Outline

1. The Paradox of Asserting Clarity
2. Informative Clarity Assertions
3. The Missing Inference Hypothesis
4. Clarity & Awareness
It’s clear that Taylor Swift’s cat, Meredith, was forged in the great Furnace of Cuteness.
http://taylorswift.com/users/tswiftnation13/blogs/2947361
Simple vs. Personal Clarity

1. It’s clear that Taylor Swift’s cat, Meredith, was forged in the great Furnace of Cuteness. 
http://taylorswift.com/users/tswiftnation13/blogs/2947361

2. It’s clear to me that Taylor Swift’s cat, Meredith, was forged in the great Furnace of Cuteness.
Simple vs. Personal Clarity

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2. It’s clear to me that Taylor Swift’s cat, Meredith, was forged in the great Furnace of Cuteness.
3. It’s clear to everyone that Taylor Swift’s cat, Meredith, was forged in the great Furnace of Cuteness.
Simple vs. Personal Clarity

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3. It’s clear to everyone that Taylor Swift’s cat, Meredith, was forged in the great Furnace of Cuteness.

4. Is it clear to you that Taylor Swift’s cat, Meredith, was forged in the great Furnace of Cuteness?
Meredith
The Paradox of Asserting Clarity

(1) It is clear that there is a wait at Tartine.

(2) It is clear that there is a wait at Craftsman & Wolves.

Why is (1) true and (2) false?
The Paradox of Asserting Clarity

(1) It is clear that there is a wait at Tartine.

(2) It is clear that there is a wait at Craftsman & Wolves.

Why is (1) true and (2) false?
The Paradox of Asserting Clarity

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The Paradox of Asserting Clarity

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(2) # It is clear that there is a wait at Craftsman & Wolves.
The Paradox of Asserting Clarity

It is clear that there is a wait at Tartine.

It is clear that there is a wait at Craftsman & Wolves.

Why is (1) true and (2) false?
The Paradox of Asserting Clarity

We have evidence that there is a wait at Tartine: long line.
We have no evidence that there is a wait at Craftsman & Wolves.
The Paradox of Asserting Clarity

- We have **evidence** that there is a wait at Tartine: long line.

Tartine

Craftsman & Wolves
The Paradox of Asserting Clarity

We have evidence that there is a wait at Tartine: long line.
We have no evidence that there is a wait at Craftsman & Wolves.
The Paradox of Asserting Clarity

The evidence supporting a clarity assertion must be **publicly available**.
The Paradox of Asserting Clarity

- The evidence supporting a clarity assertion must be **publicly available**.
- We may privately know that Craftsman & Wolves will have a wait . . .
The Paradox of Asserting Clarity

- The evidence supporting a clarity assertion must be **publicly available**.
- We may privately know that Craftsman & Wolves will have a wait . . .
The Paradox of Asserting Clarity

- The evidence supporting a clarity assertion must be *publicly available*.
- We may privately know that Craftsman & Wolves will have a wait . . .

. . . but unless all discourse participants have access to that evidence, it is not *clear* that there will be a wait.
The Paradox of Asserting Clarity

It is clear that $p$ is true iff the publicly available evidence supports concluding $p$. 

It is clear that $p$ is asserted.

Assuming It is clear that $p$ is true, how can asserting it ever be informative?
The Paradox of Asserting Clarity

- *It is clear that* $p$ *is true iff the publicly available evidence supports concluding* $p$.
- But then all discourse participants should have concluded $p$ before *it is clear that* $p$ *is asserted.*
The Paradox of Asserting Clarity

- *It is clear that* \( p \) *is true iff the publicly available evidence supports concluding* \( p \).
- But then all discourse participants should have concluded \( p \) before *It is clear that* \( p \) *is asserted.*
- Assuming *It is clear that* \( p \) *is true, how can asserting it ever be informative?*
Sometimes the evidence does not need to be publicly available.
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(3) It is clear that Maliki has come out as the winner in the political crisis he provoked. He has made it more difficult for his Shia rivals to dissent while simultaneously confining his Sunni opponents in a position suitable for exerting pressure and exploiting divisions within their ranks. (COCA)

(4) And it is clear that even in flush times, the Olympics carry a considerable financial burden. The 1992 Barcelona Games left Spain with a $6.1 billion debt. Athens estimated that the 2004 Games would cost $1.6 billion, but in the end it was $16 billion. Meanwhile, it took Montreal nearly 30 years – until 2005 – to pay off the $2.7 billion it owed after the 1976 Summer Games. (COCA)
Informative Clarity Assertions

Sometimes the evidence never needs to be provided and the reasoning required is beyond the ken of the addressee.

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Holmes: (Bursting into Watson's office) It's clear that Moriarty is the murderer, but there's no time to explain! We must apprehend him at once!
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When the evidence supporting a clarity assertion is private, there is no expectation that other discourse participants will have already reached the same conclusion as the speaker. In these cases, clarity assertions can be informative.
The Paradox of Asserting Clarity

But what about our pastries?

Tartine

Craftsman & Wolves
The Paradox of Asserting Clarity

But what about our pastries?
Barker & Taranto (2003): Asserting clarity converts mutual belief to common belief.
Previous Solutions

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The Missing Inference Hypothesis

“Perhaps an assertion merely calls to the attention of the addressee some important fact already entailed by the common ground, but which somehow has not yet been added to the common ground” (Barker 2009: 257).
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- *It is clear that* $p$ *is true iff every discourse participant may perform a sound inference with some contextually salient evidence as premises and* $p$ *as conclusion (Bronnikov 2008).*
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This inference must be easy, but non-trivial.
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- This inference must be \textit{easy}, but \textit{non-trivial}.

- Asserting clarity invites each addressee to perform their own inference.
The Missing Inference Hypothesis

- Repeated clarity assertions with similar evidence

It's clear that there is a wait at Tartine. It's clear that there is a wait at Craftsman & Wolves. Necessarily true conclusions

(6) Take an integer \( n \) that is divisible by 9. It is clear that \( n \) is divisible by 3.
The Missing Inference Hypothesis

- Repeated clarity assertions with similar evidence

It’s clear that there is a wait at Tartine.

It’s clear that there is also a wait at Craftsman & Wolves.
The Missing Inference Hypothesis

- Repeated clarity assertions with similar evidence

It’s clear that there is a wait at Tartine.

- Necessarily true conclusions

It’s clear that there is also a wait at Craftsman & Wolves.
The Missing Inference Hypothesis

- Repeated clarity assertions with similar evidence

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- Necessarily true conclusions

(6) Take an integer $n$ that is divisible by 9. It is clear that $n$ is divisible by 3.

It’s clear that there is also a wait at Craftsman & Wolves.
But what if the addressee has already reached the inference?
The Missing Inference Hypothesis

But what if the addressee has already reached the inference?

(7) It is clear that we have a highly polarized, very sharp, and I think at times, too sharp level of anger expressed across the political aisles in this country. (COCA)
The Missing Inference Hypothesis

■ But what if the addressee has already reached the inference?

(7) It is clear that we have a highly polarized, very sharp, and I think at times, too sharp level of anger expressed across the political aisles in this country. (COCA)

■ What if the “inference” associated with a clarity assertion is trivial?
The Missing Inference Hypothesis

- But what if the addressee has already reached the inference?
  
  (7) It is clear that we have a highly polarized, very sharp, and I think at times, too sharp level of anger expressed across the political aisles in this country. (COCA)

- What if the “inference” associated with a clarity assertion is trivial?
  
  (8) Clearly, it might be warmer in LA.
“Perhaps an assertion merely calls to the attention of the *addressee* some important fact already entailed by the common ground, but which somehow has not yet been added to the common ground” (Barker 2009: 257).
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Asserting the clarity of $p$ can make the addressee aware of $p$. The addressee may have already implicitly believed $p$, but failed to recognize $p$ due to inattentiveness.
Awareness

- Three slogans:

  - Unawareness is not uncertainty;
  - Unawareness is not introspective;
  - Unawareness is easily overturned (Franke & de Jager 2011).

Other models: von Fintel & Gilles (2010), Yalcin (2011)

Formal model:

- $P$: set of propositions an agent is aware of under full awareness
- $W$: set of epistemically possible worlds
- $v_w$: a valuation function on propositions for each $w \in W$
- $\alpha = \langle U_t, v_t \rangle$: an agent's awareness state
- $U_t \subseteq P$: set of unmentionable propositions at time $t$
- $v_t$: a possibly partial valuation function on unmentionables at $t$
- $W_\alpha_t = \{ w \in W | v \subseteq v_w \}$: set of epistemically possible worlds under unawareness at $t$
Awareness

- Three slogans: Unawareness is not uncertainty;
Awareness

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- Formal model:

\[\text{\(P\): set of propositions an agent is aware of under full awareness}\]
\[\text{\(W\): set of epistemically possible worlds}\]
\[\nu_w : \mathcal{P} \to \{0, 1\}: \text{valuation function on propositions for each } w \in \mathcal{W}\]
\[\alpha = \langle \mathcal{U}, \nu \rangle: \text{an agent’s awareness state}\]
\[\mathcal{U}_t \subseteq \mathcal{P}: \text{set of unmentionable propositions at time } t\]
\[\nu_t : \mathcal{U} \to \{0, 1\}: \text{possibly partial valuation function on unmentionables at } t\]
\[\mathcal{W}_t = \{ w \in \mathcal{W} | \nu \subseteq \nu_w \}: \text{set of epistemically possible worlds under unawareness at } t\]
Awareness

\( p = \text{There is a wait at Tartine.} \)
\( q = \text{Tartine has great croissants.} \)
\( r = \text{Craftsman & Wolves has great scones.} \)

\( \mathcal{P} = \{p, q, r\} \)
\( \mathcal{U}_0 = \{p\} \)
\( v_0(p) \) is undefined
\( \mathcal{W}_{\alpha_0} = \mathcal{W} \)

*It is clear that there is a wait at Tartine.*
\( \mathcal{U}_1 = \emptyset \)
\( \mathcal{W}_{\alpha_1} = \{w \in \mathcal{W} | \text{It is clear that there is a wait at Tartine in } w\} \)
(7) It is clear that we have a highly polarized, very sharp, and I think at times, too sharp level of anger expressed across the political aisles in this country. (COCA)

\[ p = \text{We have a highly polarized level of anger} \ldots \]
\[ p \in \mathcal{U}_0 \]
\[ v_0(p) = 1 \]
\[ \mathcal{W}_{\alpha_0} = \{w \in \mathcal{W}|v_w(p) = 1\} \]

\[ p \not\in \mathcal{U}_1 \]
\[ \mathcal{W}_{\alpha_1} = \{w \in \mathcal{W}|p \text{ is clear in } w\} \]
Clearly, it might be warmer in LA.

\[ p = \text{It might be warmer in LA} \]
\[ p \in \mathcal{U}_0 \]
\[ v_0(p) = 0 \]
\[ \mathcal{W}_{\alpha_0} = \{ w \in \mathcal{W} | v_w p = 0 \} \]

\[ p \notin \mathcal{U}_1 \]
\[ \mathcal{W}_{\alpha_1} = \{ w \in \mathcal{W} | p \text{ is clear in } w \} \]
Why assert clarity to raise awareness?

- Asserting the clarity of $p$ ensures that addressees are aware of $p$ for further reasoning/discussion.
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- This analysis could extend this to other uninformative assertions (e.g. *We know*, *You know*, Epistemic *must*, etc.)
Why assert clarity to raise awareness?

- Asserting the clarity of $p$ ensures that addressees are aware of $p$ for further reasoning/discussion.
- This analysis could extend this to other uninformative assertions (e.g. *We know*, *You know*, Epistemic *must*, etc.)
- Key point: We can make sense of uninformative utterances in general by having a model of discourse updates that considers more than standard notions of informativity.
Why assert clarity to raise awareness?

- Asserting the clarity of \( p \) may be weaker than asserting \( p \) (Barker & Taranto 2003, Barker 2009, Wolf & Cohen 2011).
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- Asserting the clarity of \( p \) may be weaker than asserting \( p \) (Barker & Taranto 2003, Barker 2009, Wolf & Cohen 2011).
- Asserting the clarity of \( p \) invites the addressees to conclude \( p \) on their own (Bronnikov 2008). They don’t have to take the speaker’s word for it.
Why assert clarity to raise awareness?

- Asserting the clarity of \( p \) may be weaker than asserting \( p \) (Barker & Taranto 2003, Barker 2009, Wolf & Cohen 2011).
- Asserting the clarity of \( p \) invites the addressees to conclude \( p \) on their own (Bronnikov 2008). They don’t have to take the speaker’s word for it.
- If \( p \) were asserted in order to raise awareness rather than inform, an addressee could take the speaker to view them as ignorant. Asserting clarity implies that the addressee is knowledgable, but simply inattentive.
THANKS!

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References


