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From: Cappelen & Lepore (2005)

Insensitive Semantics

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## CHAPTER 7

### Objections to Radical Contextualism (I): Fails Context Sensitivity Tests

Intuitions are the contextualist's bread and butter. The literature is chock full of tales about various people who for various reasons under diverse circumstances utter the same sentence with different imagined audiences but shared environments. We, as readers, are invited to tap into our intuitions about these stories; and reflection on our intuitions is supposed to convince us of the truth of RC. There's a sense, therefore, in which RC is an empirical thesis, based as it is on a variety of contingent features about human psychology, in particular, based on the contingent fact that we happen to have certain intuitions.<sup>1</sup> The central objection that Radical Contextualists run against Semantic Minimalism is that it disrespects these intuitions.

Our response is that Semantic Minimalism is both sufficiently attentive and adequately respectful of our actual linguistic practices. RC, on the contrary, we'll argue, is the true culprit; it is *radically* empirically inadequate. The Radical Contextualist's seduction works only on someone whose focus is on an astonishingly limited range of communicative acts. As soon as one tries to accommodate a wider range of data, RC runs into insurmountable empirical obstacles.

To establish our critical point, we will focus on three obvious (but overlooked – at least overlooked by Radical Contextualists) tests of context sensitivity. These three tests all have the form: *An expression e is context sensitive only if competent speakers have certain intuitions about uses of certain sorts of sen-*

<sup>1</sup> We don't mean anything particularly loaded by our use of 'empirical.' We mean only that it is a contingent fact that we have the said intuitions. We need to check that we have them. In this manner the push for RC is a form of experimentation. For those who want to call intuition mongering nonempirical, feel free to do so; we have no attachment to the word 'empirical' or any more general philosophical assumptions about empiricity. Our critical points stick regardless of whether they are categorized as empirical or not.

tences containing *e*. These tests appeal to fundamental features of linguistic communication, each incompatible with RC.

One more preliminary: MC is a view with much greater currency than RC. Hardly any contemporary philosopher rejects MC. Therefore, it is crucial for us to register that we *could* just as well have run our objections in this chapter directly against MC. We opted not to do so, because, as already established in Chapters 3 and 5, MC collapses into RC. If, however, for some reason you think we failed, simply apply the objections in this chapter directly to MC itself.

One final preliminary: At the end of this chapter we have included two important appendices. In the first, 'Contextual Salience Absorption,' we respond to a reply we speculate contextualists might make to the entire line of reasoning in this chapter (we've put in an appendix since we've never actually seen this response in print). In the second, 'Diagnosis: Monsters and Use-Mention Fallacies,' we present an equally speculative account of why contextualists tend to ignore, overlook, dismiss, etc. the kinds of tests we appeal to in this chapter.

The rest of this chapter has three parts structured around the three tests. We present each test, show why we think RC doesn't pass it, and respond to some potential replies.

### Test 1: An Expression is Context Sensitive Only if it Typically Blocks Inter-Contextual Disquotational Indirect Reports

'Inter-Contextual Disquotational Indirect Reports' is just an ugly term for the following fairly obvious phenomenon:

Take an utterance *u* of a sentence *S* by speaker *A* in context *C*. An Inter-Contextual Disquotational Indirect Report of *u* is an utterance *u'* in a context *C'* (where *C' ≠ C*) of 'A said that *S*.'<sup>2</sup>

Put intuitively, we suggest using such reports to test for context sensitivity as follows: If the occurrence of an expression *e* in a sentence tends to block disquotational indirect reports (i.e., render such reports false), then you have evidence that *e* is context sensitive. Take the first person pronoun 'I.' Sentences containing 'I' cannot be disquotationally indirectly reported (except by self-reporters); utterances of 'now' cannot be disquotationally

reported (except by simultaneous reporters); utterances containing the demonstrative expression 'that' cannot be disquotationally reported (except by co-demonstrating reporters), and so on for the other members of the Basic Set.

This provides the basis for the following test. 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 the standards significant according to contextualists about *e*). If there's a true disquotational\* indirect report of *u* in *C'*, then that's evidence *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.)

If this exercise sounds confusing, it shouldn't. Take an obviously context sensitive expression, e.g., take 'tomorrow.' Consider an utterance by Rupert on Tuesday of 'John will go to Paris tomorrow.' If someone tries to report on Wednesday what Rupert said with his utterance on Tuesday with an utterance of 'Rupert said that John will go to Paris tomorrow,' his report is false because the expression 'tomorrow' fails to pick out what it picked out in Rupert's original utterance. The presence of 'tomorrow' in the disquotational report figures prominently in an explanation of why the report is false.

*Real context sensitive expressions block Inter-Contextual Disquotational\* Indirect Reports.* By definition, for *e* to be context sensitive is for *e* to shift its semantic value from one context of utterance to another. So, if *e* is context sensitive and Rupert uses *e* in context *C*, and Lepore uses it in context *C'*, and the relevant contextual features change, then it will be just an *accident* if their uses of *e* end up with the same semantic value. In particular, if Lepore finds himself in a context other than Rupert's and wants to utter a sentence that matches the semantic content of Rupert's utterance of a sentence with *e*, he can't use *e*, i.e., he can't report Rupert's utterance disquotationally.

All the expressions in the Basic Set block Inter-Contextual Disquotational Indirect Reports. This can easily be verified; a couple of additional illustrations should suffice:

#### Illustration 1

Utterance made by George Bush, June 3, 2003: 'I wasn't ready yesterday.'

Indirect report by Lepore, June 5, 2003: 'Bush said that I wasn't ready yesterday.'

Lepore's report is false because his use of 'I' and 'yesterday' fail to pick out the person and the day Bush picked out using those same words. These

<sup>2</sup> Of course, uttered as a report of *u* (if you want to make that explicit in the report just add 'by uttering *u*' after '*S*').

words are such that they don't support Inter-Contextual Disquotational\* Indirect Reports.

*Illustration 2*

Utterance made by Lepore: 'You should wear that' (where Justine is the contextually salient audience and a blue hat is being demonstrated).

Indirect report by Cappelen: 'Lepore said that you should wear that' in a context where Ludlow is the contextually salient audience and a pair of sandals are being demonstrated.

Again, this report fails because Cappelen's use of the words 'you' and 'that' pick out something other than what those same words picked out in Lepore's utterance. These words are such that they don't support Inter-Contextual Disquotational\* Indirect Reports.

More generally, none of the expressions in the Basic Set supports Inter-Contextual Disquotational\* Indirect Reports.

*Objection 1 to RC: RC postulates context sensitivity for expressions that do not pass the Inter-Contextual Disquotational Indirect Report Test*

We're in a particular context now; we're in a café on 5th Street in New York City between Avenues A and B; it's one of those hot and muggy New York summer evenings, the lights are out, and we're drinking iced tea (look, we're not the ones who think any of this is relevant; we're just trying to humor Radical Contextualists by providing 'relevant' data). Call our context 5stC. In 5stC we're engaging in one of the Radical Contextualist's favorite pastimes: we're cooking up thought experiments involving distinct utterances of a single sentence under diverse circumstances.

We're thinking about different utterances of 'John is ready.'<sup>3</sup> 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).

<sup>3</sup> We're using this example because it provides the best case possible for contextualism. If they can't even show that 'John is ready' is context sensitive, we doubt that they have a better chance with any other sentence.

Here's a pretty obvious fact: whichever of these contexts of utterance we consider, no matter how dissimilar you think they are from each other, *each of your utterances can still be reported disquotationally*. To ensure this is utterly obvious, we'll right now engage in actual speech acts; the indented sentences below represent actual utterances by us in 5stC. These are acts in which we are describing the two utterances of (1) by Nina; 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.

Two features of our exercise are particularly significant. First, it's our intuition that all three of these reports are true. Second, we can say that all three reports are true in this context, i.e., in 5stC. Sitting here in a café on 5th Street between Avenues A and B in New York City, sipping on our ice tea, we can accurately disquotationally report what Nina said in contexts C1-C2. Note that these contexts are not only different from each other, they are also each radically different from 5stC. And this isn't some weird fact we have pulled out of our hats to refute RC. It's completely trivial, obvious, and ubiquitous. Here's a bold conjecture: For any utterance of (1), we can utter 'The speaker said that John is ready' and utter something true. \*

(1.1)-(1.3) illustrate two fundamental problems for contextualism:

- 1 According to RC, the two utterances of (1) assert (say, claim) radically different propositions. What each says depends on features specific to their contexts of utterance. How, then, is it that we are now able to use in 5stC an utterance of 'She said that John was ready' to describe accurately and literally what she said in those different contexts? That *shouldn't* be possible if RC is right. For, if RC is right, the proposition expressed by an utterance of (1) (as it occurs in the complement clauses of (1.1)-(1.3)) in 5stC should be shaped by features specific to 5stC, and we have no reason to think that these features match the contextual features relevant in the original utterance. More specifically, we have no reason to think those change between uttering (1.1) and (1.2) so that the content changes appropriately. In other words, contextualism cannot account for this most fundamental feature of linguistic communication.
- 2 According to RC, the two utterances of (1) that we report on express radically different propositions. If so, (1.3) should be impossible. The complement clause of (1.3) cannot express more than a single proposition. If (1.3) is true, then both the imagined utterances of (1) said (or expressed) the proposition expressed by (1) as it occurs in the complement clauses of that utterance.

It is worth pointing out here that this data indicates that a single proposition is expressed by all these utterances. We'll later suggest that this might be the proposition which, according to Semantic Minimalism, is semantically expressed. More on that possibility in Part III of this book.

We hope it's obvious that our point has nothing to do specifically with features peculiar to the examples involving utterances of (1). Just to clinch this point, we'll provide an additional example. (Feel free to skip it if it's obvious to you how to generalize from (1).)

Bezuidenhout's writings on RC provide an excellent source of data; one of her many examples, one we used in Chapter 3, involves her and her son discussing red apples. (By the way, just reread the previous sentence and you've got the point we're about to make.) Here's a slightly revised version of her example:

*Context of Utterance C1.* We're at a county fair sorting through a barrel of apples. The apples are sorted into different bags according to the color of their skin. Some have green skin; others have red skin. Anne utters:

(2) The apple is red.

*Context of Utterance C2.* We're sorting through a barrel of apples to identify and discard those afflicted with a horrible fungal disease. This fungus grows out from the core and stains the flesh of the apple red. One of us is slicing apples open, placing the good ones into a cooking pot. The bad ones are tossed. Cutting open an apple Anne again utters (2).

We are still on 5th Street. We're thinking about what Anne said in C1 and in C2. Here's what we think about C1:

(2.1) Anne said that the apple was red.

This is what we think about C2:

(2.2) Anne said that the apple was red.

Come to think about it:

(2.3) Both in C1 and in C2, Anne said that the apple was red.

*Elaboration on the kinds of contexts that support Inter-Contextual Disquotational Indirect Reports*

The examples of true indirect reports discussed in the previous section constitute an objection to contextualism in part because the context that the

report is made in is *relevantly different* from the context of the reported utterance. We want to draw your attention to four important kinds of differences between the reporting context and the reported context:

*Basic differences between contexts.* The point of our short description of 5stC was just to point out that the context we found ourselves in when reporting on (1) and (2) was different from the original context of utterance in a whole range of potentially important respects. Compare 5stC and the context Anne found herself in when talking to her son about red apples. Those contexts differ at least in the following respects: perceptual inputs, accompanying activities, previous conversational context, purpose of conversation, nature of audience, and assumptions shared by conversational participants.

*Reports under ignorance.* Sometimes the person reporting on an utterance might be ignorant of the relevant contextual features of the original context of utterance; that is, someone uttering (2.1) might not know what Anne had in mind in the original context of utterance. The reporter might not know whether Anne cared about the inside or the outside of the apple, whether she looked at the apple through sunglasses or under water. That ignorance, however, needn't influence the truth value of the indirect report.

*Reports under indifference.* This is a variation on reports under ignorance, but deserves separate mention. Someone can utter 'A said that Rudolf is red' in a context where no kind of redness is salient. It's what we'll call *an indifferent context*. Such contexts differ from some *ignorant contexts*, since in some 'ignorant' contexts, the speakers care about what the relevant features are; they just don't know what they are. Indifference need not influence the truth value of disquotational indirect reports.

*Reports based on mistaken assumptions.* Sometimes the reporter has false beliefs about the original context of utterance. The speaker of (2.1) might believe that in the original context of utterance redness on the inside when seen through sunglasses was salient. Suppose he's wrong. What was salient was redness on the inside when seen without sunglasses. Such false beliefs need not influence the truth value of the disquotational indirect report.

It might be useful to pause here for a moment and compare the effects on indirect reports of the controversial cases of context sensitivity (i.e., those discussed above and in more detail below) to the effects of real context sensitive expressions (i.e., members of the Basic Set, e.g., 'I,' 'that,' 'now,' etc.). Consider, for example, an utterance of 'That's a nice one.' If someone overheard this utterance, but did not know what was demonstrated, one of four things would typically happen:

- The potential reporter might say, *I don't know what he said, since I don't know what was demonstrated.*
- She might do some investigation, i.e., try to find out what was demonstrated and, if the investigation was successful, then indirectly report.
- She might provide a direct quote, i.e., say: 'She said "That's a nice one."'
- She might say something like 'She said some demonstrated object was nice.'

This contrasts radically with what we would do if we overheard, e.g., 'A is red' uttered in a context where we didn't know what 'kind' of redness was in question (i.e., whether the speaker intended to describe A as red when washed, scrubbed, painted, red on the inside or outside, etc.). As pointed out above, in such cases we do not (typically) find it problematic to report the utterance with: *She said that A is red.* (Same point applies to the other expressions discussed above.) Notice, for example, you never hear people say things like: 'She said that A is red for some contextually salient way of being red.'

*More illustrations of allegedly context sensitive expressions that fail the Inter-Contextual Disquotational Indirect Report Test*

We venture the following daring hypothesis: *Every instance of an allegedly context sensitive expression that is not a member of the Basic Set fails this test.* What we will now do is simply report on our own intuitions involving disquotational indirect reports.

Consider the claims below, in part, as reports of our own intuitions, and in part, as hypotheses susceptible to falsification. These are test cases for the various contextualist claims that have been made (and documented in Chapter 2) about knowledge, moral and psychological attributions, about the context sensitivity of ordinary nominals, attributive and comparative adjectives, about weather and temporal reports, about possessive constructions, about quantifier expressions, about 'ready' and 'enough,' geometrical expressions, and various modal constructions. We are keeping an open mind on all these cases, and it is certainly possible that someone can devise a scenario in which these predictions fail (and we can't explain why they fail), but here is how we see things for the time being. (In all these cases assume that the indirect report takes place in a context that's relevantly different from the original utterance.<sup>4</sup>)

<sup>4</sup> i.e., they differ with respect to whatever features the contextualist thinks determine content.

(*Know*)

Any utterance of 'A knows that he has a hand' can be reported by 'She said that A knows that he has a hand' and any two such utterances can be reported by 'They both said that A knows that he has a hand.'

(*Believes*)

Any utterance of 'A believes that B is shady' can be reported by 'She said that A believes that B is shady' and any two such utterances can be reported by 'They both said that A believes that B is shady.'

(*Nominals* (i.e., Stanley's (2002b) view), e.g., *penguin*)

Any utterance of 'Penguins have soft beaks' can be reported by 'She said that penguins have soft beaks' and any two such utterances can be reported by 'They both said that penguins have soft beaks.'

(*Adjectives in general*, e.g., *blue*)

Any utterance of 'Jackie has blue eyes' can be reported by 'She said that Jackie has blue eyes' and any two such utterances can be reported by 'They both said that Jackie has blue eyes.'

(*Quantifiers*, e.g., *There is at least one*)

Any utterance of 'There is at least one duck in Norway' can be reported by 'She said that there is at least one duck in Norway' and any two such utterances can be reported by 'They both said that there is at least one duck in Norway.'

(*Enough*)

Any utterance of 'Steel isn't strong enough' can be reported by 'She said that steel isn't strong enough' and any two such utterances can be reported by 'They both said that steel isn't strong enough.'

(*Possessives*)

Any utterance of 'Rudolf's penguin is happy' can be reported by 'She said that Rudolf's penguin is happy' and any two such utterances can be reported by 'They both said that Rudolf's penguin is happy.'

(*Comparative adjectives*, e.g., *tall*)

Any utterance of 'A is tall' can be reported by 'She said that A is tall' and any two such utterances can be reported by 'They both said that A is tall.'

(*Moral terms*, e.g., *bad*)

Any utterance of 'Killing penguins is bad' can be reported by 'She said that killing penguins is bad' and any two such utterances can be reported by 'They both said that killing penguins is bad.'

(Geometrical terms, e.g., *hexagonal*)

Any utterance of 'France is hexagonal' can be reported by 'She said that France is hexagonal' and any two such utterances can be reported by 'They both said that France is hexagonal.'

(Modals, e.g., *could have, would have*)

Any utterance of 'If Oswald hadn't shot Kennedy, someone else would have' can be reported by 'She said that if Oswald hadn't shot Kennedy, someone else would have' and any two such utterances can be reported by 'They both said that if Oswald hadn't shot Kennedy, someone else would have.'

(Weather reports, e.g., *It's raining*)

Any utterance of 'It's raining' can be reported by 'She said that it's raining' and any two such utterances can be reported by 'They both said that it's raining.'

(Temporal reports, e.g., *It's three p.m.*)

Any utterance of 'It's three p.m.' can be reported by 'She said that it's three p.m.' and any two such utterances can be reported by 'They both said that it's three p.m.'

The main point of these illustrations is that if you agree with the data, then you are endorsing our objection against any contextualist about the expressions just discussed: *Inter-Contextual Disquotational Indirect Reports, though perfectly natural and ubiquitous, are inexplicable on the assumption that RC (or some version of MC that extends to any of these above cases) is true.* The challenge is to explain away or challenge this data (or show that the test is no good). (Keep in mind, though, that in order to do that a *single* counterexample is not enough. We present these claims as generalizations about *all* utterances of various sentences because that's what we believe, but this generalization is not essential to our objection. If a Radical (or Moderate) Contextualist agrees that there are *some* true reports of these kinds, then she has a problem. There should be *no* such readings according to RC or MC.<sup>5</sup>) Here are several responses we imagine a contextualist might tender.

5 Here's a guess: whatever technical apparatus is introduced to account for the cases you can hear will be powerful enough to account for the cases you allegedly can't hear. That is to say, in order for a theory to account for the disquotational reports you agree with us on, you'll end up introducing apparatus that's powerful enough to account for the readings you disagree with us about. If that is so, then it'll turn out to be *surprising* if we couldn't get all the readings we can get. You'll in effect be committed to the semantic possibility of even the 'strange' ones, and what'll end up being strange is that you can't hear them.

*Reply 1: The indirect reports are false*

The first reply goes like this: 'It's just not true that these utterances can be so reported. The indirect reports are all false. She didn't say that John was ready and they didn't both say that John was ready. (Anne didn't say that both apples were red.)'

*Our reply.* The objection should be made more fine grained. With respect to (1.1), (1.2), (2.1), and (2.2), we're quite confident that nonbiased introspection supports our estimation of the facts. We're equally sure that the collective reports, those in (1.3) and (2.3), have overwhelming foundation in our practice of indirect reporting. There might be contexts in which they are less natural, but all we need for our point to stick is that there are contexts in which they seem perfectly natural. That is what we wholeheartedly believe. It is an empirical claim and it seems to us to be almost obviously true. As we see it, this is a cornerstone of our communicative practices, namely, the idea that two or more people said the same thing.

*Reply 2: There's an abstract content that they all have in common*

We can imagine two versions of this reply. According to the first, all utterances of 'John is ready' express a very abstract proposition, namely, the proposition *that John is ready for something or other*. That's why they can all be reported in 5stC. That's also why it makes sense to collectively report them by 'They all said that John is ready.' So, the idea is to just find something very abstract that they all have in common, and that abstract property is what's attributed to John by all these utterances.

It should be obvious that this is not a view available to a Radical Contextualist. It is, in effect, the denial of RC. RC is the view that what's said is a richer content, to wit, a content specific to the context of utterance. To endorse the view that the said-content is this abstract proposition is in effect to relinquish RC. It's to endorse Semantic Minimalism (except that our view is not that all utterances of 'John is ready' express the proposition *that John is ready for something or other*, but rather that they all express the proposition *that John is ready*, and we don't want to characterize this proposition as abstract – see Part III).

A revised version might be this: Well, one of the propositions expressed by any utterance of 'John is ready' is the abstract proposition. Then other propositions are expressed too. These other propositions are specific to the context of utterance.

We would be more than happy if the Radical Contextualist proffered this reply. We say: Welcome to Semantic Minimalism and (a version of) Speech

Act Pluralism, i.e., to endorse this view is to accept (a version of) our view, so we strongly encourage this move.

*Reply 3: 'What's said' doesn't track content/propositions expressed*

The Radical Contextualist might respond: 'Look, all this evidence is based on intuitions we have about indirect reports and those intuitions are notoriously unreliable. Even if we can do weird stuff in indirect reports, that's no evidence of the content expressed by the utterance reported. There's a sharp distinction between how we think about what utterances say, and what the real content of those utterances is. Evidence based on what's said doesn't support conclusions about which propositions were expressed in the original contexts of utterance.' It will become clear below (Chapter 13) that we endorse a version of this view. It is, however, not a reply available to the Radical Contextualist. Without appeals to intuitions about what's said by utterances, there's *no* basis for RC and no basis for their alleged evidence against Semantic Minimalism. Radical Contextualists are the ones who base their arguments on intuitions about what speakers say and about what's said by utterances. They are the ones who think intuitions about what speakers say should be captured. They are the ones who think Semantic Minimalism fails precisely because it fails to account accurately for what speakers say. (See Chapter 2 for textual evidence.) If they give up such appeals, we have no idea how anyone could argue for RC and against Semantic Minimalism. (It is sometimes suggested to us that Radical Contextualists do not need to rely on intuitions about what utterances say, and instead rely on direct intuitions about the truth value (or truth conditions) of utterances. Our brief response is threefold: First, as a matter of *exegesis* this is not true. See Chapter 2. All the arguments that we have encountered for RC are based on intuitions about what speakers say. Second, we don't know what it is to have intuitions about the truth value of utterances as such. If we are asked to have intuitions not about what an utterance says, asserts, claims, etc. but just about its truth value, we are at a loss. Third, if someone claims to have such intuitions, we would like to know why they are not supportive of Semantic Minimalism, i.e., if we were to encounter someone who claims to have intuitions just about the truth conditions of an utterance of 'John is ready' or 'The apple is red' (and not the truth conditions of what is said by such an utterance), he would have to explain to us why those truth conditions are not just that John is ready or that the apple is red.

*Reply 4: 'Said that' is context sensitive*

The Radical Contextualist might say: 'Whether or not such indirect reports are true depends on the context of the report. In some contexts, a disquotational report of an utterance *u* might be acceptable, but in other contexts not. It all depends on the context of utterance for the report.'

This might be true (we argued for a view like this (1997) and discuss it further in Chapter 13), but even if it is, it has no bearing on the present issue. All we are claiming is that Anne said that the apple was red. If what we said by the previous sentence is true, and it is, then that settles the matter. Suppose there are contexts in which 'Anne said that the apple was red' is false (we are not saying there are such contexts, but suppose). All we need is that it is true that Anne said that the apple was red. That's it.

We turn now to our second test for context sensitivity.

## Test 2: Context Sensitive Expressions Block Collective Descriptions

If a verb phrase *v* is context sensitive (i.e., if it changes its semantic value from one context of use to another), 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. In short, from there being contexts of utterance in which 'A *v*-s' and 'B *v*-s' are true it doesn't *follow* that there is a true utterance of 'A and B both *v*.' This is because the semantic value of '*v*' in the previous sentence is determined in one context, and we have no guarantee that that semantic value, whatever it is, 'captures' (whatever that means) the semantic values of '*v*' in those contexts of utterance where they were used solo.

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*' (i.e., by using 'A and B *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.<sup>6</sup> A parallel point extends to singular terms.

6 The argument can be summarized as follows: If '*v*' is a context sensitive term, then its semantic value can change from one utterance to another. So, 'A *v*-s' and 'B *v*-s' might attribute different properties to A and B. But it doesn't follow that '*v*' can be used to describe what A and B share. Maybe by chance someone might be able to use '*v*' in some context to refer to a property they both share, but that would be a coincidence. In other words: *v* is context sensitive only if there's no guarantee of collective usage. Suppose there were a guarantee of collective usage, then a use of '*v*' in one context would 'denote' (have as its semantic value) what all other utterances of '*v*' denote and we would be guaranteed collective descriptions.

If a singular term *N* is context insensitive and there's a range of true utterances of the form '*N* is *F*' and '*N* is *G*,' then we, for example, in *this* context, can truly utter '*N* is *F* and *G*.' If, however, *N* is context sensitive, we shouldn't be able to do this. As an illustration consider the context sensitive 'yesterday': Suppose we know there are two contexts in which 'Yesterday John left' and 'Yesterday Bill left' are true respectively (though we don't know the times of these contexts). It doesn't follow that there is a context in which 'Yesterday John and Bill left' is true. Again, all of the expressions we list as members of the Basic Set pass this test of collectivity. We won't bore the reader with more illustrations, so we leave these thought experiments as homework.

*Objection 2 to RC: RC postulates context sensitivity that fails the Collective Descriptions Test*

We first present you with two circumstances involving Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones. We then ask you to think about how Smith and Jones are to be properly (i.e., truly) described.

*Circumstance 1.* Smith, who is an astronaut, steps out of his spacecraft onto a new and unexplored planet. As usual, he has brought his extremely accurate scale with him (he does that since he's curious about gravitation). The first thing he does is step onto it, in full astronaut outfit, and it registers '80 kg.' His fellow astronauts look at him, and utter: 'Smith weighs 80 kg.'

*Circumstance 2.* Jones is at home on earth, it's morning, he's naked, he hasn't had breakfast, but he did go to the bathroom, and now he steps onto an extremely accurate scale. It shows '80 kg.' His friends gleefully exclaim 'Jones weighs 80 kg.'

Consider the following facts about how we, and, we assume, every other competent English speaker, would describe these circumstances. (Note: The objection we are running focuses on how *we* would describe Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones in these two circumstances; not how we would describe what people say in these contexts, and not what we would have and could have said in these circumstances.) We're interested in how we (i.e., C&L) can actually now, in this one context, describe the facts. Here's the description that we find natural of Circumstance 1:

(C1) Smith weighs 80 kg.

Here's a description of Circumstance 2 that we also find natural:

(C2) Jones weighs 80 kg.

It is also true that:

(C3) Both Smith and Jones weigh 80 kg.

Our objection should by now be obvious: RC postulates context sensitivity in cases where collective descriptions are perfectly natural, contrary to what's demanded by the Collective Descriptions Test. In particular, RC cannot explain how the utterance (C3) above follows from the truth of the two stories we told about Smith and Jones. RC proponents claim that the truth conditions for utterances of 'Smith weighs 80 kg' and 'Jones weighs 80 kg' vary between contexts of utterance, that they semantically express different propositions contingent upon the peculiarities of the context of utterance. But if all of the circumstances of evaluation that make these distinct utterances true (that make the propositions semantically expressed true) are ones in which Smith and Jones weigh 80 kg, then the RC claim is false. The truth of (C3) provides evidence that all utterances, e.g., of 'Smith weighs 80 kg,' are true just in case Smith weighs 80 kg; and that all such utterances semantically express the same proposition, namely, that Smith weighs 80 kg. Ditto for 'Jones weighs 80 kg.'

*More illustrations of expressions that fail the Collective Descriptions Test*

Again, our intuitions involving collective descriptions are inconsistent with RC (and MC) across the board. The collectivity test as formulated above

7 A related test for context sensitivity concerns the fact that context sensitive expressions have fixed interpretations in Verb Phrase ellipsis (or VP-ellipsis). In the following sentences

Frank likes my mother, and Bob does too.  
George lives near you, and so does Bill.  
Frank bought this, and Martha did too.

there are no available interpretations where Frank and Bob like different people, or George and Bill live near different people, or Frank and Martha bought different things. Obviously, noncontext sensitive expressions do not exhibit this feature, as in

John bought a car, and so did Bill.

Nothing in the meaning of this sentence requires that it be the same car that John and Bill bought. With this understanding of context sensitivity we can see that we get the same results as with the collective readings for the troublesome cases. In the circumstances described above we can infer

(C4) Smith weighs 80 kg and Jones does too.

applies to verb phrases and noun phrases, and, to our ears, none of the verb or noun phrases alleged to be nonobviously context sensitive by RC (and MC) pass the Collective Descriptions Test for context sensitivity (again, we simply report on our intuitions here, and encourage readers to come up with counterexamples to change our minds):

(*Know*)

If there is a true utterance of 'A knows that he has a hand' in context of utterance C, and another true utterance of 'B knows that he has a hand' in relevantly different context C', the following collective description is perfectly natural: 'Both A and B know that they have hands' and, as the VP-ellipsis Test (see note 7) suggests, so is 'A knows that she has hands, and B does too.'

(*Believes*)

If there is a true utterance of 'A believes that B is shady' in context of utterance C, and another true utterance of 'C believes that B is shady' in relevantly different context C', the following collective description is perfectly natural: 'Both A and C believe that B is shady,' and, as the VP-ellipsis Test suggests, so is 'A believes that C is shady, and B does too.'

(*Nominals* (i.e., Stanley's (2002b) view), e.g., *penguin*)

If there is a true utterance of 'Penguins are happy' in context of utterance C, and another true utterance of 'Penguins are lazy' in a relevantly different context C', then the following collective description is perfectly natural: 'Penguins are both lazy and happy,' and, as the VP-ellipsis Test suggests, so is 'Penguins are happy, and lazy too.'<sup>8</sup>

It's fairly obvious how to extend the test so it applies to adjectives and adverbs:

<sup>8</sup> Interestingly enough, Stanley (2003a) invokes the VP-ellipsis Test himself in arguing against contextualists about vague predicates, e.g., Soames (1999), Kamp (1981), and Raffman (1994, 1996). What's especially interesting is that it looks to us as if the VP-ellipsis Test does not go the way Stanley should want it to go given his comments on domain specification. Recall that according to Stanley and Szabó (2000a) quantifier expressions like 'a store' should index different domain restrictions in different contexts of utterance, i.e., they are supposed to be context sensitive. Yet under VP-ellipsis their interpretation does not seem fixed. So, for example, in the sentence

John went to a store, and so did Bill

we feel no compulsion to restrict the domain of quantification of 'a store' elliptic in the second conjunct to the same one as the one that occurs (explicitly) in the first conjunct. The first might be restricted to stores in New Jersey, or car stores, or whatever; and the second may be restricted to anything whatsoever.

(*Adjectives in general*, e.g., *blue*)

If there is a true utterance of 'Jackie has blue shoes' in context of utterance C, and another true utterance of 'Jackie has blue sunglasses' in a relevantly different context C', then the following collective description is perfectly natural: 'Jackie has blue shoes and sunglasses.'

(*Geometrical terms*, e.g., *hexagonal*)

If there is a true utterance of 'France is hexagonal' in context of utterance C, and another true utterance of 'Berlin is hexagonal' in a relevantly different context C', then the following collective descriptions are perfectly natural: 'France and Berlin are both hexagonal' and, as the VP-ellipsis Test suggests, so is 'France is hexagonal and so is Berlin.'

(*Comparative adjectives*, e.g., *tall*)

If there is a true utterance of 'Mount Everest is tall' in a context of utterance C, and another true utterance of 'The Empire State Building is tall' in a relevantly different context C', then the following collective description is perfectly natural: 'Mount Everest and the Empire State Building are both tall,' and, as the VP-ellipsis Test suggests, so is 'Mount Everest is tall, and the Empire State Building is too.'

(*Enough*)

If there is a true utterance of 'Jackie has had enough' in a context of utterance C, and another true utterance of 'Jill has had enough' in a relevantly different context C', then the following collective description is perfectly natural: 'Both Jill and Jackie have had enough' and, as the VP-ellipsis Test suggests, so is 'Jackie has had enough, and Jill too.'

(*Possessives*)

If there is a true utterance of 'Jill's daughter is happy' in a context of utterance C, and another true utterance of 'Jill's dog is happy' in a relevantly different context C', then the following collective description is perfectly natural: 'Jill's dog and daughter are happy.'

It is considerably more difficult to extend these tests to quantifier expressions, in part because there's a great deal of dispute about where exactly to locate the allegedly context sensitive component of a quantifier expression. Some posit a context sensitive argument place attached to the nominal (Stanley and Szabó 2000a), some claim it is in the quantifier itself (Westerstahl 1989). The former option has been tested for above (we have shown that nominals don't pass the test); the latter is difficult to test for since some collective readings are blocked for simple logical reasons. But here is an intuitive instance of the test extended to a quantifier expression

Consider the view that 'at least two' is context sensitive. It follows from this view that the following collective description should be blocked, even though (at least to our ears) it is obviously not (we should report that we have come across a few stragglers who do not share our intuitions):<sup>9</sup>

(Quantifiers)

If there are true utterances of 'Jill bought at least two penguins' and 'Jill bought at least two ducks' in two relevantly different contexts, then the following collective description is perfectly natural: 'Jill bought at least two penguins and ducks.'

The challenge is the same as in connection with the Inter-Contextual Disquotational Indirect Report Test: If RC (or MC) is true, none of these collective sentences should be true. If you have the intuition that the collective sentences are true in at least *some* of these cases, then you need either to find a way to explain away those intuitions or to find a way to accommodate them. Our hypothesis: These intuitions can't be explained away and they can't be accommodated within the framework of RC or MC.

### Test 3: Context Sensitive Expressions Pass an Inter-Contextual Disquotational Test and Admit of Real Context Shifting Arguments

We now present two closely related tests (so closely related that they in effect are the same test described in different ways) that a theorist can perform to determine whether an expression *e* is context sensitive. These (just as the previous two) tests are 'live' in this sense: they require the theorist to actually *use e* while performing the test. They require the theorist to confront intuitions about her own language *in use*, and not just about other people's use of language (or her use of *e* in other contexts).

To introduce the first such test, note, once again, 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. This is surely a big part of what it means to say of any expression that it is context sensitive. It follows from this constitutive fact alone that for any context sensitive expression *e* our use of *e* in *this* context (i.e., in the context of this chapter) 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.

<sup>9</sup> Notice that we are not here presenting a general collectivity test for quantifiers. We remain neutral about that possibility.

Based on this constitutive fact about context sensitivity, the following test recommends itself for judging whether an expression *e* is context sensitive or not: Simply look and see whether *e* behaves as it should by actually *using e* in a context of utterance (and thereby fixing its semantic value in that context) and simultaneously describe 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 value *e* takes in, say, *this* context of utterance (i.e., the context of this book) 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 Disquotational (ICD, for short; where *S* contains *e*):

(ICD) There are (or *can*<sup>10</sup> be) false utterances of '*S*' even though *S*.

(Alternatively, run the test in reverse.<sup>11</sup>) Unless *e* passes this ICD Test, it is *not* context sensitive.

Here's a concrete example that should help to concretize the discussion, if you are not yet getting it.

Suppose we (i.e., C&L) are trying to determine whether 'she' is context sensitive. To do so, according to the ICD Test, we choose a sentence *S* containing 'she,' e.g., (1):<sup>12</sup>

(1) She is French.

We then proceed to assert an instance of ICD with respect to (1), namely, (2a):

(2a) There is (or can be) a false utterance of 'She is French' even though she is French.

<sup>10</sup> In our formulation of ICD we appeal to possible utterances. We do that because it is something our opponents, i.e., Radical (and Moderate) Contextualists, do all the time. However, if you're worried about quantification over possible utterances (or worried it will be difficult to specify the relevant domain of possible utterances), run the test on actual (past, present, or future) utterances.

<sup>11</sup> That is, it can take the form of an utterance of 'There is at least one true utterance of '*S*' even though it is not the case that *S*.'

<sup>12</sup> Of course, care must be practiced in choosing *S*; e.g., *S* mustn't contain any context sensitive expressions other than possibly *e*, or, if it does, then restrict the domain of 'There are utterances' so that additional context sensitive expressions take the same semantic values in the imagined contexts as in the context of use.

Since, as a matter of fact, we are now actually pointing at a French woman, (2a) is true, that is, in the context of this chapter, i.e., in 5stC; and so, 'she' is context sensitive. If you need convincing, ask yourself whether *intuitively* you think this utterance of (2a) (taking into account the relevant intentions, demonstrations, etc.) is true. Since the answer is obviously 'yes' – consider someone else's utterance of (1) who is pointing at a non-French woman – (1), and so 'she,' are established to be context sensitive.

Here are additional illustrations involving further expressions from the Basic Set:

- (2b) There is a false utterance of 'That's nice' even though that's nice [said pointing at Al's car].

Suppose Al's car is nice. Then, obviously, any utterance where someone points at anything other than Al's car that isn't nice suffices to establish there are true utterances of (2b).

- (2c) There is a false utterance of 'I'm hungry' even though I am hungry.

Suppose I'm hungry. Then, obviously, any utterance of 'I'm hungry' by a speaker who is not me and who is not hungry suffices to establish that the test utterance of (2c) expresses a truth.

- (2d) There is a false utterance of 'Tom is leaving now' even though Tom is leaving now.

Suppose Tom is leaving now. Then, obviously, any utterance of 'Tom is leaving now' made at times other than now, say, a few days into the future when Tom isn't leaving, suffices to establish that the test utterance of (2d) expresses a truth.

These stories decisively illustrate that expressions from the Basic Set pass ICD with flying colors. That there are intuitively true utterances of (2a)–(2d) in perfectly ordinary circumstances suffices to establish that *not* all utterances of the following biconditionals are true.

- 'She is French' is true just in case she is French.  
'That's nice' is true just in case that's nice.  
'I'm hungry' is true just in case I'm hungry.  
'Tom is leaving now' is true just in case Tom is leaving now.

#### *Real Context Shifting Arguments*

A reasonable question to ask is how do we elicit intuitions in others that an expression *e* does, as a matter of fact, pass ICD? We believe the best

manner in which to proceed is by providing a *Real Context Shifting Argument*. Indeed, an expression *e* passes the ICD Test just in case it is possible to construct a *Real Context Shifting Argument* involving *e*.<sup>13</sup>

The context in which a Context Shifting Argument (CSA) is told we are calling the *Storytelling Context*; and the context *about* which a CSA is told we are calling the *Target Context*. In trying to elicit intuitions about context shifting either of two *sorts* of stories can be devised from within the Storytelling Context: with one sort, the alleged context sensitive expression *e* doesn't get *used* (in the Storytelling Context), but is instead only mentioned in describing its uses in Target Contexts; with the other sort, the alleged context sensitive expression *e* is both used (in the Storytelling Context) and also mentioned in describing its uses in Target Contexts. We'll call the first sort of Context Shifting Argument *Impoverished* (ICSA, for short) and the latter sort of Context Shifting Argument *Real* (RCSA, for short).

Both Radical and Moderate Contextualists invariably rely on ICSAs (and not on RCSAs) in order to convince us that the relevant expressions are context sensitive. For examples consult Chapter 2. Here, though, are a few illustrations of ICSAs well known from the literature.

When a contextualist about 'know' tries to convince us that knowledge attributions are context sensitive, he appeals to intuitions we have about ICSAs involving 'know' to provide evidence of context sensitivity; so, e.g., consider two Target Contexts, one in which the topic of conversation is philosophical skepticism and one in which it is various issues about the habits of birds (nothing philosophical).<sup>14</sup> Imagine an utterance of (3) in each Target Context.

- (3) Lewis knows that penguins eat fish.

Intuition is supposed to support the conclusion that the utterance of (3) in the first Target Context is false (because Lewis doesn't, for example, know how to rule out the possibility that he is a brain in a vat), while the utterance in the second Target Context is true (since he's fairly knowledgeable

<sup>13</sup> Note that this is where we finally tell you how we think Context Shifting Arguments can be successfully put to use.

<sup>14</sup> As Keith DeRose pointed out to us (personal communication), he prefers to use examples in which the high standard context is nonphilosophical, e.g., a context in which the participants care very much about the evidence for the knowledge claim. The exact points we are making here can be made about such examples by just changing the descriptions of the contexts appropriately. As far as we can tell, nothing at all hinges on what kinds of high or low standard examples are chosen. We let the 'high' standard cases be philosophical just because that's the way Lewis (1996) proceeded.

able about flightless water birds and their eating habits). So described this story is an ICSA since in the Storytelling Context we are not told whether or not 'knows that penguins eat fish' as used in that context applies to Lewis.

Or, consider a Storytelling Context in which two Target Contexts are described, one in which the topic is the heights of NBA basketball players and the other in which the topic is the heights of Saudi Arabians. We're asked, again from within the Storytelling Context, to consider two distinct utterances of (4) in these two Target Contexts.

(4) Osama bin Laden is tall.

Intuition leans towards concluding that the utterance of (4) in the first Target Context is false (because Osama is not tall for an NBA player), while the utterance of (4) in the second Target Context is true (because he is tall for a Saudi Arabian). So described this story is also an ICSA, since (4) is *never* used in its Storytelling Context; it is only mentioned in describing its uses in the two Target Contexts.

Note that these ICSAs (and others documented in Chapters 1-3) differ from the stories *we* have been telling above about context shifting with regards to members of the Basic Set, e.g., the stories surrounding our discussion of (2a)-(2d). Reexamine those stories and you'll note for yourself that each constitutes an RCSA for its mentioned sentence. (2a), e.g., tells a story in which (1) is used in an assertion in the Storytelling Context. We *used* the word 'she' in the Storytelling Context (i.e., in this chapter) to pick out some woman and say of her that she is French and simultaneously we described a Target Context where the word 'she' got used to pick out someone else, rendering that utterance of (1) in that Target Context false.

In sum, for a story to be a legitimate RCSA for an expression *e*, it can't be just *about* utterances of a sentence *S* containing *e*; it must also be about what *S* semantically expresses in the Storytelling Context. If an expression *e* is genuinely context sensitive, we should be able to construct an RCSA for *e*, i.e., we should be able, in a Storytelling Context, to use *e* in a sentence *S* that semantically expresses a true proposition and simultaneously describes a Target Context in which *S* is used falsely (or vice versa); thus, establishing bona fide context shifting. It is only through such stories that we should be convinced that an expression *e* passes the ICD Test, and only such expressions, as we have emphasized, are context sensitive.

All the expressions in the Basic Set pass the ICD Test *and* can be used to construct legitimate and convincing RCSAs. The various contextualist candidates do not.

### Objection 3 to RC: RC postulates context sensitivity that does not support ICD and RCSA

As with (3) and (4), the mentioned sentences in (5a)-(5b) are context sensitive only if there are true utterances of (5a)-(5b).<sup>15</sup>

- (5a) There are true utterances of 'George knows that he has hands' even though George doesn't know he has hands.
- (5b) There are true utterances of 'Fire engines are red' even though fire engines aren't red.

We deny, however, there are any such utterances. We believe that, even at this early stage of our argument, anyone who doesn't already have theoretical prejudices will find it very hard to resist denying there are true utterances of (5a)-(5b). If any utterance of 'George knows he has hands' is true, George had better know he has hands; and if any utterance of 'Fire engines are red' is true, fire engines had better be red. These intuitions tell us that 'know,' 'red,' etc. fail the ICD Test. Compounded with the intuitive obviousness of the ICD Test for context sensitivity, this constitutes strong *prima facie* evidence that these expressions are not context sensitive.

Of course, it would be boring were the entire debate reduced to a collision of intuitions: we say all utterances of (5a)-(5b) are intuitively false; our opponents insist that they can hear some as true. How do we press forward? Well, since it's supposed to be news that these expressions are context sensitive, anyone who thinks there can be true utterances of (5a)-(5b) needs to bolster her case: she could try to do so by bringing us to recognize some of these utterances as true, perhaps by getting us to reflect further upon the sorts of data presented in CSAs. Thinking about the cases presented by Cohen, DeRose, Lewis, and others might enable us to recognize there are true utterances of 'George knows that he has hands' even though George doesn't know he has hands. Thinking about Travis's and Searle's examples involving 'weighs 80 kg' might enable us to recognize there are true utterances of 'Smith weighs 80 kg' even though Smith doesn't weigh 80 kg. Etc.

15 To repeat why: Suppose 'George knows he has hands' is context sensitive, i.e., that the proposition expressed by (and the truth conditions of) 'George knows that he has hands' varies across contexts of utterance. If so, this sentence in this context (i.e., the context of this chapter) expresses a certain proposition, and has certain truth conditions. This proposition and these truth conditions needn't be the same as those of its other utterances. In other words, it's a trivial implication of the assumption that 'George knows that he has hands' is context sensitive that it has (at least potential) utterances that are not true just in case George knows he has hands. At least one of these is true even though George doesn't know he has hands, i.e., some utterance of (5a) (in the context of this chapter) is true.

It's extremely telling, in this regard, that the stories presented in defense of contextualism *never* take the form of an RCSA; instead, we are given an ICSA. In what follows we will try to elicit just how hard it is, if possible at all, to devise RCSAs for 'know,' 'red,' 'weighs 80 kg,' etc., that is, a story in which these words are both used (in the appropriate way) and mentioned. It's crucial to keep in mind that our stories are contextualized, i.e., understood as uttered, if you like. That's important because if contextualism is true, then these RCSAs will contain a context sensitive expression.

We call the first alleged RCSA *Known Rupert*:

*Known Rupert.* Right now, I'm doing philosophy and thinking about Rupert. Rupert, however, is not now doing philosophy. Instead, he's home making tea. Rupert doesn't know he is 30 years old. For Rupert to know he is 30 years old, he has to rule out the possibility that he is a brain in a vat. Rupert, however, is unaware of (or not thinking about) this possibility.<sup>16</sup> And so he's ignoring a possibility that must be ruled out in order for anyone to know anything at all. Still, when Rupert utters in the comfort of his home, 'I know I am 30 years old' what he says is true, because he's ignoring this possibility, even though this possibility has got to be considered in order for Rupert to know anything at all.

To see the point of the *Known Rupert* scenario remember that according to contextualism 'know' is context sensitive, and so, its semantic value is fixed in a context of utterance. When we use 'know' in the Storytelling Context (i.e., *this* context) to describe a Target Context, it takes on the semantic value it has in the Storytelling Context, and not the semantic value it would have had had it been used in the Target Context. After all, we are *not* in the Target Context; we're *in* the Storytelling Context using 'know' to describe the Target Context. More generally, when we use 'A knows that *p*' in *this* context to describe a possible world, it is the standards of *this* context that determine whether an object in that possible world is correctly described by that utterance, i.e., whether A knows that *p*. That, by the way, is why *Known Rupert* contains the modal claim that Rupert is 'ignoring a possibility that *must* be ruled out in order for anyone to know anything at all.' Remember: *All of this follows directly from contextualism itself.* If 'know' is context sensitive,

<sup>16</sup> We've been assured by our contextualist friends that no contextualist would require Rupert to occurrently rule out the possibility of being a brain in a vat, or to actively check it off in any manner. All that would be required is that Rupert be disposed to handle the possibility properly, perhaps by being capable of eliminating it on the basis of his evidence. We assume nothing in our thought experiment turns on this distinction.

then *Known Rupert* should be true; we should have the intuition that it is true. Our intuition is that *Known Rupert* is blatantly false.<sup>17</sup>

Here's the same point applied to 'red.'

*Red Rupert.* In order to be red, an apple has to have red skin. That's a necessary condition for being a red apple. It is irrelevant, for instance, whether an apple is red on its inside. Here's an apple, call it *Rupert*; *Rupert* is red. On the inside, *Rupert* is white. Nonetheless, there are utterances of '*Rupert* is red' that are false, not because *Rupert*'s color changes, but because the speaker cares about what's inside *Rupert* rather than whether it is red or not. This affects the truth value of the utterance even though the color of the inside of the apple is completely irrelevant to whether *Rupert* is red.<sup>18</sup>

We assume you'll agree with us that these *Rupert* stories do not provide clear and convincing intuitive support for contextualism. However, compare them with the following *Now* scenario (again, reading this passage as contextualized).

*Now.* Right now, Stephen is not wearing a hat. Yesterday he was wearing a hat. And when he then uttered 'I'm wearing a hat now' what he said then was true, even though he's clearly not wearing a hat now.

<sup>17</sup> The point can be strengthened: Suppose someone reads *Known Rupert* and says: 'Yeah, I can still hear that as true.' So far we have nothing but an incredulous stare to reply with. But we could catch our breath and go further. We can ask this person: 'Why do you think *Rupert*'s utterance of "I know that I am 30 years old" is not true in this context?' The reply, we suppose, is going to be something like: 'Because *Rupert* doesn't know he's not a brain in a vat.' But now ask: 'What is the meaning of "know" in that reply?' Is it what it means in this context or in the context of utterance? It can't be either, so our opponent is in a bind. What this shows is that in order for a CSA to be effective, it must be motivated by descriptions that are context insensitive. (We'll see this point again when we discuss color words and their alleged context sensitivity below: color terms cannot be used to describe the Target Context in a CSA that aims to establish that such words are context sensitive, because if they are, those words would take on the meaning they have in the Storytelling Context.)

<sup>18</sup> *Skinny Rupert.* *Rupert* has been dieting for the last eight weeks. *Rupert* now weighs 80 kg! In order to weigh 80 kg a person must weigh 80 kg on an accurate scale, naked, before breakfast, in the morning. What he weighs with his clothes on at lunch is irrelevant. It has no bearing on whether or not *Rupert* weighs 80 kg. Nonetheless, there are utterances of '*Rupert* weighs 80 kg' that are false, not because *Rupert* weighs more naked before breakfast in the morning, but because the speaker cares about what a scale would show when he steps on fully clothed after lunch. Suppose, for example, *Rupert* is about to get on an elevator with a capacity of no more than an extra 80 kg. 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.

The Rupert scenarios are unconvincing to us, and compare quite unfavorably to the Now scenario. Unlike the Rupert scenarios, we take Now to be an RCSA that provides evidence for the view that 'now' is context sensitive. Yet there is nothing cagey about the Rupert stories; they parallel exactly the Now one. If you don't like them, or think that they are prejudicially slanted, try devising one of your own.

A point worth reemphasizing is that anyone who wants to defend the context sensitivity of an expression *e* while conceding that RCSA cannot be devised for it has placed himself in an unfortunate position. Anyone who is in this position is asking us to take it as an article of faith that the expression in question is context sensitive. Though faith has its place, we don't believe that place is in the philosophy of language.

### Penultimate Point: It would be Surprising if there were Surprising Context Sensitivity

This penultimate point is a bit vague, but it's important. If expression *e* is context sensitive, then it's *obviously* context sensitive. Speakers should *not* have to theorize about it in order to realize that it is context sensitive.

We remind you of some basic facts about communication: Conversations happen fast. Someone speaks; sounds hit the audience's eardrums; they must be processed; often a reply is expected immediately. There's little time for reflection and exploration. It is because our linguistic devices are so effective for communication that conversation is able to be as fluid as it is. They are easy to use and it is not surprising that they are easy to use.

To use the dubious metaphor of language as a tool for a moment: if words are tools, then they had better be pretty easy to use because they don't come to us with instruction manuals and even if they did, there would be no time for us to consult these instruction manuals when we're steeped in the middle of a fast and furious conversation.

We're highlighting these obvious features of communication in order to register a very simple point: If an expression *e* has its semantic value fixed in a context of utterance, that had better be obvious to all of us. Context sensitivity can't be some obscure phenomenon that you need to read scholarly books and articles about in order to recognize and master. Context sensitivity is a surface phenomenon. Every speaker knows it when he's confronted with it; and he knows that every other competent speaker of his language knows it as well, and all speakers know how to exploit context sensitivity in the heat of a conversation. None of this should come as a surprise. If you ask a speaker of some particular expression whether or not it's context sensitive, she should be able to tell you right away that it is, and how it is, context sensitive.

Every expression in the Basic Set is obviously context sensitive. No one needs a theory to figure this out. You can gift wrap it in fancy language and appeal to all of the philosophical tests, as we did above, but you don't *have* to do that to convince yourself of the context sensitivity of any single member of the Basic Set. We all know that the referent of an utterance of 'yesterday' depends on the day it's uttered on. We all know that the referent of 'I' is always its user; and so on for each member of the Basic Set. But compare that to the idea that 'blue' is context sensitive; that *not* every single thing it applies to is blue! Any nonphilosopher apprised of this philosophical 'discovery' would, and should, scoff at it. That reaction itself is philosophically significant and presents more than just a *prima facie* case against the alleged discovery.

### Final Point: Caution

We end this chapter with a cautionary note to be elaborated upon in Part III of the book: The tests in this chapter obviously have to focus on what's communicated; we are after all communicating with the reader, and so the tests are tests that go via communicated content. Our view, as presented in Part III, is that there is a sharp distinction between communicated content and semantic content. Nonetheless, we use communicated content (the content we succeed in communicating to our readers) to 'get at' semantic content (semantic context sensitivity in particular). There is of course no other way to proceed. The purpose of the tests is to generate contexts in which semantic content is salient. Think of the tests like this: They are ways to get the audience to notice semantic features of sentences uttered. They create contexts in which our attention is drawn to features of the semantic content expressed by the utterances in question. These issues are addressed further in Chapter 13.

## APPENDIX 1. CONTEXTUAL SALIENCE ABSORPTION

Here is a reply that we guess some Radical Contextualists might devise in response to the ICD/RCSA Tests and objection in this chapter.<sup>19</sup> Since we've never seen it in print, we're not sure exactly how to put it, but we imagine

19 Participants at a Rutgers Graduate Seminar (fall, 2003) unanimously claimed that no sensible Radical Contextualist would appeal to Contextual Salience Absorption. Hence, the appendix status of this reply.