. However, a sentence like (4) is not incoherent. It requires that the judging agent(s) is/are not the subject of believe. Related examples with Swedish tro are given in (5).
(2)  
\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{situation : } \text{Sit} \\
\text{type : } \text{Type} \\
\text{agent : } \text{Ind}
\end{array}
\]

(3)  
A: This milk is sour  
B: I’m not so sure

(4)  
I believe the soup is good

(5)  
\begin{enumerate}
\item a. Vår minne lurar oss att tro att människor med ett attraktivt yttre är trevligare än fula.  
\url{http://www.suntliv.nu/Amnen/Halsa/Artiklar-om-halsa/Darfor-tror-vi-att-vackra-manniskor-ar-trevligare/}  
\text{(29th Oct 2012)}
\item b. Jag önskar att jag vore lika vacker som Sebastian tror att han är (title of novel by Christer Hermansson, 2003)
\item c. trots den pinsamma missen tror jag soppan var rätt så god ändå  
\url{http://tantgulsblogg.se/en-spicy-thai-soppa-och-tant-gul-tokar-till-det/}  
\text{(29th Oct 2012)}
\end{enumerate}

References


