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Moderately Sensitive Semantics

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1. INTRODUCTION

What is context sensitivity? What tests are reliable indicators of this phenomenon? Here I shall take up and develop some themes of Herman Cappelen and Ernie Lepore's book *Insensitive Semantics*, in order to better understand the phenomenon, and the tests that reveal it. If we eschew such tests, and rely on intuitions about what is said, then, Cappelen and Lepore argue, it is hard to resist the conclusion that all of language is contextually sensitive. While most semanticists take themselves to be Moderate Contextualists—who hold that natural language contains a broad but limited stock of context-sensitive items—Cappelen and Lepore claim that Moderate Contextualism is an unstable position. The same intuitions that lead semanticists to espouse Moderate Contextualism should lead them to instead espouse Radical Contextualism—which is the view that context sensitivity is so rampant, no natural language sentence ever semantically expresses a proposition independent of context. The phenomenon of what is said is so unconstrained that, if we try to capture it semantically, we shall be forced to adopt Radical Contextualism. Since, Cappelen and Lepore claim, the arguments for Moderate Contextualism hinge on the desire to account for what is said, there is a slippery slope from Moderate Contextualism to Radical Contextualism.

Cappelen and Lepore level three main objections against Radical Contextualism, and thus, if their slippery slope stands, against Moderate Contextualism. They claim that the contextualist classifies as context-sensitive items that fail their three tests, which is an unacceptable result. They then argue that, if Radical Contextualism were true, we would be unable to communicate with each other with the ease and reliability that we, in fact, routinely employ. Finally, they claim that Radical Contextualism is internally inconsistent.

In what follows, I shall defend Moderate Contextualism against both Cappelen and Lepore's slippery slope argument and their claim that Moderate Contextualism posits context-sensitive items that fail their three tests. Specifically, I will

argue that the Inter-Contextual Disquotation/Real Context Shifting Argument test classifies more items as context-sensitive than Cappelen and Lepore suggest. In addition to the basic set, I shall argue that the ICD/RCSA test itself indicates that there is a range of items that are also contextually sensitive. I will refer to this set of contextually sensitive items that are not included in the basic set as the intermediate set. The intermediate set, which *is* determined by Cappelen and Lepore's ICD/RCSA test, is quite restricted; it excludes many of the items that the Radical Contextualist would count as context-sensitive. For example, the intermediate set includes "tall", "ready", "enough", and "every", among others, but does not include "weighs 80 kg", "is red", and "is tall for a pregnant giraffe that is standing up straight". Thus if we take the ICD/RCSA test seriously, as I think we should, it provides the Moderate Contextualist with a way of blocking Cappelen and Lepore's slippery slope argument. The ICD/RCSA test gives us a means of investigating contextual sensitivity without relying on intuitions about what is said. We have a sober and restricted means of determining when a given item is contextually sensitive, and this means tells in favor of Moderate Contextualism.

I shall then consider the other two tests in light of these considerations. I will argue that ICD/RCSA is not negotiable as a test of context sensitivity, and so we should look to understand how the items in the intermediate set could appear to fail the other two tests, despite their being context-sensitive. I provide an account of how the members of the intermediate set behave in 'says that' reports and collected predications that explains their apparent failure on the Report and Collection tests. My account proceeds by first considering how the semantic values of items including "then", "there", "local", "nearby", "left", and "right" are determined in reports and collected predications, and then simply extending this account to the intermediate items. The investigation sheds some light on the complex phenomenon of non-indexical context sensitivity.

Since I am only concerned with defending Moderate Contextualism, I shall not address Cappelen and Lepore's charge that Radical Contextualism is internally inconsistent. As Moderate Contextualism is in fact a stable position, this criticism does not apply; the charge is specific to Radical Contextualism, as it rests on the claim that every sentence is contextually sensitive. I will also not address the claim that contextualism cannot account for our ability to communicate with each other across contexts in the main body of the chapter, though I have included an appendix in which I discuss the matter. I argue there that Cappelen and Lepore's positive view, Semantic Minimalism, cannot explain our communicative practices any better than Moderate or even Radical Contextualism.

Although it may appear that I thoroughly disagree with the view presented in *Insensitive Semantics*, this is not so. Cappelen and Lepore's main point concerns semantic methodology, in particular, our unwarranted reliance on intuitions about what is said. On this point, I am in full agreement with them. Their point is an important one, and should be recognized as such. Unfortunately, this point—their main point—has been overlooked because of the provocatively

small size of their “basic set”. If I am right, however, this is no more than an artifact of their misapplication of their own tests, and not itself reflective of the quality and plausibility of their position. I hope that this chapter will help to clarify this point, and so allow us to see how valuable Cappelen and Lepore’s *real* contribution is to the debate.

2. MODERATE CONTEXTUALISM AND REAL CONTEXT SHIFTING ARGUMENTS

Let us begin with Cappelen and Lepore’s (henceforth CL) third test, which concerns Inter-Contextual Disquotation and ‘Real’ Context Shifting Arguments. This test is, I believe, the most important and the most telling. CL note that:

It is a constitutive mark of a context sensitive expression *e* that it can be used with different extensions (semantic values) in different contexts of utterance . . . it follows from this constitutive fact alone that for any context sensitive expression *e* our use of *e* in *this* context . . . with whatever extension it takes on in this context need not be the same as whatever extension it takes on in another context. There can be no denying that this is so.

Based on this constitutive fact about context sensitivity, the following test recommends itself for judging whether *e* behaves as it should by actually *using e* in a context of utterance . . . and simultaneously describ[ing] another use of *e* with a distinct semantic value in another context.

Since *e* is not context sensitive unless its semantic values can shift from context to context, and since the semantic values *e* takes in, say, *this* context of utterance . . . can be distinct from the semantic value it takes in some other context, to test whether *e* is context sensitive or not, simply use *e*; in order to use *e*, put it in a sentence *S* and then use *S*. *e* is context sensitive only if there is a true utterance of an instance of the following schema for Inter-Contextual Disquotation (ICD for short, where *S* contains *e*):

(ICD) There are (or can be) false utterances of “*S*” even though *S*. (2005: 104–5)

CL claim that the members of their basic set pass this test with ease. Consider, for example, the following obviously true remark: there are false utterances of “I am female” even though I am female. The ICD test has a sister test; if an item passes ICD, we should be able to construct a Real Context Shifting Argument (RCSA) for the item, and vice versa. An RCSA is essentially an ICD, but with the contextual details explicitly supplied, rather than left to the interpreter’s imagination. We may think of ICD and RCSA as two sides of the same test.

We might, for example, construct the following RCSA for “then”:

Then Let’s think back to the year 2000. Barry lived in California then. The other day, Gideon and I were talking about last summer. He said “Barry lived in California then”, but that was false because Barry was living in Princeton last summer. This is so even though, thinking back to 2000, Barry lived in California then.

Such an RCSA helps us fill out the otherwise awkward “there are false utterances of ‘Barry lived in California then’ even though Barry lived in California then”. It should be clear that RCSAs simply function to flesh out the bare bones of the ICDs; the difference between an RCSA and an ICD is only one of packaging.

The ICD/RCSA test is a convincing test of context sensitivity. If an item can be shown to pass it, it is hard to deny that it is context-sensitive. On the other hand, if an item does not pass ICD/RCSA, then this is good evidence that it is not contextually sensitive, and any data or intuitions to the contrary should be reconsidered. CL describe the test as reflecting a constitutive fact about what it is to be context-sensitive; I have no quarrel with this claim, but rather embrace it. This test should be taken seriously.

2.1. Do the Items in the Intermediate Set Really Fail This Test?

Let us consider just which items pass ICD/RCSA. CL write as though all items that lie outside their basic set fail ICD/RCSA, though in providing examples of such failures, they focus exclusively on items that only a Radical Contextualist would consider context-sensitive—predicates such as “knows”, “is red”, and “weighs 80 kg”. Many a Moderate Contextualist would deny that these expressions are contextually sensitive, while maintaining that the basic set is too restrictive. At this point in their argument, it is understandable why CL would focus exclusively on these items; they have already argued that there is no such stable position as that which the Moderate Contextualist would endorse—there is only their position, which acknowledges no semantic context sensitivity outside of the basic set, or Radical Contextualism. This argument proceeds by way of claiming that the Moderate Contextualist cannot embrace the intuitions that lead to his moderate case without also embracing those that lead to a radical one. There is alleged to be a slippery slope between Moderate and Radical Contextualism, so that the Moderate Contextualist has no principled way of drawing the line between his items and those of the Radical Contextualist.

Since CL take themselves to have established this, they may suppose there is no reason why they cannot object equally well to the Moderate’s position by focusing on the more radical items. Thus they focus on whether items such as “knows” and “weighs 80kg” fail their tests. This transition is too hasty, however. All the Moderate Contextualist needs is some way or other to resist the slide down the slippery slope, and she cannot be held responsible for the Radical Contextualist’s failings. If there is some limited range of items outside the basic set that pass ICD/RCSA, then the Moderate Contextualist will have found the firm footing she needs along the slope to Radical Contextualism. She will have found a principled way to draw the line between the items she takes to be context-sensitive, and the multitude that the Radical Contextualist classifies as such.

I will argue in what follows that there is a set of items that is intermediate between the tiny basic set and the Radical Contextualist's teeming horde. These intermediate items easily pass ICD/RCSA, while items like "knows", "weighs 80 kg", and "is tall for a pregnant giraffe that is standing up straight" do not. Since passing this test is matter of our having intuitions about the truth or acceptability of various stories or utterances, I have informally polled people who are not involved in this debate, and have found that their intuitions accord with mine. My informal poll is a far cry from a controlled experiment, and such an experiment might prove useful here; it would certainly trump my poll, were the results found to ultimately differ. A poll, however informal, is valuable in that it keeps the debate from reducing to SJ's-intuitions-versus-CL's. The purpose of the poll is to reflect that I am not alone in construing the data this way. (Nor are my opinions only shared by Moderate Contextualists with a stake in the debate. Most of the people I spoke with were either not philosophers of language, or were not philosophers at all.)

Consider the following Real Context Shifting Arguments for various intermediate items.¹

Enough

I've just moved apartments, and I'm hanging a picture in my living room. It's pretty light, so a small picture hook is strong enough. But yesterday, my friend was helping me hang a 25lb mirror, and he said "Oh, a small picture hook is strong enough". That was false (and I have a cracked mirror to prove it), even though, given how light this picture is, a small picture hook is plenty strong enough.

Ready

John is woefully unprepared from his APA interviews, and is about to pass out from nerves. He really needs more time before his interviews; he is simply not ready. There is an evangelist hovering around the convention, looking to see whether there are any lost souls for whom the time is right to accept Jesus Christ as their Personal Savior. Spotting John, the evangelist says "Ah, *he's* ready!" This is true; as it turned out the evangelist managed to convert John, in large part thanks to his looming interviews, coupled with the fact that he just wasn't ready.

Every

Princeton has really clamped down on grade inflation. I'm teaching Intro to Logic this semester, and it is definitely not the case that every student will get an A. I'm going to make sure of that, or else the administration

¹ See Hawthorne (2006) for more examples of RCSAs for items not found in the basic set.

will get ticked off with me. My friend Des has a lot more guts about these things than me, though. He was telling me about his Kant class the other day, and said “My students are great. I don’t care what the administration says. Every student will get an A!” That was true, too—I saw his grade sheet—but as for my class, it’s decidedly false that every student will get an A.

It’s raining

I’m in New Jersey right now, and the weather is beautiful. It’s one of those clear spring days, and it’s definitely not raining. My poor grandmother called me from Scotland this morning though, and one of the first things she told me was, “it’s raining”. She was right—I checked the weather report for Scotland. Anxious to make sure the day would remain nice, I looked outside. No worries; it wasn’t raining.

Tall

Seeing as how he measures 6’3”, Tom is tall. He plays basketball from time to time, and once he called me from the court, because he was feeling nervous before the game. To reassure him, I said “well, it’ll help that you’re tall”. He replied “are you kidding me? You should look at the guys I’m up against. I’m not tall at all!”. He was right (the other guys were approaching 7’!), even though at 6’3”, Tom is definitely tall.

These scenarios are perfectly intelligible, and as natural as anything else in this debate. And as far as I am able to tell, they all count as RCSAs. In each of them, the sentence in question is *used* in the context (twice in fact—once at the beginning, and again at the end), and mentioned in another, where it receives a different truth value. By CL’s own standards, “enough”, “ready”, “every”, “tall”, and “it’s raining” pass their RCSA test for context sensitivity.

There are two objections to the validity of these RCSAs that I can imagine that CL might raise, but they each turn out to be non-starters since they also apply to RCSAs for non-indexical members of the basic set such as “then”. The first is that, when we use the sentence a second time at the end of the RCSA, we need a brief remark to ‘bring us back’ to the original context. For example, in *Enough* we have:

I’ve just moved apartments, and I’m hanging a picture in my living room. It’s pretty light, so a small picture hook is strong enough. But yesterday, my friend was helping me hang a 25lb mirror, and he said “Oh, a small picture hook is strong enough”. That was false (and I have a cracked mirror to prove it), even though, *given how light this picture is*, a small picture hook is plenty strong enough.

The italicized phrase makes a significant contribution to the naturalness of the RCSA. Now, we do not need to supply such a phrase in giving an RCSA for an indexical. For example, I might simply write “I am female. The other day Bill said “I am female”. This was false, even though I am female”. No phrase, however minimal, is needed to bring us back to our context. This, however, is not so with those members of the basic set that are not pure indexicals. Consider the RCSA we gave for “then”, for example:

Let’s think back to the year 2000. Barry lived in California then. The other day, Gideon and I were talking about last summer. He said “Barry lived in California then”, but that was false because Barry was living in Princeton last summer. This is so even though, *thinking back to 2000*, Barry lived in California then.

Removing the italicized phrase here undermines the RCSA for “then” as much (if not more) than removing the corresponding phrase from *Enough*. We cannot insist that an RCSA be no more complex than is needed for a pure indexical or we will rule out items such as “then”.

The second challenge to the validity of my RCSAs might hold that, for an RCSA to be successful for a predicate “is F”, we must be able to remark in the RCSA that the relevant utterance is false because the speaker was not concerned with F-hood. CL end their unsuccessful RCSA for “weighs 80 kg” by writing “If someone were to utter “Rupert weighs 80 kg” her utterance would be false, even though he weighs 80 kg. *The utterance would be false, not because Rupert’s weight has changed, but because the speaker is concerned with something other than what Rupert weighs, for example with what a scale registers were he to step on it fully clothed*” (2005: 111; my emphasis). Now, one *can* end an RCSA for a pure indexical in such a manner, for example, “Bill’s utterance of “I am female” is false because Bill was concerned with something other than whether I am female”. But we cannot so amend our RCSA for “then”, on pain of incoherence:

Let’s think back to the year 2000. Barry lived in California then. The other day, Gideon and I were talking about last summer. He said “Barry lived in California then”, but that was false because Gideon was concerned with something other than what Barry was doing then.

This amended RCSA is clearly unacceptable; it is every bit as bizarre as CL’s proffered RCSA for “weighs 80kg”. Again, unless we are to decide that items such as “then” are not contextually sensitive, we cannot require that an RCSA for an expression *e* contain a remark that the false utterance of “. . . *e* . . .” was false because its speaker was not concerned with *e*. This cannot be a constraint on a successful RCSA. I will thus take myself to

have met CL's challenge, and have provided RCSAs for the intermediate items above.

A question that now arises is whether we can construct successful RCSAs for just about any item, as the Radical Contextualist might hope, or whether only a modest collection of items are amenable to RCSAs. It is not a trivial matter to construct an RCSA for an item, and it seems to me that there are many items that do not pass the RCSA test. For example, the RCSA that CL attempt to provide for "knows" (i.e. their *Known Rupert*) is decidedly awkward, and I'm not convinced that mine is much better:

Knows

Right now I'm writing a paper on semantics, and am not thinking about epistemology. I know a lot of things right now, including that I have hands. But earlier today, Jim called me, and we talked about epistemology—in particular about the possibility of being a brain in a vat. I said "Wow, I guess I don't know that I have hands!" That was true, since I can't rule out the possibility of my being a brain in a vat. But now that I'm back to writing my semantics paper, I know that I have hands.

This RCSA is considerably less natural, to my ear at least, than the ones above. Perhaps a better one could be constructed, or perhaps "knows" is just not context-sensitive, as various leading theorists have argued (see Stanley 2005; Hawthorne 2004, for example). Insofar as some putatively context-sensitive expressions pass RCSA while others fail it, the Moderate Contextualist has found her way off of CL's slippery slope.

I am myself neutral on the question of whether knowledge attributions are contextually sensitive, but I would very much like to be sure that Moderate Contextualism does not lead inexorably to Radical Contextualism. CL argue that the intuitions that tell us that "is tall" is context-sensitive should also tell us that "is tall for a giraffe" is context-sensitive. They ask: Are we talking about pregnant giraffes? (Pregnancy, they tell us, affects giraffes' necks in ways that are relevant to determining their height.) Once we have decided whether or not we have in mind pregnant giraffes, the questions arise: Are the giraffes in question standing up straight? Have they just taken a bath? (CL inform us that bathing makes a difference to a giraffe's height.) CL claim that all these further factors are ones that start to seem contextually relevant, once we start down the contextualist road. (Why this is so is not wholly apparent; to me these seem more like cases of vagueness or perhaps mere determinability, but let us put that aside.)

The challenge to the Moderate Contextualist is then to provide a principled way of acknowledging the context sensitivity of "is tall" without allowing that "is tall for a pregnant giraffe that is standing up straight" is also context-sensitive. Here, CL's RCSA test is most helpful. Consider the following (decidedly odd) RCSA:

Tall for a pregnant giraffe that is standing up straight

Georgina is simply not tall for a pregnant giraffe that is standing up straight. No one who saw her would claim that she was. But the other day, we were talking about pregnant giraffes that are standing up straight but have just taken a bath. I said “Georgina is tall for a pregnant giraffe that is standing up straight!” What I said was true, because taking a bath shrinks giraffes by a small amount. Of course, now that I am just looking at a dry Georgina, she is definitely not tall for a pregnant giraffe that is standing up straight.

There is a clear difference in acceptability and plausibility between the RCSA above, and *Tall*, reprinted below:

Seeing as how he measures 6’3”, Tom is tall. He plays basketball from time to time, and once he called me from the court, because he was feeling nervous before the game. To reassure him, I said “well, it’ll help that you’re tall”. He replied “are you kidding me? You should look at the guys I’m up against. I’m not tall at all!”. He was right (the other guys were approaching 7’!), even though at 6’3”, Tom is definitely tall.

The Moderate Contextualist, it seems, *can* distinguish between “is tall” and “is tall for a pregnant giraffe that is standing up straight”; and she can do so using CL’s own test for context sensitivity! Whether one can construct an RSCA for a term then, seems a robust and theoretically well-grounded test. I fully agree with CL that it is an important test for context sensitivity, though of course I disagree with them about which terms pass it. As CL emphasize throughout their book, though, their main concern is with semantic methodology, rather than with defending the boundaries of their basic set. Inasmuch as predicates such as “is tall for a pregnant giraffe that is standing up straight” are not amenable to RCSAs, the introduction of the RCSA as a benchmark is an extremely valuable contribution to the debate.

RCSA’s sister test, ICD, is also very helpful in this regard. My intuitions, and the intuitions of the neutral parties polled, are that the following ICDs are easily heard as true:²

FN:2

I There are false utterances of “I’m female” even though I’m female.

Now There are false utterances of “Jason is reading an email now” even though Jason is reading an email now.

Ready There are false utterances of “SJ is ready” even though SJ is ready.

² As I say, I did not conduct a controlled experiment, but the people I spoke to were instructed to hold fixed tense/time of evaluation, facts about the world, and the referents of proper names.

Enough There are false utterances of “steel is strong enough” even though steel is strong enough.

It’s raining There are false utterances of “it’s raining” even though it’s raining.

No one I spoke to had any difficulty hearing the above group (*I*, *Now*, *Ready*, *Enough*, and *It’s raining*) as true.

One or two people found the following ones unnatural, though they reported that they were able to hear them as true if they thought about them:

Then There are false utterances of “John went to the store then” even though John went to the store then.

Tall There are false utterances of “Tom is tall” even though Tom is tall.

Every There are false utterances of “every student got an A” even though every student got an A.

It is important to note that while *Tall* and *Every* were less natural than *Ready*, *Enough*, and *It’s raining*, so was the basic set member *Then*. *Tall* and *Every* were not *more* difficult for people to hear than *Then*. And remarkably enough, *Ready*, *Enough*, and *It’s raining* struck people as more natural than even *Then*!

Overwhelmingly, however, people could not hear the following ones as true:

Tall for a pregnant giraffe that is standing up straight There are false utterances of “Georgina is tall for a pregnant giraffe that is standing up straight” even though Georgina is tall for a pregnant giraffe that is standing up straight.

Red There are false utterances of “Clifford is red” even though Clifford is red.

Weighs 80kg There are false utterances of “Smith weighs 80kg” even though Smith weighs 80kg.

Of these, *Red* was the only one that anyone even wondered whether they could hear as true. It turned out, though, that this had to do with the vagueness of “red” — not with the possibility of our being concerned with the color of, say, Clifford’s innards, to take CL’s example. Everyone was confident about the falsity of the ICDs containing “weighs 80kg” and “is tall for a pregnant giraffe that is standing up straight”. People were confident that these statements could not be true.

These intuitions are exactly those that the Moderate Contextualist would predict, and they accord well with naturalness of the corresponding RSCAs. Thus if we grant CL’s methodology of testing items for context sensitivity in this manner, and embrace ICD/RCSA as a valid and accurate test, then Moderate

Contextualism emerges as the leading view. Minimalism wrongly predicts that many items that easily pass will in fact fail, and Radical Contextualism wrongly predicts that items that fail will in fact pass. Moderate Contextualism makes the correct predictions. This test also serves to rescue the Moderate Contextualist from CL's slippery slope. Thus, adopting CL's methodology seems to vindicate Moderate Contextualism.

3. THE OTHER TWO TESTS

The ICD/RCSA test is not the only test that CL offer. They suggest that we adopt two additional tests for context sensitivity, which I will refer to as the Report test, and the Collection test. The Report test concerns inter-contextual disquotation. An item is context-sensitive, they claim, only if it "typically blocks inter-contextual disquotational indirect reports" (2005: 88). They write:

Suppose you suspect, or at least want to ascertain whether, *e* is context sensitive. Take an utterance *u* of a sentence *S* containing *e* in context *C*. Let *C'* be a context relevantly different from *C* (i.e. different according to those standards significant according to contextualists about *e*). If there's a true disquotational* indirect report of *u* in *C'*, then that's evidence that *S* is context insensitive. (To be 'disquotational*' just means you can adjust the semantic values of components of *S* that are generally recognized as context sensitive, i.e., we just test for the controversial components.) (2005: 89)

CL argue that the members of their basic set pass this test with flying colors. If Bill utters "I am male", Mary cannot correctly report him by saying "Bill said that I am male". In contrast, they claim that items that are context-sensitive according to the contextualist often fail this test. If Nina utters "John is ready" in the course of discussing an exam he is to take, CL, in the context of writing their book at a café, can correctly report her by saying "Nina said that John is ready".

The next test, the Collection test, concerns so-called collected predications. On this test they write:

If a verb phrase *v* is context sensitive . . . then on the basis of merely knowing that there are two contexts of utterance in which "A *v*-s" and "B *v*-s" are true respectively, we *cannot* automatically infer that there is a context in which '*v*' can be used to describe what A and B have both done . . . On the other hand, if for a range of true utterances of the form "A *v*-s" and "B *v*-s" we obviously *can* describe what they all have in common by *using* '*v*' . . . then that's evidence in favor of the view that '*v*' in these different utterances has the same semantic content, and hence, is not context sensitive. (2005: 99; original emphasis)

An indexical such as 'yesterday' clearly passes this test; if there is a true utterance of "John left yesterday", and a true utterance in another context of "Bill left yesterday", we cannot 'automatically assume' that there is a context in which "John and Bill left yesterday" is true. In contrast, they suggest, from a true utterance of "John

is ready”, and a true utterance of “Bill is ready”, then, as they put it, the following collective description is perfectly natural: “Both John and Bill are ready”.

Given that the intermediate items pass ICD/RCSA while apparently failing the other two tests, we appear to have a tension in CL’s own theory. Whatever CL’s personal convictions may be, it seems that people overwhelmingly have the intuitions that suggest the intermediate items pass ICD/RCSA. On the other hand, it does appear that the intermediate items fail the Report and Collection tests.

One option is to reject ICD/RCSA as a test for context sensitivity. This option seems to me to be the least attractive, for reasons independent of my favoring Moderate Contextualism. The ICD/RCSA test captures a constitutive feature of context sensitivity. CL themselves insist on this:

it is a constitutive mark of a context sensitive expression *e* that it can be used with different extensions (semantic values) in different contexts of utterance . . . It follows from this constitutive fact alone that for any context sensitive expression *e* our use of *e* in *this* context . . . with whatever extensions it takes on in this context need not be the same as whatever extension it takes on in another context. There can be no denying this is so. (2005: 104)

They go on to notice that it is the truth of an ICD statement containing *e* that guarantees the inadequacy of a disquotational T-statement for *e*. If ‘S’ contains *e* and there can be false utterances of ‘S’ even though S, then clearly the following biconditional cannot hold: ‘S’ is true iff S. CL point out that ICD is precisely what shows us that the biconditional “*I am female*” is true iff *I am female* is false. There can be false utterances of “I am female” even though I am female, so this biconditional is false, and therefore unusable in a T-schema, or any similar semantic framework. If an item passes ICD, then we cannot give its truth conditions disquotationally, for doing so would result in a biconditional that is false, precisely because we have not recognized the item’s context sensitivity. If an item passes ICD, and relatedly, RCSA, it must be recognized as contextually sensitive.³ I see no way of denying this fact, and I do not believe that CL would care to deny it either.

FN:3

Since it is hard to see how an item could pass the ICD/RCSA test but not be contextually sensitive, let us try to understand how the intermediate items could appear to fail the Report and Collection tests despite their being contextually

³ CL speak at times as if none of their three tests were necessary, nor jointly sufficient, for establishing that an item is contextually sensitive. It seems to me quite possible, though, that a true ICD is sufficient for an item to be counted as contextually sensitive, provided that the truth of the ICD cannot be traced to vagueness, ambiguity, or such factors. Constructing a corresponding RCSA for the item is important in ruling out those factors; the minimal ICD might be heard as true for such extraneous reasons, but in producing an RCSA we can ensure that we are paying attention only to relevant differences between contexts. If an ICD for an item is true, and its truth cannot be traced to vagueness, ambiguity, etc, then it is hard to see how that item could fail to be context-sensitive. Certainly, the truth of the ICD guarantees that we cannot give a disquotational T-schema for the sentence.

sensitive. I will argue that once we have a better understanding of the nature and behavior of context-sensitive items *other than the pure indexicals*, it will become clear how some context-sensitive items might seem to fail these two tests. In what follows, I will discuss how the semantic values of context-sensitive items such as “then”, “there”, “nearby”, “local”, “left”, and “right” are determined when they occur in the scope of ‘says that’ reports, and in collected predications. I offer an account of how their values are determined in such constructions, and argue that the account extends naturally to the intermediate items. The account allows us to see why the intermediate items appear to fail the Report and Collection tests, thereby resolving the theoretical tension generated by their passing ICD/RCSA while failing the other two tests.

The account I will offer is not intended as a full-fledged theory, but is rather somewhat schematic in nature. I do not doubt that there is more to be said about the items in question. I have also tried to remain neutral between the various moderate theories of context sensitivity, and have not tied my account to any particular one.

Let us begin to develop our account by noting that the intermediate items are *not* always amenable to being disquotationally reported, or collected. It is not difficult to construct a scenario in which such reports and collections are unacceptable. Consider the following scenario, for example (adapted from Leslie 2004):

3.1. John’s APA Nightmare

John is on the job market, and about to be interviewed for his dream job. Unfortunately, he hasn’t prepared for the interview at all. He can barely even remember what his thesis is about, and is unbelievably nervous.

Now, the night before John’s APA nightmare, he was very hungry. People were going out for dinner, and inquired if John was in a position to eat dinner right then. He was indeed ready to eat dinner, and appropriately responded, “Yes, I’m ready”.

John’s classmate Mary, on the other hand, is very well prepared for her interviews. She has her dissertation summary down pat, has her syllabi memorized, and is well equipped to answer any questions thrown at her. Her friend takes one look at her confident demeanor and remarks “I gotta hand it to you. You are ready”.

Report test

The interviewing committee decides that they will allow John to reschedule, if his thesis advisor agrees that he needs to take more time to prepare. The thesis advisor disquotationally* reports John’s utterance by saying “Hey, he said himself last night that he’s ready”. The report is simply false under these circumstances.

Collection test

The interviewing committee reacts with surprise when they hear this, since John looks to them to be woefully unprepared, especially in contrast to Mary. The thesis advisor collects the two true utterances that attribute readiness to John and Mary, and remarks in response: “Nope, they’re both ready”. The collection is false as described.

If there is some salient activity to be ready for, disquotational reports and collections only strike us as true if they pertain to that salient activity. Parallel situations are easily produced for the other intermediate items. This is not to say that the intermediate items pass the Report and Collection tests after all. Recanati (2006) discusses examples such as my example above, but CL (2006*b*) reply that the existence of such scenarios does not count against their view. In particular, they note that the existence of *some* contexts in which the relevant reports and collections may take place, despite relevant contextual differences, is all that they require. We still need an account of why we are able to *ever* disquotationally report and collect in the face of relevant differences in context.

In their recent article “Shared Content”, Cappelen and Lepore suggest that our intuitions in scenarios such as the one above are tracking speech act content rather than semantic content; the salience of the APA interview leads us to focus on expressed propositions that are relevant to it, and thereby ‘blind us’ to the minimal, shared semantic content (2006*c*). They encourage us to look to contexts of ‘ignorance’ and ‘indifference’: contexts in which we might, for example, say “John said he was ready” without knowing or caring exactly what activity was under discussion at the time of John’s utterance. The ignorance and indifference constitute relevant differences between the contexts, yet such differences do not render disquotational reports or collections unacceptable.

Of course, it is vital that the reports and collections we consider occur in contexts that are “relevantly different” from the contexts of the original utterances. Clearly, it is irrelevant to consider reporting and collecting contexts in which the relevant contextual factors are the same as in the original context. As CL note in their reply to Hawthorne, “we can disquotationally report uses of ‘I if the right circumstances are in place, i.e. if the reporter is identical to the original speaker” (2006*a*). The question then becomes: under what circumstances are two contexts ‘relevantly different’ from each other?

CL themselves clearly do not think that there is an easy answer to this question; that this is so becomes clear in the course of their response to Hawthorne (CL 2006*a*). Hawthorne (2006) notes that ‘nearby’ and ‘left’ seem to fail the Report test. Hawthorne writes:

Let us try ‘left’ and ‘nearby’. Suppose Ernie is in New York City and I am in Birmingham. Ernie says ‘A nearby restaurant has good Vietnamese food’. I can report this by saying

‘Ernie said that a nearby restaurant has good Vietnamese food,’ even though I am far away from him. Suppose that Ernie is facing me. A car goes to Ernie’s left and my right. Ernie says ‘The car went left’. I can say ‘Ernie said that the car went left’, even though my orientation is radically different to his. (2006)

In their reply, CL defend the claim that “nearby” and “left” are context-sensitive, and argue that Hawthorne’s example does not show them to fail the Report test. They argue as follows:

For the test to be applicable, it is essential that the contexts of the report and the reportee be *relevantly different*, i.e. that the relevant contextual features should be different in the contexts of the report and the reportee.

So what are the contextually relevant features for, say, ‘nearby’? Maybe the answer is something like this: the character of ‘nearby’ determines that an utterance of ‘nearby’ in a context C refers to a location salient in C, but that location needn’t be the location of C (i.e. it needn’t be the location where the speech act occurs). It is whatever location is salient in C, and that could be the location of the reportee—if, for example, that location is made salient in indirectly reporting her.

Hawthorne’s examples can then be understood as examples in which we can disquotationally report utterances containing ‘nearby’ because the relevant contextual features in the two contexts (i.e. the salient location) are the same. If this is the correct diagnosis, all the examples show is that when the same location is salient in two context, C and C’, you’ll be able to disquotationally report utterances of sentences containing ‘nearby’ from C to C’ (or the other way around). But this is no more surprising than being able to disquotationally report utterances of sentences containing the first person pronoun when the reporter is the same as the reported speaker. (2006a)

CL go on to adduce support for this claim by noting:

According to this suggestion, ‘nearby’ refers to whatever location is salient in the context of utterance, and if your intuition is that Hawthorne’s disquotational reports are true, that is because the location of the reportee has become salient in the context of the report. Further support for this diagnosis is provided by imagining examples in which the salient locations differ in the context of the report and the context of the reportee, and hence blocks the disquotational report. Consider this variation in Hawthorne’s example (i)–(ii):

- i. Ernie says to John, walking on 7th street in NY looking for a restaurant: *A nearby restaurant has good Vietnamese food.*
- ii. John, walking around Birmingham looking for a restaurant, reports Ernie’s utterance to his friends by saying: *Ernie says that a nearby restaurant has good Vietnamese food.*

(ii) is intuitively false, and the above account provides an explanation: in the context of (ii) it is the location of the report (i.e. the location where the indirect report is uttered) that is salient—the search for a restaurant in Birmingham has made Birmingham the salient location. (2006a)

These observations concerning “nearby” are quite analogous to my observations concerning the intermediate items such as “ready”. As evidenced by *John’s APA Nightmare*, disquotational reports of ascriptions of readiness are false if there is a salient activity to be ready for, and the reported utterance did not concern that

activity. If John's thesis adviser says "John said himself that he was ready", on the basis of John's saying in connection with dinner "I'm ready", this report is false. If there is a salient activity to be ready for in the context of the report, then we cannot disquotationally report readiness ascriptions, unless they pertain to that activity. Similarly, if there is a salient location in the context of the report, then we cannot disquotationally report utterances containing "nearby", unless, of course, they pertain to the same salient location.

But in the case of "ready" and other intermediate items, CL direct us to consider only contexts of ignorance and indifference, and thus to set aside such scenarios as *John's APA Nightmare*. It is those contexts that are relevant to the Report and Collection tests. Should not the same advice apply to Hawthorne's examples? Hawthorne's examples seem to be prime cases of reports under ignorance or indifference, but in case we are unconvinced, let us borrow an example directly from CL's reply to Hawthorne. (The example is offered in response to Hawthorne's suggestion that the reports contain mixed quotation, but it is well suited to our purposes here.) They write:

Consider an example involving 'nearby': Imagine answering a ringing payphone on the street, and a woman's voice says: 'There's a river nearby', then she hangs up. Asked what the caller said, you reply: 'The woman on the phone said there is a river nearby' It seems perfectly possible that the speaker intended to *use* 'nearby' and not to talk about "nearby" *and that in so doing, she succeeded in saying something true* (if our earlier diagnosis (of the character of 'nearby') is correct, that's what we would expect). (2006a; my emphasis)

The reporting context described here is clearly one of ignorance and indifference, in that the reporter does not know or care where the woman was calling from. CL claim that ignorance and indifference are factors that lead us to focus on semantic content rather than speech act content. Yet even in these circumstances of ignorance and indifference CL agree that we are able to disquotationally report an utterance containing "nearby", a term that they take to be contextually sensitive.⁴ Presumably they take it that, as in Hawthorne's example, the woman's location becomes salient, *just in virtue of our reporting her utterance*. That is, no precursor is needed to render salient the location; it is enough for the reporter to utter "The woman on the phone said there is a river nearby", for the woman's location to be made sufficiently salient. It is also not in any way a necessary condition for the report that the reporter know *what or where the location is*. He may be completely ignorant of this. Both the reporter and the audience understand "nearby" to operate on the woman's location, *whatever it may be*.⁵

⁴ Ernie Lepore suggested to me (pers. comm.) that perhaps only predicative uses of "nearby" are contextually sensitive, and that when it is used as a modifying adjective, it is not. I will return to this issue below, but it is important to note here that the utterance that is disquotationally reported is one in which "nearby" occurs predicatively.

⁵ Not everyone finds such disquotational reports as acceptable as CL do. One may well doubt that the reporter could properly report the woman's utterance as above. Similarly, in the case of

It appears then that “nearby”, which even CL (probably) recognize to be contextually sensitive, behaves like the intermediate items on the Report test. That is, we can disquotationally report utterances containing “nearby” in contexts of ignorance and indifference, just as we can disquotationally report utterances containing the intermediate items in such contexts. If, however, the context of the report is not one of ignorance and indifference, and there is a salient value for the item in the context of the report, then a disquotational report will be unacceptable (unless, of course, that same value was salient in the context of the original utterance). CL point out that this is the case for “nearby”; if the context of the report is one in which Birmingham is a salient location, we cannot say “Ernie said that a nearby restaurant has good Indian food” if Ernie said this while discussing eateries in New York City. Similarly, if a particular activity is salient in a context, we cannot disquotationally report utterances of the form “x is ready” if they were made in contexts where a different activity was salient. We saw this in *John’s APA Nightmare*; John’s adviser cannot say to the interviewing committee, “John said he was ready” on the basis of John’s having said “I’m ready” in connection with the previous night’s dinner. It is not hard to see that the same holds for the other intermediate items. (Consider, for example, the Real Context Shifting Arguments given above. If we place ourselves in the context of those stories, unqualified disquotational reports of the utterances mentioned in the stories are false.) The intermediate items behave exactly like “nearby” in this respect. We can disquotationally report utterances containing them in contexts of ignorance and indifference, but not in contexts in which a different value for the context-sensitive item is salient.

There are other similarities between “nearby” and the intermediate items. Consider what happens if we preface our disquotational report with a brief description of the context in which the original utterance occurred. Including such a preamble allows us to disquotationally report utterances containing “nearby” and the intermediate items, even if the context of the report includes a contextually salient value for the item in question, which would otherwise prohibit us from disquotationally reporting. In the case of “nearby”, suppose we are in Birmingham and looking for a good Indian restaurant there, as per CL’s example, but instead of uttering out-of-the-blue “Ernie said that there was a really good Indian restaurant nearby”, I say instead, “when we were in Princeton and talking about restaurants in NJ, Ernie said that there was a really good Indian restaurant nearby”. This little preamble of mine makes it clear that in the context

‘ready’, one could reasonably be skeptical that, if we had no idea what John was said to be ready for, we could unqualifiedly report Bill’s utterance of ‘John is ready’ by saying ‘Bill said that John was ready’. Many people feel that, in such circumstances, we would be obliged to add ‘but I don’t know what for’, or some such qualification. Of course if this is correct, this casts doubt on the claim that items such as ‘ready’ actually pass the Report test. I’m sympathetic to this position, but I will not pursue it here. I will rather grant CL their data, and show that, even if it is correct, it does not mean that items such as ‘ready’ are not contextually sensitive.

of Ernie's utterance, Princeton, not Birmingham, was salient, and so "nearby" should be interpreted accordingly. With this small preamble, we can override the contextually salient location of Birmingham—the salience of which is enough to render false a disquotational report that does not follow such a preamble.

The same pattern is to be found among the intermediate items. If John's thesis adviser says to the interviewing committee, "John said he was ready" with no preamble, his report is false. If, however, he begins with a preamble, he can successfully offer a disquotational report: "when we were talking about dinner last night, John said that he was ready". As is the case with "nearby", a little preamble allows us to disquotationally report the utterance.

CL do not discuss preambles, but in keeping with their earlier treatment of "nearby", I imagine that they would understand the preamble as making salient another location—in my above case, the preamble makes Princeton salient, and so "nearby" is interpreted relative to this.

I propose that, if we simply extend this model to encompass the intermediate items, we will eliminate the tension between the ICD/RCSA test and the Reporting test. If an item such as "nearby" occurs in a 'says that' report, its semantic value depends on (a) the location that was salient in the context of the original utterance, as introduced by a preamble or some such means; if no such location is available then it will depend on (b) a location that is salient in the reporting context, and if there is no such location, then (c) it will be understood as dependent on some location or other that was salient in the context of the original utterance, even though the reporter and his audience are ignorant as to which location this may be.⁶ This last case, case (c) includes contexts of ignorance and indifference, and if "nearby" operates in the manner here described, we can understand how it can be contextually sensitive, while permitting disquotational reports in contexts of ignorance and indifference.

What we, in effect, have is a pattern of cascading defaults, which determine the semantic value of a contextually sensitive item figuring in a report.

The intermediate items can be assimilated to this schema. As *John's APA Nightmare* suggests, the predicate "is ready" operates in a parallel fashion. If the predicate "is ready" occurs in a 'says that' report, its extension depends on (a) the salient activity in the context of the original utterance, as introduced by a preamble or some such means; if no such activity is salient, then it will depend on (b) an activity that is salient in the reporting context, and if there is no such activity, then (c) it is understood as dependent on *some activity or other that was salient in the context of the original utterance*. The reporter and her audience need not have any clue as to the nature of this activity, any more than they need know which location was salient in the original context when reporting utterances containing "nearby". These conditions hold, *mutatis mutandis*, for the

⁶ This is not, of course, intended as a full description of how "nearby" operates. I do not doubt there is far more to say than has been said here.

other intermediate items, as far as I am able to tell. It is this pattern of cascading defaults that allows us to disquotationally report the intermediate items under conditions of ignorance and indifference.

It should be noted that we can find members of the basic set exhibiting this behavior, at least to some extent. We can, contra CL, sometimes use such items in ‘says that’ reports under conditions of ignorance and indifference. Suppose, for example, that I am talking to Rachel while she is on her cell phone. I have no idea where she is calling from, and I don’t bother to ask. In the course of the conversation, Rachel remarks “It’s raining here”. I can report Rachel by saying “Rachel said that it’s raining there”.⁷ This report is not, of course, strictly disquotational—there is a mandatory switch from “here” to “there”—but nonetheless a member of the basic set is used in a report made under conditions of ignorance. We have no trouble interpreting the occurrence of “there” as picking out Rachel’s location, *wherever that may be*.

When members of the basic set that are not pure indexicals occur in ‘says that’ reports, they are also sensitive to the occurrence of preambles that describe the context of the original utterance. Such a preamble can easily override whatever values may be salient in the reporting context. Consider, for example:

I had a great conversation with John the other day. The sun was shining then, and we were both in a good mood. We got to talking about Plato’s Greece, and John said that philosophy was done so much better then.

The reporting context contains a salient value for “then”—namely the day that the reporter spoke to John—and it is this value that the first occurrence of “then” picks up. On the basis of the minimal preamble “we got to talking about Plato’s Greece”, we easily understand the second occurrence of “then” as referring to the time of Plato’s Greece. It is important to notice how easily we obtain the value of the second “then” on the basis of this minimal information. Nothing in the preamble “we got to talking about Plato’s Greece” contains a reference to the *time period* of Plato’s Greece, yet we automatically extract such a time as a value for “then”. Clearly, we can extract values for contextually sensitive items on the basis of minimal and oblique preambles, and such values override other potentially salient values in the reporting context. If the members of the basic set behave in this way, it is not surprising that the intermediate items do too.

⁷ Even if one does not think that this is the most natural report possible, it is no less natural than disquotationally reporting an utterance by Rachel of “There is a restaurant nearby” under the same conditions. For that matter, it is not clear that our intuitions are as firm as CL would have us believe when it comes to disquotational reports of the moderate items under ignorance and indifference. It is not very natural to utter “Nina said that John is ready” if one has no idea of what Nina took John to be ready for. If one feels a temptation to amend the report “Rachel said that it’s raining there” by adding “but I don’t know where she is”, consider whether one does not also feel that it would also be more natural to say “Nina said that John is ready, but I don’t know what for”, or “Rachel said there is a restaurant nearby, but I don’t know where she is”.

My reader may be wondering why I have separated out values made salient by a preamble from ones that are otherwise salient in the context. Could not both be treated under the banner of salience? Preambles affect the context by making a particular value salient; they are one among many ways by which a value may become salient in a context. I don't think there is anything wrong with this way of thinking, but it is helpful to separate out values that are salient *in the reporting context*, and those that become salient *only in connection with the context of the original utterance*. The preambles I have been discussing thus far function to make values salient in the latter way. The distinction is helpful when we consider multiple, collected reports, to which we now turn.

Multiple, collected 'says that' reports are possible with members of the basic set, such as "then". We might say, for example, "The other day, I spoke to John about Plato's Greece, and Barry about Shakespeare's England. Both said that intellectual standards were much higher back then". Here the preamble does not serve to render salient one single value for "then", but rather makes salient one value for John's utterance, and another for Barry's. We understand the collected report to attribute one utterance to John in which the time of Plato's Greece determines the extension of "then", and another to Barry in which the time of Shakespeare's England determines the extension of "then". These different attributions are possible even though we choose to report the utterances with a collected 'said that' report. The preamble (again, minimal and oblique) is enough to allow us to interpret the report as attributing assertions to John and Barry in which "then" takes on different respective values.

We do not always even require a preamble for such a distributive interpretation. Distributive interpretations, it seems, are possible even under conditions of ignorance and indifference. To see this, let us elaborate CL's scenario in which one answers the phone only to hear a woman mysteriously utter "there is a river nearby" and then hang up. Let us imagine that, immediately after the woman hangs up, weirdly enough, a man calls, also utters "there is a river nearby", and promptly hangs up. If asked what the callers said, one might reply "The woman and the man both said that there is a river nearby". This report is as natural as the single report CL describe. One might offer this collected report even if one had no idea where the speakers were calling from, and one certainly need not assume that they are calling from the same location to offer it. We easily understand "nearby" as tied to each speaker; we understand the report distributively, as equivalent to "the woman said there is a river nearby, and the man said there is a river nearby", where the semantic value of the first occurrence of 'nearby' depends on whatever location is salient in the woman's context, while the semantic value of the second depends on whatever location is salient for the man.

Given that we can collect 'says that' reports for items that are contextually sensitive, and can even do so under conditions of ignorance, it is no surprise that we can also do this for the intermediate items, as CL point out:

Moderately Sensitive Semantics

We're thinking about different utterances of "John is ready". We're imagining the following two contexts of utterance of (1):

(1) John is ready.

Context of Utterance C1 In a conversation about exam preparation, someone raises the question of whether John is well prepared. Nina utters (1).

Context of Utterance C2 Three people are about to leave an apartment; they are getting dressed for heavy rain. Nina utters (1).

. . . In (1.1) we report on her utterance in C1, in (1.2) her utterance in C2:

(1.1) Nina said that John is ready

(1.2) Nina said that John is ready.

(1.3) In both C1 and C2, Nina said that John is ready. (2005: 90–1)

It should be clear that the possibility of these reports does not count against the context sensitivity of "ready". The behavior of "ready" is not different from that of "nearby" or even "then" in this regard. (To make the parallel with "then" even more explicit, consider: *The other day, I spoke to John about Plato's Greece, and then later about Shakespeare's England. In both contexts, he said that intellectual standards were much higher back then.*)

So far it seems that the behavior of the intermediate items in reporting contexts does not differ in unacceptable ways from the behavior of items that are clearly contextually sensitive. Once we understand their behavior on the model I have proposed—a model that is required to account for the behavior of contextually sensitive items such as "nearby", and perhaps even Kaplanian adverbs such as "there" and "then"—it becomes clear why the intermediate items appear to fail the Report test, despite their being contextually sensitive. We have seen that, for all these items, a minimal preamble lets us understand the value of the context-sensitive item in a 'says that' report as dependent on what was salient in the context of the original utterance. The value is thus dependent on the context of the original utterance, as opposed to the reporting context, and further, this can be so across multiple, collected reports—even if the various reported utterances occurred in very different contexts. We have seen that this is so for "then" and "nearby", as well as for the intermediate items.

If we find ourselves in a context of ignorance and indifference—that is, if no preamble is given and nothing relevant is known about the original context, and the reporting context does not provide the relevant value needed to determine the item's semantic value—then we can nonetheless disquotationally report utterances containing "nearby", and in some circumstances, even "there". We simply understand the relevant, required value to be *what it was in the original context, whatever that may have been*. I see no reason why we cannot understand reports containing intermediate items in contexts of ignorance and indifference in the same way. We understand out-of-the-blue utterances of "Bill said that John was ready" to mean roughly that *Bill said*

that John was ready for some activity or other that was salient in the context of Bill's utterance.

Let us bolster this last claim by considering the following report. Imagine that we do not have any particular activity in mind, and we do not know what activities were salient in the original contexts. Then consider the following report:

Tom said that John was ready. Later, Barry said that John wasn't ready, but that was in another context, so he and Tom didn't disagree.

Such a report may well be true. Tom can say that John was ready, while Barry can say that John wasn't ready, and yet Tom and Barry need not contradict each other. For CL, however, "John is ready" and "John is not ready" are contradictories—"is ready" is an invariant predicate, and so either John possesses the property it expresses or he does not. Barry and Tom would have to be in disagreement, since they predicated contradictory things of John. CL must claim that our intuition that the above report might be true is based on our tracking speech act content, rather than semantic content, since the semantic content of the complements of the reports are contradictories. It is not clear why we would be tracking speech act content here, though, given that we are tracking semantic content in the scenarios they use for their Report test.

The proposal I have outlined, however, offers a natural rendering of the above report. Since this is a context of ignorance and indifference, we understand the initial report "Tom said that John was ready" to mean roughly that *Tom said that John was ready for something or other that was salient in the context of Tom's utterance*, and we understand the second report "Barry said that Tom wasn't ready" to mean roughly that *Barry said that John wasn't ready for something or other that was salient in the context of Barry's utterance*. Since we are told that the two contexts differed, it is easy to see how the two reports could be true, and yet Tom and Barry fail to disagree. The contents of the reports are not contradictories on the view proposed here, which fits well with our intuitions concerning scenarios such as this.

3.2. The Collection Test

We have seen how we might reconcile the results of the ICD/RCSA test with those of the Report test. It is not difficult to extend the model described above to also help us reconcile the results of the ICD/RCSA test with those of the Collection test. Consider "nearby" and "local". Both appear to fail the Collection test, as the following example illustrates:

John lives in St Louis, and Bill lives in San Francisco. Both John and Bill buy their food from local farmers. And last night, both John and Bill went to a nearby restaurant for dinner.

We can collect predications containing “local” and “nearby” across relevantly different contexts. That means both items apparently fail the Collection test. The situation here, though, is not too different from the one we faced when dealing with collected ‘says that’ reports. There, we understood the context-sensitive elements to be indexed to their respective contexts, so that they might have different semantic values in each of the multiple reports that were collected. For example, if we say “I spoke to John about Plato’s Greece, and then later on about Shakespeare’s England. In both contexts, he said that intellectual standards were much higher back then”, we understand that two utterances are being reported, and the semantic value of “then” in the first is the time of Plato’s Greece, and in the second it is the time of Shakespeare’s England. An analog of this approach is appropriate here: we understand “local” in the collected predication above as meaning *local wrt John and Bill respectively*, and “nearby” as meaning *nearby John and Bill respectively*.

But now consider simple, non-collected predications such as “John went to a nearby restaurant”. Here, I propose that “nearby” may receive either a ‘subject-based’ interpretation, i.e. *nearby John*, or a ‘context-based’ interpretation, which is relative to a salient location in the context of utterance. If there is such a salient location in the context of utterance, then the item is most naturally interpreted relative to that location; otherwise it is interpreted relative to the subject, so long as that is appropriate. (I will discuss these conditions of appropriateness below.) Thus, if one utters out-of-the-blue “John went to a nearby restaurant last night”, “nearby” can be naturally interpreted as meaning *nearby John*, and so the utterance may be true even if John is in New York, while the utterer is in Birmingham. If, however, one is trying desperately to find a restaurant in Birmingham, and one’s friend says “John went to a nearby restaurant last night”, “nearby” is here interpreted as *nearby the location of the speaker*, and so is false.

Having drawn the distinction between these two ways in which the semantic value of “nearby” may be determined, we can notice that not all sentences lend themselves to the subject-based interpretation. Consider, for example “John is nearby”. This sentence can only be interpreted to mean that John is near the location of the utterer (or at least near some location that is salient in the context of the utterance). A subject-based interpretation of “nearby” here would yield the unacceptable *John is nearby John*, and so is not available as an interpretation of that sentence. Only the context-based interpretation is acceptable here.

If collected predications drawing on different contexts are only acceptable when the context-sensitive item receives a subject-based interpretation, then we would predict that sentences in which the subject-based interpretation is not available could not be collected. This is indeed the case: if Bill utters in San Francisco “John is nearby”, and Barry utters in Princeton “Shanna is nearby”, we cannot conclude that both John and Shanna are nearby. The collection is unacceptable.

I believe that this treatment explains Hawthorne’s otherwise puzzling observation that some collected predications of “nearby” and “left” are permissible, while other are not. Hawthorne writes:

Suppose in Birmingham, I say, ‘I am going to a nearby restaurant’ and Ernie, in New York, says ‘I am going to a nearby restaurant’. We can certainly ‘collect’ with ‘John and Ernie are going to nearby restaurants’. But suppose Ernie says ‘There is good Vietnamese food nearby’ and I say, ‘There is good Indian food nearby’. We cannot ‘collect’ with ‘There is good Vietnamese food and Indian food nearby.’

A similar pattern holds for ‘left’. Suppose Ernie turns to his left, saying ‘I am turning left’, and I turn to my left, saying, ‘I am turning left’. I can collect: ‘We are both turning left’. I can also use verb phrase ellipsis: I turned left and Ernie did too. But suppose Ernie and I are facing each other. Noticing a ball rolling to from his right to his left, Ernie says ‘The ball is moving left’. Noticing a balloon moving from my right to my left, Ernie says ‘The balloon is moving left’. I cannot collect with ‘The ball and the balloon are moving left’. Relatedly, I cannot say ‘The ball moved left and so did the balloon’. This particular pattern of success and failure cries out for some kind of explanation. (2006)

With “there is good Vietnamese food nearby” and “there is good Indian food nearby”, there is no subject-based interpretation available. For these sentences, the ‘dummy’ subject “there” does not support a subject-based interpretation. If we consider, say, “good Indian food” to be the dislocated subject of the sentence, as many syntacticians do, this does not help matters; the sentence would then mean *Good Indian food is nearby*, which does not allow for a subject-based interpretation, just as “John is nearby” does not. As my treatment predicts, because there is no subject-based interpretation available, we cannot collect these predications.

In the case of “left”, it matters whether the subject determines a frame of reference appropriate for right and left. People determine such frames, so it is possible to interpret “John and Ernie both turned left” as *John and Ernie both turned left from the point of view of John and Ernie respectively*. Balls and balloons, however, do not determine such frames—there is no such thing as left from the point of view of a balloon. Only the context-based interpretation is possible in such cases, and we cannot collect these predications.

Ernie Lepore (pers. comm.) has suggested to me that perhaps “nearby” is ambiguous between a context-sensitive predicative sense, as in “John is nearby”, and a context-insensitive adjectival sense, as in “John went to a nearby restaurant”. The suggestion is ingenious, and would capture the data described thus far, without recourse to subject-based interpretations. I think, however, that it is not adequate to draw the distinction between predicative and adjectival uses, for there are some adjectival uses that also block collection. Consider, for example “John is in a nearby restaurant”. Let us suppose that Bill in St Louis utters “John is in a nearby restaurant” and Mary in Portland utters “James is in a nearby restaurant”. We cannot conclude that both John and James are in nearby restaurants. The simple change of verb from “went to”/“is going to” to “is in” suffices to block the collection. “Nearby” here can only be interpreted as

nearby a location salient in the context of utterance. It is, however, occurring in adjectival form. This shows that the situations in which “nearby” does not allow for collection are not limited to ones in which “nearby” occurs as a predicate. Whether we use “to be in” rather than “to go to” makes the difference between predications with “nearby” that can be collected and ones that cannot. It is hard to see how this could be explained by positing ambiguities in “nearby”.

The model here described predicts this outcome; while one can *go to* a restaurant that is near one’s location, one cannot *be in* a restaurant that is near one’s location, since one is located *in* the restaurant. An item cannot be near another item if the former is located within the latter. In “John is in a nearby restaurant”, “nearby” cannot mean *nearby John*; John is *in* the restaurant, and so cannot be *nearby* the restaurant. The subject-based interpretation is unavailable, and so cannot be invoked in interpreting the sentence. Collection, as in “John and Bill are both in nearby restaurants”, is therefore unacceptable. My account lets us see why the small change in verb can make the difference between collected predications being acceptable or unacceptable.

The distinction between subject-based interpretations and context-based ones, then, is an important one. If we posit that context-sensitive items such as “nearby” and “left” can receive subject-based interpretations when such interpretations are acceptable, we are able to explain why some collections are permissible, while others are not. I take this to be good reason to assume that some context-sensitive items can receive these subject-based interpretations, and that collected predications across different contexts are permissible only when the items receive subject-based interpretations.

There is no reason to suppose that the intermediate items do not behave similarly.⁸ I suggest that the intermediate items sometimes receive subject-based interpretations, and that we can collect predications containing them only when they receive these subject-based interpretations. As we have seen, there are circumstances under which we cannot collect intermediate items such as “ready”. If a particular activity is salient in a context, then we cannot collect predications of readiness, unless of course they pertain to that activity. We saw this in *John’s APA Nightmare*; in the context of that scenario, we cannot collect the true utterance of “John is ready” (said in connection with dinner) and the true utterance of “Mary is ready” (said in connection with APA interviews) to obtain *John and Mary are both ready*. Such a collection is impermissible in that context. This, I claim, is because the context-based interpretation of “ready” is favored, since the context of the collection supplies a salient activity. Similarly, if we are hungrily seeking a restaurant in Birmingham, we cannot say “both John and Bill went to nearby restaurants last night” unless the restaurants in question are near to our current location.

⁸ Stanley (2000, 2002) offers an important and detailed treatment of intermediate items such as “tall” along these lines.

If, however, the context is one of indifference, where no salient value for the context-sensitive item is provided, then we can collect predications containing intermediate items, such as “ready” and “tall”. Since we have established that *some* context-sensitive items permit subject-based interpretations, I propose that we understand the intermediate items to allow subject-based interpretations where appropriate. Just as with “nearby”, we can collect predications containing intermediate items across different contexts *only* when those items receive a subject-based interpretation. So, for example, we understand the collection “both John and Bill are ready” to mean roughly that *both John and Bill are ready for activities that are salient for John and Bill respectively.*⁹

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Notice that we can collect predications containing “nearby” even in contexts of ignorance, so long as the subject-based interpretation is available. If Tom utters “John went to a nearby restaurant last night”, and George utters “Bill went to a nearby restaurant last night”, then I might collect the two utterances and say “Both John and Bill went to nearby restaurants last night”. I might do this even if I have no idea where either John or Bill happen to be. My collection is understood as meaning *Both John and Bill went to restaurants that are nearby their respective locations, whatever those may be.* I suggest that we understand collected predications containing intermediate items in contexts of ignorance and indifference in a similar way. If Tom utters “John is ready” and George utters “Bill is ready”, then I might collect these and say “Both John and Bill are ready”, even if I have no idea what they are ready for. We understand the collection to mean that John and Bill are ready for activities that are salient for them both respectively, *whatever those activities may be.*

In general, the intermediate items are no worse off than items such as “nearby” with respect to the Report and Collection tests.

In short, once we recognize the possibility of subject-based interpretations of context-sensitive items, we need not think that the possibility of collection counts against an item’s being contextually sensitive. We should not assume that, just because we might say *A and B are F*, this means that we are predicating the very same property of both A and B. This would be akin to arguing that we predicate the same property of every girl when we say “every girl loves her mother” (Stanley 2005), or arguing that John and Bill must desire the same thing if we are to be able to say “both John and Bill want to be department chair”.

As a final remark on the possibility of collecting the intermediate items, it should be noted that the predicate “is ready” does not allow collection in all cases. Consider, for example, the impermissibility of the following collection:

⁹ Just as in the Report test, not everyone is as confident of the data as CL are. One might reasonably doubt that such collects really are acceptable. I will once again respond to CL on their own terms, however, and show how, even if these data are correct, items such as ‘ready’ may nonetheless be contextually sensitive.

Moderately Sensitive Semantics

My guests have arrived for dinner, and are very hungry. I ask them if they are ready to eat, and they reply “yes, we are ready”. I call into the kitchen to check on the status of the beef tenderloin, and the cook replies “it is ready”. Wonderful, I think to myself. My guests and the tenderloin are both ready.

We cannot collect in these circumstances. “My guests and the tenderloin are ready” is no more acceptable than the zeugma “Mary left in a huff and a taxi”. As linguists have long noted, “ready” allows for both ‘tough’ readings and ‘control’ readings, hence the ambiguity of “the goose is ready to eat”. On the control reading, the subject “the goose” controls the unpronounced subject of “to eat”; this is the interpretation according to which the goose is ready to eat, in the same sense that one’s guests may be ready to eat. On the so-called tough reading,¹⁰ the subject is identified with the unpronounced object of “to eat”; in this sense, the goose is ready to eat in the way that a beef tenderloin may be ready to eat. Just as we cannot accept “my guests and the beef tenderloin are ready to eat” (except on an interpretation that calls to mind Hannibal Lecter and the like), we cannot accept “my guests and the beef tenderloin are ready”. The explanation of the failure of collection when the infinitival clause is articulated is straightforward: we cannot collect predications that differ so in their underlying syntax. Since collection fails in exactly the same way when the infinitival clause is not articulated, this suggests that we are nonetheless at some level representing the infinitival clause and its dependence relations to the subject. This suggests that there is no such predicate as “is ready, period”—there is always some completion required, though not always articulated. The syntactic nature of the completion determines whether collection is permissible.¹¹

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This point is, of course, specific to “ready”. It is telling, though, since these data strongly suggest that we represent the object of the readiness, even if we do not articulate it. If this is so, then the Report and Collection tests are misleading in the case of “ready”; CL use these tests to argue that there is a simple, invariant predicate “is ready”, which predicates a single property of its subject, no matter the context. The syntactic data above suggest this cannot be so, thus these tests cannot be trusted. Instead, we should rely on the ICD/RCSA test, which correctly characterizes “ready” as contextually sensitive.

¹⁰ So-called because sentences such as “John is tough to please” are only interpreted in this way. “John is tough to please” can only mean that it is tough for the arbitrary person to please John; it cannot mean that it is tough for John to please the arbitrary person.

¹¹ The point is made most clearly when we try to collect predications of readiness across people and inanimate objects. This is because inanimate objects almost invariably occur with tough interpretations; it is hard to imagine cases in which we might say of an inanimate object that it is ready to itself undertake an action. People, on the other hand, are usually said to be ready to do such-and-such a task. The failure of collection can occur when all the subjects are people, however. Consider: “John is ready to run a marathon. Bill is ready to shoot a basket. George is ready to fall down. They are all ready.” This collection strikes us as a sort of bad joke, a sign of zeugma.

4. CONCLUSION

Cappelen and Lepore's *Insensitive Semantics* forces us to think carefully about the phenomenon of semantic context sensitivity. What are our standards for counting an item as contextually sensitive? Are these so lax that all of natural language turns out to be context-sensitive? And how do we explain the behavior of context-sensitive items in a variety of linguistic constructions, across a variety of contexts?

I have argued that Cappelen and Lepore's ICD/RCSA test should be a benchmark for context sensitivity. It reflects basic, constitutive facts about the nature of context sensitivity, and it sets the bar high enough that only a limited range of items are able to pass it. With that test in hand, we are able to draw a principled distinction between those items that are context-sensitive and those that are not. We are no longer in no danger of sliding down the slope into Radical Contextualism.

Since the ICD/RCSA test should be taken seriously, a challenge emerges. There are a fair number of items that pass the ICD/RCSA test, and yet can occur in disquotational reports and collected predications, both across different contexts. How is this possible, if these items are contextually sensitive? I have tried to sketch out how this might happen, and in doing so, I hope to have shed some light on the phenomenon of non-indexical context dependence. Cappelen and Lepore are right to point out to us the prima-facie incompatibility of an item's being contextually sensitive, yet amenable to disquotation and collected predication. It is no simple matter to understand how this is possible, and we are indebted to Cappelen and Lepore for pointing out that this is a phenomenon in need of explanation.

Finally, as a meditation on semantic methodology, *Insensitive Semantics* reminds us time and again that intuitions about what is said are poor guides to semantic content. This point, so often overlooked, is an important one for semanticists to take on board. I have attempted here to extend Cappelen and Lepore's work so as to provide tests and standards for context sensitivity that do not depend intuitions about what is said. On the importance of developing and adhering to such tests, I am in full agreement with Cappelen and Lepore. I differ from them only on exactly which items pass the tests.

5. APPENDIX: MINIMALISM AND COMMUNICATION

Cappelen and Lepore level three charges against the contextualist: they argue that she classifies items that fail their three tests as context-sensitive, that she cannot account for the ease with which we communicate with each other, and that her

theory is internally inconsistent. In the main body of this paper, I argued that Moderate Contextualism is indeed a stable position, contra CL, and that it does not count any items as context-sensitive if they do not pass their ICD/RCSA test. I also provided an account of non-indexical context sensitivity that explains why some of the Moderate Contextualist's context-sensitive items might appear to fail the Report and Collection tests. Thus I take myself to have answered CL's first objection to contextualism, namely that it counts items that fail their tests as context-sensitive. I will not address their third objection—that contextualism is internally inconsistent—because the objection applies only to theories that hold that all sentences are contextually sensitive. That is, it is only an objection to Radical Contextualism, not to Moderate Contextualism, and my concern here is only to defend Moderate Contextualism.

In this appendix, I will consider CL's claim that only their view, Semantic Minimalism, is able to explain how we can successfully communicate across contexts, or perhaps even within a given context. I will argue that Semantic Minimalism is hard pressed to account for our communicative practices. Simply put, the minimal proposition¹² that is semantically expressed is far too minimal to be what we care about in communication. If Semantic Minimalism was the correct view of semantics, then it would follow that we would almost never be concerned with semantic content in communication, but rather with speech act content. On CL's view, a huge range of propositions are expressed by every utterance, though only one of those propositions is the semantic content of the utterance, while the others constitute the remainder of its speech act content. If their view was correct, our intuitions about even the truth and falsity of an utterance would often fail to track the truth value of the proposition semantically expressed, and would rather track one of the many propositions that are merely said, not semantically expressed. Since our intuitions about the truth and falsity of an utterance may often fail to track its semantic content, the minimal proposition that is semantically expressed does not explain our ability to communicate with one another in the way that CL claim it does.

CL introduce their objection to contextualism by writing:

If RC [Radical Contextualism]¹³ were true, it would be miraculous if people ever succeeded in communicating across diverse contexts of utterance. But there are no miracles; people do succeed in communicating across diverse contexts of utterance with boring regularity. So, RC isn't true.

Only slightly more elaborated, it goes like this: If RC were true, then *what's said by an utterance* by a speaker A in context of utterance C depends, at least in part, on very

¹² The minimal proposition expressed by a sentence "S" is the semantic content of "S", and if "S" does not contain any members of the basic set, then the minimal proposition expressed by "S" is just the proposition *that S*.

¹³ Remember that CL take themselves to have established that Moderate Contextualism collapses into Radical Contextualism; that is why they are addressing their objection only the Radical Contextualist.

specific features of C . . . In sum, if RC were true, it would be a miracle if speakers in difference contexts were ever able to agree, disagree, or more generally, share contents. (2005: 123; my emphasis)

It is not easy to understand exactly what the objection is here, since on their own view *what is said* by a given utterance depends on specific features of the context of the utterance (93). (In fact, what is said by a given utterance even depends on features *outside* the context of the original utterance; see their rejection of ‘Original Utterance Centrism’.) CL devote the entire last chapter of their book to describing and emphasizing how varied and unconstrained speech act content, or what is said, turns out to be, once we look closely. What is said, on their view, depends heavily on features of the context of utterance, among other things.¹⁴

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How, then, do CL envision their objection applying to contextualism, but not to their own view? It is their minimal proposition that they suppose gives their account an advantage over its alternatives. This minimal proposition *that S*—the proposition that is semantically expressed by an utterance of “S”—is *always* among the indefinitely many propositions expressed by an utterance of “S” (2005: 205). It is the availability of this context-invariant proposition that allows us to communicate with each other across contexts. They write:

Semantic Minimalism, and no other view, can account for how the same content can be expressed, claimed, asserted, questioned, investigated, etc. in radically different contexts. It is the semantic content that enables audiences who find themselves in radically different contexts to understand each other, to agree or disagree, to question and debate with each other. It can serve this function simply because it is the sort of content that is largely immune to contextual variations. (2005: 152)

Since it is their minimal proposition that CL believe enables us to communicate across contexts, let us consider the nature of these minimal propositions, so as to see whether they can indeed serve this purpose. In particular, let us consider the proposition that CL believe is semantically expressed by sentences containing the intermediate items, such as “John is ready”. CL hold that “John is ready” expresses the proposition *that John is ready*, which is true iff John is ready (2005: 155). The question that naturally arises is, what is the nature of the property of *being ready*? When does a person or object possess this property?

¹⁴ They write: “What’s crucial to notice here (and in general) is that our intuitions about what speakers say with their utterances are influenced by, at least, the following sorts of considerations: (1) *Facts about the speaker’s intentions and beliefs* . . . (2) *Facts about the conversational context of this particular utterance* . . . (3) *Other facts about the world* . . . (4) *Logical Relations*” (193). They also state that “there’s no reason to think that [these factors] exhaust all the factors that influence our intuitions about what speakers say” (194). Finally, it’s important to note that they “take our non-theoretic beliefs about intuitions about what speakers say, assert, claim, etc. at face value” (191).

CL are adamant that a semanticist should not have to answer such metaphysical questions. Nonetheless, they sketch how they imagine an analysis of this property would proceed:

Think about what metaphysicians do. For at least the last two millennia, metaphysicians have been asking *What-Do-they-Have-in-Common-Questions* (CQ, for short). Suppose you're curious about what it is to be G. Then you ask (this is at least one of the questions you ask):

(CQ) What do all G things have in common?

... Think about what people who are ready have in common. To make this vivid, imagine A's being ready to commit a bank robbery, B's being ready to eat dinner, and C's being ready to take an exam.

Thinking about A, B and C, you've got two options:

- a) You might think, as we do: Well, they have a common relation they stand in to their respective projects: There's something in common between A's relation to the bank robbery, B's relation to the dinner and C's relation to the exam. What they have in common is that they are all *ready*.
- b) Alternatively, you might think that there's *nothing* these people have in common. The fact that we would describe them as all being ready for their various projects doesn't mean that they have anything whatsoever in common. There's no state of readiness that they share with respect to their respective tasks.

We find (a) overwhelmingly plausible. It's not just a pun that we feel comfortable describing them all as being ready. They really are all *ready*. That's different from their all being *done with* the tasks, or *excited about* them, or *prepared for* them, or *good at* them, etc. (159–67)

So CL conclude it is this shared property that 'is ready' expresses. A has it in virtue of being ready to rob a bank, B has it in virtue of being ready to eat dinner, and so on. Generalizing, we have that *being ready* is a property that one possesses in virtue of being ready to do some task or other. Any time A is ready to do X, for any X at all, then A is ready.

One should wonder that this does not make it very easy to be ready. CL are aware of this, and though they do not specifically address this question with respect to readiness, they say of their corresponding claim concerning "enough":

The following concern might now be raised: Doesn't that make it very easy to have had enough? If that's all it takes, haven't we all had enough all of the time? Suppose the answer is 'yes' (though we have no idea whether this is correct or not; presumably it all depends on doing more serious metaphysics, but suppose it's correct). When you think real hard [sic.] about enoughness, maybe that's all it takes. If so, then it's not that hard to have had enough. (168 fn.)

Thus while CL hedge slightly in their parenthetical remarks, they are quite open to the above metaphysical analysis of properties such as *being ready*. Let us for now assume that this is indeed their intended account of the property of *being ready*, and therefore that the proposition *that John is ready* is co-extensive with

FN:15 the proposition *that John is ready for something*.¹⁵ The question now arises: is this proposition the one that we care about in communication?

CL intend this minimal proposition to be one that is communicated by all utterances of “John is ready”. Now, it is not in dispute that all utterances of “John is ready” communicate that John is ready for something. (CL sometimes write as though the contextualist would deny this, but I do not see why this would be so.) Even if contextualism is true, the truth of “John is ready” entails that John is ready for something—i.e. if John is ready for some contextually salient activity, then he is ready for something. It is quite reasonable to think that a proposition that is at least co-extensive with CL’s minimal proposition is communicated by all utterances of “John is ready”, no matter which view of semantics one adopts.¹⁶

FN:16 But what are we to make of utterances of “It’s false that John is ready”? Surely the proposition semantically expressed by “it’s false that John is ready” is the negation of the proposition expressed by “John is ready”. But if “John is ready” semantically expresses a proposition that is co-extensive with *John is ready for something*, then “it’s false that John is ready” must semantically express a proposition that is co-extensive with *not: John is ready for something*. This proposition is false if there is anything at all that John is ready for. But is it reasonable to think that we communicate such a proposition with every utterance of “it’s false that John is ready”? Surely this is not so. We simply do not interpret utterances of “it’s false that John is ready” as communicating anything this strong. We do not intend to convey this information by uttering such a sentence, and we do not glean this information from utterances of the sentence. Since CL urge us to take our pre-theoretic intuitions about what is said at face value, it is hard to see how such a proposition could be among those that are said by *any* utterance of “it’s false that John is ready”, let alone one that is said by *every* such utterance.

¹⁵ These propositions (and the properties that figure in them) are co-extensive, but not identical. I assume that CL adopt a structured approach to propositions so that this is possible.

¹⁶ CL repeatedly argue as though the contextualist should want to deny that this is so, and claim that there is something in common between people who are all ready for their respective tasks. I must confess that I do not understand why they anticipate this line of objection. Clearly, there are many, many things that two people who are ready for different tasks have in common—they are both self-identical, both complex material objects, both human beings, and of course, both ready to do something. No one would deny that there is something in common between two people who are ready to perform different tasks. The question is not whether there are some commonalities between these people, the question is we semantically predicate a common property of them when we say that A and B are both ready. Consider e.g. girls who all love their respective mothers. There are many properties shared in common between girls who love their mothers—they are all self-identical, they are all girls, they all love someone, and so on. This observation has no bearing on the semantics of “each girl loves her mother”. We do not conclude from the fact that these girls share common properties that we are semantically predicating one of these common properties of all of them when we say “each girl loves her mother”. That there are many properties shared between the objects of thought and talk is an observation that is completely orthogonal to issues concerning semantic context sensitivity.

Even if we were to be somehow convinced that this proposition is always among those that are said by an utterance of “it’s false that John is ready”, it is *clearly* not the proposition that we care about in communication, since we are not even aware that we are communicating it to one another.

Minimal propositions are poorly suited for the communicative work for which CL intend them. They are rarely, for example, our objects of disagreement. I discussed this point in Leslie (2004), and Hawthorne (2006) also makes this point. Let us return to *John’s APA Nightmare* to see this more clearly.

5.1. Disagreement

Recall that poor John is on the job market, and is thoroughly unprepared for his interviews. Looking at him, his thesis advisor says: “Well, at least John’s ready.” The department chair appropriately responds: “Are you out of your mind? He’s clearly not ready!” In other words, the chair adamantly disagrees with the advisor’s claim that John is ready. What is the basis for this disagreement? It is surely not that the chair takes John not to be ready for *anything*. He may well think John is ready to do a variety of things: pass out, bolt from the APA, etc. But:

If the chair thinks John is ready to bolt from the APA,
 And if being ready to do something is sufficient for having the property
being ready,
 And the property of *being ready* is what is semantically predicated of
 John by and utterance of ‘John is ready’,
 And if disagreements are over semantically expressed propositions,
 Then the chair would have no grounds to disagree with the thesis
 advisor.

It is clear that the minimal proposition that CL endorse is not sufficient to explain disagreements. A corollary is that the minimal proposition is also not our object of debate and deliberation, since these notions are intimately tied to disagreement. When the department chair questions the advisor’s judgment, he is not questioning the truth of a proposition that is co-extensive with *John is ready for something*. It is simply not true that “it is the semantic content that enables audiences who find themselves in radically different contexts to understand each other, to agree or disagree, to question and debate with each other” (152). The semantic content does not even serve this purpose *within* a context.

In their paper, “Shared Content”, Cappelen and Lepore provide a variety of other purposes that shared content serves. I shall not go through every purpose they cite, but it is clear that their minimal proposition is simply not up to task. Consider, for example, the following two additional purposes:

5.2. Responsibility

Responsibility is another phenomenon that CL claim is based on shared content. Again the minimal proposition is not sufficient to bear the burden. If the interviewers ask John's thesis advisor if John would like to take more time and reschedule the interview and the advisor responds, "No, he's ready", then John may hold his advisor responsible for the consequences of this. It is no defense on the part of the thesis advisor that the proposition semantically expressed was true in virtue of John's being ready to bolt from the APA.

5.3. Reasons for Action

CL point out that what others say often provides us with reasons for action. If John's thesis advisor says "no, John's ready", the interviewing committee takes this as a reason for them to go ahead and interview John right away, rather than rescheduling his interview. The advisor's utterance would not provide them with a reason to do this if it was not understood to mean that John is ready *to be interviewed*. If the advisor could truly utter "John's ready" in virtue of John's being ready to bolt from the APA, then his utterance would not provide the interviewing committee with a reason to go ahead with the interview.

The minimal proposition clearly cannot explain the communicative phenomena that CL wish it to explain. The minimalist is no further forward than the Radical Contextualist in explaining communication.

We might wonder to what extent the difficulties we raised for the minimal proposition depend on the particular metaphysics of *being ready* that CL seem to adopt. I believe that any invariantist account of *being ready* will face similar difficulties. Let us adopt a different analysis of *being ready*—let us say that x is ready iff x is ready for the activity that is most salient to x .¹⁷ Then the minimal proposition expressed by "John is ready" will be co-extensive with *John is ready for the activity that is most salient to him*. In *John's APA Nightmare*, this activity is clearly his APA interview, so "John is ready" here expresses a proposition that is co-extensive with *John is ready for his APA interview*. Notice that this is an invariant property; in every context, an utterance of "John is ready" expresses this same property, so "John is ready" is not context-sensitive on this picture. This account offers a much better rendering of the situation described above; an utterance of "John is ready" will be false, and any disagreement over whether John is ready amounts to disagreement over whether he is ready for his interview, and so on. It seems that we have the correct result so far.

¹⁷ CL suggest an analogous analysis of *being tall* on at 2005: 171, so it is not a stretch to imagine that they might adopt such an account of *being ready*.

Unfortunately, it is easy to replicate the difficulties we encountered earlier. Imagine, for example, that two evangelists are hovering around the APA, looking for lost souls that are ripe for conversion. They discreetly observe John, and it is manifestly clear to them that he is not ready for his interview. Neither of them doubts this fact. The evangelists come to discuss whether the time is right to approach John to discuss his accepting Jesus Christ as his Personal Savior. Is John ready to be saved, they wonder? The first evangelist says, “Take one look at him. He’s lost and bewildered. This guy is definitely ready.” The second expresses doubt, saying “I disagree. Let’s wait and see how things unfold. If his interview goes badly—as it surely will—then he’ll be ready. Right now, I just don’t think he’s quite ready.” The evangelists are in disagreement over whether John is ready, though neither of them doubts that John is not at all ready for his interview. Since John’s interview is the most salient activity for him at the time, if the above account of *being ready* was correct, the evangelists would not be in disagreement over whether John is ready. The minimal proposition would, once again, fail to be the object of disagreement. Similarly, if the second evangelist insists, saying “No, John is just not ready”, and as a result they miss a perfect opportunity to convert John, the first evangelist may hold the second one responsible for what he said. It would be no defense for the second evangelist to claim that what he said was semantically true, because John was clearly not ready for the activity that was most salient to him.

A minimal, invariant proposition is simply not sufficient to explain our communicative practices. We often do not care about the minimal proposition even *within* a given context. It is thus also rarely what we care about in communication *across* contexts. (Years later, John might confront his thesis advisor, demanding to know why he told the interviewing committee that John was ready, when he obviously was not. The thesis advisor’s defense that John was ready for something, namely to bolt from the APA, is no more convincing in this new context than it was in the original context.) If Semantic Minimalism were the correct view, we would be no further forward in explaining communication than we would be if Radical Contextualism were true. On both theories, communication depends on what is said, and what is said is an elusive, context-dependent phenomenon.¹⁸

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¹⁸ On the Moderate Contextualist’s view, the proposition that is semantically expressed is quite plausibly what we care about in communication, at least in many cases. Certainly, it is easy to see how it is the object of agreement and disagreement, debate and discussion in the scenarios described above. Of course, if Moderate Contextualism is correct, then the proposition that is semantically expressed is, of course, dependent on features of the context. It depends on them in more constrained ways than CL’s speech act content does, however. In the main body of this chapter, I sketched an account of how we make use of preambles and the like to help us interpret reports of utterance that were made in different contexts, and how we interpret these reports if we do not know anything about the context of the original utterance. It need not be wholly mysterious how we could communicate across contexts if Moderate Contextualism were true. Still, cross-contextual communication is a remarkable phenomenon, and it is not obvious on any account how it proceeds.

Semantic Minimalism does not explain how we are able to communicate with each other any better than its alternatives. CL therefore ought not to criticize contextualism on these grounds, since their criticism applies equally to their own theory. Nonetheless, CL are absolutely correct to point out that there is a phenomenon here that needs to be explained. Given that what we care about in communication depends so heavily on contextual features, how is that we are able to understand each other so well? How can we share content across contexts, given how variable the content we care about turns out to be? At this time, we have no satisfying answers to these questions, and we are indebted to Cappelen and Lepore for reminding us that this is so.

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I rather suspect that a satisfying account of the phenomenon will belong to psychology, not to semantics.