

# Saying and Agreeing

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**Abstract:** No semantic theory is complete without an account of context sensitivity. But there is little agreement over its scope and limits even though everyone invokes intuition about an expression's behavior in context to determine its context sensitivity. Minimalists like Cappelen and Lepore identify a range of tests which isolate clear cases of context sensitive expressions, such as 'I', 'here', and 'now', to the exclusion of all others. Contextualists try to discredit the tests and supplant them with ones friendlier to their positions. In this paper we will explore and evaluate Cappelen and Hawthorne's recent attempts to discredit Cappelen and Lepore's tests and replace them with others. We will argue they have failed to provide sufficient reason to abandon minimalism. If we are right, minimalism about context sensitivity is still viable.

## Introduction

Every student of natural language recognizes that no semantic theory is complete without some account of context sensitivity.<sup>1</sup> However, semanticists diverge greatly over its nature and breadth. Some see a slum of context sensitivity; others a desert landscape with only a brief *conservative* list of items; most, though, assume a middle ground. A cornerstone of semantic methodology all three groups support is the appeal to intuition about linguistic usage in settling hard cases. Competent speakers know the semantics for their language: they need only be reminded of an expression's behavior in contexts of use to determine whether it is semantically context sensitive.

Cappelen and Lepore (C&L) (2005) embrace minimalism about the scope of semantic context sensitivity. They identify a range of tests which isolate clear cases of context sensitive expressions, such as 'I', 'here', and 'now', to the exclusion

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<sup>1</sup> We distinguish semantic context sensitivity from however else linguistic usage elicits context effects in interpreting others. Context helps determine which language is spoken; which speech act are made: knowing a speaker's attitudes may help you interpret an utterance of 'I will kill you if you do that' as a threat rather than as a joke. None of these effects is, however, relevant to semantics.

1 of all others. Both radical and moderate contextualists, faced with their results,  
 2 try to discredit the tests and then supplant them with ones friendlier to their  
 3 positions. Though we cannot respond to every criticism of minimalism here,<sup>2</sup>  
 4 we will explore and evaluate one particularly lucid effort to discredit C&L's tests,  
 5 namely, Cappelen and Hawthorne (C&H) (2009). We will argue C&H's response  
 6 to C&L fails to provide sufficient reason to abandon minimalism.<sup>3</sup> Since C&H's  
 7 reaction is emblematic, our response targets anyone who rejects minimalism on  
 8 account of perceived flaws in C&L's tests.

9 We proceed as follows: we discuss anti-contextualist tests in Part 1, C&H's  
 10 criticisms in Part 2, their replacement tests in Part 3, and our critical assessments in  
 11 Part 4. If we are right, minimalism about context sensitivity is still viable.

### 12 13 **1. Tests for Discerning Context Sensitivity**

14  
15 C&L begin with the not unreasonable suggestion that those linguistic practices that  
 16 are indifferent to context involve context *insensitive* expressions. These practices  
 17 include disquoting another speaker in indirectly reporting his utterances as well  
 18 as collective reporting of distinct speakers' utterances of the same sentence. Such  
 19 practices, C&L claim, underwrite tests for semantic context sensitivity. Since C&H  
 20 restrict their critical attention to two particular tests, so will we, namely, Indirect  
 21 Disquotational Reporting (IDR) and Collectivity.

22 We begin with IDR. Disquotation is usually a safe policy in ensuring accuracy  
 23 in indirect reporting. When Alice says 'Bob Dole is Italian', she is straightforwardly  
 24 and accurately reported with 'Alice said that Bob Dole is Italian'.<sup>4</sup> Context sensitive  
 25 language, however, mandates adjustments in the disquoted sentence in order to  
 26 report accurately on what was said. If Bob Dole utters 'I'm Italian', the indirect  
 27 quotation 'Bob Dole said *I* am Italian' fails to report him accurately (unless the  
 28 reporter is Bob Dole). Such obvious considerations led C&L (p. 88) to propose  
 29 that the easier it is to indirectly report an utterance disquotationally, regardless of  
 30 indifference or ignorance about its context of use, the less likely its constituents are  
 31 to be context sensitive.

32 In short, C&L advocate *IDR*:

33  
34 If reporters can easily and truly indirectly disquotationally report an utterance *u*  
 35 of a sentence *S* by an agent *A*, i.e., with 'A said that *S*', despite indifference or  
 36

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37  
38 <sup>2</sup> See, for example, Stanley and King, 2005; Bach, 2006; Hawthorne, 2006; Stanley, 2007;  
 39 Szabo, 2006; Corrao and Dokic, 2007.

40 <sup>3</sup> The authors are not equally persuaded of the sparseness of context sensitivity; but both are  
 41 convinced the tests presented in Cappelen and Lepore, 2005 require explanation.

42 <sup>4</sup> 'Best' obviously means 'in a manner that ensures accuracy'. If an audience doesn't understand  
 43 the words being reported, for example, it would be best to choose another method of  
 reporting.

1 ignorance about its original context of utterance, then it is unlikely S is context  
2 sensitive.<sup>5</sup>

3  
4 We turn next to Collectivity. Collective reports of utterances of a sentence *s* often  
5 preserve truth. If John and Herman both utter 'China is larger than Russia', we  
6 easily collectively report them with the single sentence 'John and Herman said  
7 that China is larger than Russia'. An exception is when what's uttered is context  
8 sensitive. Suppose we know that John and Herman each uttered 'Bill left today'  
9 on different days. We cannot accurately collectively report them by saying 'John  
10 and Herman both said that Bill left today'. The occurrence of 'today' in their  
11 utterances blocks collection; and in general, context sensitive expressions resist  
12 accurate collective reporting.

13 Such obvious considerations led C&L to propose that the easier it is to collect  
14 distinct utterances of a single sentence into a single accurate disquotational report,  
15 regardless of indifference about, or ignorance of, their original contexts of use, the  
16 less likely it is that the sentence uttered is context sensitive.

17 In short, C&L advocated *Collectivity*:

18 Let *u* and *u'* be utterances of *S* by *A* and *B*. If reporters can easily collect *u*  
19 and *u'* into a single true indirect disquotational report, i.e., with 'A and B both  
20 said that *S*', despite indifference or ignorance about the original contexts of  
21 utterance, it is unlikely *S* is context sensitive.  
22

23 Both these tests presume that accurate reporting requires reporter and reportees to  
24 express the same thought (or proposition) *when* the latter's utterances easily admit  
25 of an accurate disquotational or collective indirect report.  
26

## 28 2. Contextualist Critical Reaction to the Tests

29  
30 Virtually everyone, including C&H (p. 35), concede that the tests work effectively  
31 for identifying traditional cases of context sensitivity such as standard indexicals and  
32 demonstratives. However, contextualists hold that the test results can be explained  
33 in a manner consistent with the context sensitivity of the expressions in question.  
34 To take a particular case, C&L (as well as C&H)<sup>6</sup> contend that, by and large,<sup>7</sup> an  
35

37 <sup>5</sup> This is C&H's reconstruction of test on pp. 88–90 of C&L (2005); C&H's version is on  
38 pp. 34–35 (2009).

39 <sup>6</sup> For many surprising context sensitive expressions, indirect quotational reporting 'seems easy to  
40 come by: no matter what the environment of the reporter is like, she has the ability to make a  
41 "say that" report of the reportee' (C&H, p. 36).

42 <sup>7</sup> Of course, as C&L carefully note, in many contexts they cannot be so reported. The more we  
43 know and care about the differences between two contexts of utterances, e.g. if we know one  
speaker was talking about Boston and the other New York when each uttered 'It's raining',

1 utterance by John of (1) (below) can often *easily* be reported with (2) (also below)  
 2 ‘no matter what the environment of the reporter is like’ (C&H, p. 36), despite  
 3 indifference to, or ignorance of, the original context of utterance.

- 4  
 5 (1) It’s raining.  
 6 (2) John said that it’s raining.

7 Likewise, when John and Herman each utter (1), they can be *easily* reported col-  
 8 lectively with (3) ‘across contexts’ (C&H, p. 45), despite indifference or ignorance  
 9 about John’s and Herman’s original contexts of utterances.

- 10 (3) John and Herman said that it is raining.  
 11

12 So, the questions for C&H are: How can an expression behave thusly if it is context  
 13 sensitive? What allows a report to index the content of both John’s and Herman’s  
 14 utterances when distinct in terms of the contextually determined location? We take  
 15 up C&H’s explanation of the relevant data below.<sup>8</sup>

## 17 2.1 C&H Explain Data About Easy Indirect Disquotational Reporting: 18 Parasites

19 According to C&H, a sentence containing a context sensitive expression E might  
 20 still be easily disquoted in an indirect report *because* E might be behaving *parasitically*  
 21 on the context of the *reported* utterance; i.e. E shifts its evaluation from the reporter’s  
 22 context to the *reportee’s*. As they put it:

24 If an expression E is context sensitive with respect to feature F and if E behaves  
 25 parasitically in indirect reports, then the context of the report takes on the  
 26 F-value of the context of the reportee—that is, E’s parasitism has the result of  
 27 making the two contexts merge their F-values (C&H, pp. 41–2).

29 It is unclear how they intend to flesh out their ‘merging’ metaphor, but their  
 30 intended upshot is clear: an expression E sensitive to parameter F, in an indirect  
 31 disquotational report, can take its F-value *from the reportee’s context*. Since the  
 32 expression ‘left’ is allegedly semantically context sensitive to orientation and is  
 33 parasitic, whatever orientation a reportee indexes in his context C can *also* be  
 34 indexed in the reporter’s context C’, regardless of differences between C and C’. If

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37 the more difficult it will be to collect their utterances. What is intriguing, however, is that  
 38 the less we know and care, the more amenable they are to collection and straight indirect  
 39 disquotational reporting.

40 <sup>8</sup> C&H (pp. 36–7) provide what they take to be counterexamples to the IDR test. We think  
 41 the data concerning reporting of these expressions is murky; so we will decline from haggling  
 42 over intuitions in the work at hand, preferring to let the best theory settle the matter. In any  
 43 case, the tests were meant to be taken as evidence, not as sufficient conditions, for context  
 sensitivity.

1 A's utterance of (4) in a given context expresses the proposition *that Frank turned left*  
 2 *with respect to orientation O*, then the indirect disquotational report (5) can attribute  
 3 expression of this same proposition to him as well, including its reference to *O*—  
 4 even though *O* may not be the reporter's orientation or anyone else's in the context  
 5 of the report; and even though the reporter may be ignorant of the orientation.

6 (4) Frank turned left.

7 (5) A said that Frank turned left.  
 8

9 This sort of explanation severs any direct analogy between traditional context  
 10 sensitive terms, such as 'I', 'now', 'yesterday', 'here', and the rest of the crew for  
 11 which IDR has been championed. Notice, e.g. that 'I' never behaves parasitically  
 12 inside indirect reports; and no known operator can effect this sort of shift, without  
 13 becoming a monster.<sup>9</sup> Natural language doesn't generally permit monsters,<sup>10</sup> but  
 14 even if 'said that' behaves like a monster in parasitic cases, why shouldn't it  
 15 behave with overt indexicals? Why can't we say 'John said that Jim saw that', with  
 16 'that' intended to demonstrate the most salient object in John's, rather than our,  
 17 context?<sup>11</sup>

18 Standards for true reporting usually run as high as identity of proposition  
 19 or semantic content expressed by reporter and reportee.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, C&H  
 20 embrace the following constraint on indirect disquotational reporting:

21 The underlying line of thought runs as follows. If S exhibits a high degree of  
 22 [easy indirect disquotational reporting], then there's a content *p* . . . that is said  
 23 by all utterances of S (where *p* is the content expressed by S as it occurs in the  
 24 complement clause of 'A said that S'). On one conception of semantics, this  
 25 common core of content can be considered the semantic content of S (C&H,  
 26 p. 35).  
 27

28 Of course, with traditionally acknowledged indexicals, it sometimes suffices to  
 29 successfully report another to use merely a *description* of what was said. With a use  
 30 of 'Now I leave', we can sometimes get by with 'Whoever spoke said that he was  
 31 leaving at the time of his utterance'. This 'report', however, does not *re-express* the  
 32 original utterance expressed; it only conveys *some* of what was said; the audience  
 33 has no idea who spoke and when he spoke, and no one can grasp what was  
 34  
 35

36 <sup>9</sup> See Kaplan, 1989, pp. 510f.

37 <sup>10</sup> See Rice, 1997 for data from Slave, an Athabaskan language, which seems to permit monstrous  
 38 shifting in indirect speech verbs.

39 <sup>11</sup> Thanks to an anonymous referee for urging us to clarify this point.

40 <sup>12</sup> See, however, C&L's final chapter for a defense of 'speech act pluralism', or the view that  
 41 accuracy of reporting does *not* require identity of asserted content with the semantic value of  
 42 the original utterance. They also argue this does not damage the smooth operations of the  
 43 tests, which are designed to abstract away from the potential interference of pluralism in the  
 accuracy of indirect reporting.

1 communicated by the original utterance without knowing these two features of  
 2 the original context of use. However, ‘nearby’ and ‘left’, C&H claim, *can* be easily  
 3 re-used in a wide array of contexts to *re-express* the exact same proposition that their  
 4 original uses (semantically) expressed. If a speaker utters (4), thereby indexing an  
 5 orientation, an *accurate* indirect report *must* also index this same orientation. Such  
 6 co-indexing, C&H claim, can be achieved parasitically: a reporter can effortlessly  
 7 exploit the context of a reportee, regardless of how ignorant he is of the value of  
 8 the index.

9 So, a willingness to embrace Parasites provides an alternative explanation for the  
 10 controversial easy reporting data—that is, it provides an explanation of the data that  
 11 doesn’t mandate positing context insensitivity. Below we will argue the Parasites  
 12 come at an awfully high price, but before so doing we want to examine other  
 13 controversial reporting data, data C&H deny can be accounted for by invoking  
 14 Parasites, namely, collectivity data.

## 16 2.2 C&H Explain Easy Collectivity: Lambda Abstraction

17 Doesn’t easy collectivity mandate context *insensitivity*?<sup>13</sup> After all, if (1) were  
 18 context sensitive, then its distinct utterances could index distinct locations. Parasitism  
 19 can’t explain how a collective utterance can index distinct locations, since, as C&H  
 20 note, ‘there is no *one* context for the report to be parasitic on’ (C&H, p. 45).  
 21 Though C&H concede that Herman’s and John’s utterances of (1) may express  
 22 different propositions, they insist it can still be accurately collectively reported with  
 23 (3). How is this possible while respecting easy collectivity?

24 C&H begin by noting predictable ambiguities in eliding phrases: not only can an  
 25 utterance of ‘John wrote to his brother, and Herman did too’ (where the speaker  
 26 is pointing at Frank) express the proposition *that John wrote to Frank’s brother and*  
 27 *Herman wrote to Frank’s brother*, when the speaker is *not* demonstrating anyone, it  
 28 can express the proposition *that John wrote to John’s brother and Herman wrote to*  
 29 *Herman’s brother*. To account for this second reading, it is standard to ascribe to it  
 30 the logical form,<sup>14</sup>

31  
 32  $\lambda x(x \text{ wrote } x\text{'s brother}) \text{ John and } \lambda x(x \text{ wrote } x\text{'s brother}) \text{ Herman.}$

33  
 34 Likewise, they claim the logical form for the collective report (3) (simplifying  
 35 massively) is (3’):

36  
 37 (3’)  $\lambda x(x \text{ said that it rained (near } x)) \text{ John and Herman.}^{15}$

38  
 39  
 40 <sup>13</sup> For the record, C&L never claimed it did, but only that it provides support for the claim.

41 <sup>14</sup> See Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet, 1990, ch. 7; Heim and Kratzer, 1998, ch. 9. There are a  
 42 number of other accounts of ellipsis ranging from the purely syntactic (Fiengo and May, 1994)  
 43 to the dynamic (Hardt and Stone, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> The explanation here is similar to one in Stanley, 2005, *viz.* ch. 3, pp. 49–51.

1 Key here is that (3') is not context sensitive. That is why, they claim, it is so easy  
 2 to collect utterances of the context sensitive (1); lambda abstraction transforms the  
 3 context sensitive sentence (1) into a predicate in (3), where the plural subject is its  
 4 argument.

### 7 3. Agree Tests Supplant IDR and Collectivity

9 After dismissing Easiness and Collectivity as adequate tests for context sensitivity,  
 10 C&H urge replacing them with ones that exploit intuitions regarding the accuracy  
 11 of reporting multiple party *agreement* and *disagreement*—tests that deliver verdicts  
 12 C&H find more intuitive. Suppose John and Herman each, in uttering (1), indicate  
 13 different locations. While their utterances may easily admit of the collective report  
 14 (3), it is *difficult* in such circumstances to characterize them with (6):

15 (6) John and Herman (both) agree that it is raining.

16 Similar difficulties arise for all their favorite cases, including 'nearby', 'left', 'local',  
 17 'ready', 'enough', etc.

18 Exploiting such judgments, C&H proffer Agree-1 and Agree-2 as tests for context  
 19 sensitivity.

21 **Agree-1:** If A utters S, B utters its negation, and they are not easily reported  
 22 as disagreeing, say, with 'A and B disagree whether S', then S is semantically  
 23 context sensitive.

24 **Agree-2:** If A and B both utter S and can be reported as agreeing, say,  
 25 with 'A and B agree that S', then that is evidence S is semantically invariant  
 26 across its distinct utterances. If, on the contrary, distinct utterances cannot be  
 27 so reported, this is evidence S is not semantically invariant across its distinct  
 28 context of utterance (C&H, pp. 54–55).

30 If speakers in distinct contexts utter S and can be reported as agreeing, then S  
 31 is likely to be context *insensitive*; and if one utters S while the other utters its  
 32 negation, then S is context sensitive only if they needn't be disagreeing.<sup>16</sup>

33 C&H prefer agreement judgments over indirect reporting ones in ascertaining  
 34 context sensitivity, since the former do not admit of *distributive readings* while the  
 35 latter do. A distributive reading is one in which the predicate is predicated of  
 36 several distinct entities as opposed to a collected sum. For example, if I claim that  
 37 Barack and Michelle lifted the piano, the distributive reading involves two separate  
 38 liftings rather than one in which they lifted the piano together (the non-distributive  
 39

41 <sup>16</sup> C&H refine this claim at the end of Chapter 2. The refinements aren't relevant here. Thanks  
 42 to an anonymous referee for noting that contextualists are unlikely to agree with the baldly  
 43 stated tests above.

1 reading). In this regard, agreement and disagreement require co-ordination on a  
 2 single proposition, while indirect reports do not. Further, because 'agree' is not  
 3 distributive, it does not lend itself to the considerations regarding lambda abstraction  
 4 suggested above: you can't 'double bind' the lambda-bound variable with the  
 5 multiple subjects in 'agree' reports. Thus, according to C&H, Agree removes the  
 6 possible noise Collectivity lets in.

#### 9 4. Replies

10 Theorists can introduce semantic machinery, such as Parasites, but their justification  
 11 in semantic theory presumably rests in their explanatory power. Do these maneuvers,  
 12 however, actually explain (away) the data that led C&L to adopt IDR and  
 13 Collectivity?  
 14

15 Thought the teleology of reporting is not always clear, one clear goal we generally  
 16 set for ourselves is to copy the content expressed to get an audience to know what  
 17 was said. This goal can be achieved in many ways and not each of which need  
 18 involve a direct facsimile of the content uttered by the speaker. Nonetheless, we  
 19 frequently *do* exploit content matching in reporting others, and we generally know  
 20 when we succeed (even if we aren't sure our audience understood the content  
 21 expressed!). Call such cases 'Content Matching Reports' (CMR). Contextualists  
 22 who accept the burden of explaining how easy it is both to CMR and collectively  
 23 report owe us an explanation of reporting epistemic success. The less you know  
 24 about another context of utterance along parameter F, the worse position you  
 25 should be in with respect to figuring out what an uttered sentence context sensitive  
 26 along parameter F says.<sup>17</sup> But, as we shall see, while Parasitism may render it easier  
 27 to knowingly report another, it doesn't make it easier to explain how reporters  
 28 know *what* they are reporting.

#### 30 4.1 Can Parasitism Accommodate Easy Indirect Disquotational 31 Reporting?

32 The relevant facts surrounding 'left', 'local', 'nearby', 'It's raining' and similar  
 33 allegedly parasitic context sensitive expressions are:

- 34 (i) The contribution to what sentences containing these expressions say (or  
 35 express) depends on context in some way or another.<sup>18</sup>
- 36 (ii) But no semantic rule directly attaches to these expressions, at least none  
 37 as straightforward as those that govern 'I', 'now', 'yesterday' and the like.  
 38

39  
 40  
 41 <sup>17</sup> Careful here—one might be able to know that the sentence uttered in a foreign unfamiliar  
 42 context was true even if he isn't sure what was said by it.

43 <sup>18</sup> This formulation is intentionally vague to allow for Speech Act Pluralism: C&L (2005).

1 In this regard, these expressions act more like ‘that’, which has as its character  
2 something like ‘the most salient object in the context’.<sup>19</sup> As C&H observe:

3  
4 ... the key point to notice is that the relevant orientation governing a use  
5 of ‘left’ need not be the speaker’s own orientation and the relevant location governing  
6 ‘nearby’ need not be the speaker’s own location. After all, I can, for example, say  
7 ‘Nicole turned left’, where the acceptability of my assertion is dependent on  
8 whether Nicole turned left relative to her own orientation, and I can say  
9 ‘Nicole went to a nearby bar’, where the relevant location is, for example,  
10 some distant place I have been talking about earlier in the conversation. This is  
11 already a significant contrast between these terms and simple indexicals, where  
12 the physical environment of the speaker places severe constraints on the content  
13 of the indexical (C&H, p. 47; emphasis ours).

14  
15 (iii) We can, despite the alleged context sensitivity, rather easily indirectly  
16 disquotationally report others with their uses, even under circumstances of  
17 indifference or ignorance, and know that we succeeded in re-expressing the  
18 content uttered. (C&H, p. 39).

19 (iv) We can do so, because, according to C&H, these expressions are Parasites.

20 A prima facie plausible constraint governing CMRs is (T):

21  
22 (T) A use of a context sensitive expression can be knowingly (by the reporter)  
23 accurately indirectly disquotationally reported *only if* its reporter *knows* the  
24 value of the parameter to which it is sensitive.<sup>20</sup>

25  
26 The notion of ‘knowing the semantic value’ is wooly. Even when you do not know  
27 whether it’s Tuesday or Wednesday, you can still accurately disquote A’s utterance  
28 of ‘It is nice today’ with ‘A said it is nice today’ just as long as your report is on  
29 the same day as the utterance you are reporting (and satisfy (T) if you know it is  
30 the same day). You can do this even though, in some sense, you *don’t* know which  
31 day it is.<sup>21</sup> Of course, in another sense, the one intended in (T), you *do* know—*it’s*  
32 *the day of your utterance*. We want to set issues about what constitutes knowledge  
33 aside for now, since they will not impact on the substance of the considerations we  
34

35  
36 <sup>19</sup> ‘Character’ is a function from contexts to contents. See Kaplan, 1989 for a defense of the use  
37 of characters in semantics.

38 <sup>20</sup> (T) is probably too strong: if you hear someone utter ‘I am hungry’, you may use clever naming  
39 tricks such as ‘Let “Zappa” name the person who uttered that token of “I am hungry”’ and  
40 then report that Zappa said he is hungry. Your naming presumably ensures success. Thus,  
41 (T) needs refinement, though so doing may require a proper solution to puzzles concerning  
42 the contingent a priori, something we can’t do here.

43 <sup>21</sup> Of course, if someone asks you what day it is, you could answer ‘It is today’, but more likely  
42 you would respond ‘I don’t know’. We leave fussing over direct reference concerns for another  
43 time.

1 advance below. The puzzles of indirect reporting that concern us are not of direct  
2 reference or pure indexicality, where these issues do often arise.

3 If someone points to an object you can't see, and utters, 'That is a fine red one',  
4 there is a clear sense in which you can neither understand nor accurately report him.  
5 You certainly cannot faithfully report him with the indirect disquotational report,  
6 'He said that is a fine red one', since you are ignorant of what he demonstrated,  
7 and so, cannot demonstrate it yourself.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, for 'he'—you can't indirectly  
8 report a demonstrative utterance of 'He was nice' if you can't pick out the person  
9 in question.

10 So (T) has plausibility in standard cases of context-sensitivity, and it thereby,  
11 renders reporting *harder*: It constrains when we can disquotationally report using  
12 context sensitive terms. (i)–(iv) together with (T), however, are a toxic mix: If Sal  
13 utters (7) and if, as C&H assume, 'local' is context sensitive, it follows that it is  
14 sensitive to Sal's context of utterance.

15 (7) Jill found a local bar.

16 Assume (with (ii)) that the salient location in Sal's context is where Jill is, so that  
17 what Sal expresses is what (8) expresses.

19 (8) Jill found a local (to Jill) bar.

20 Now consider Rob, who, overhears Sal, but is ignorant of Sal's context of utterance.  
21 By (iii), Rob should still be able accurately to report Sal's utterance with (9) and  
22 given Rob's presumed ignorance, his ability to do so must be explained by (iv).  
23

24 (9) Sal said that Jill went to a local bar.

25 But his report violates (T), since Rob, by assumption, doesn't know the relevant  
26 location. Rob should be able to infer no more than that Sal said that Jill went  
27 to a bar local *in some salient sense in Sal's context*. That fails to *re-express* whatever  
28 proposition Sal expressed; at best it describes it. Similarly, Rob's audience need not  
29 be in any position to recover the location.

30 It is easy to identify where the problem lies: once we concede the easiness  
31 of indirect disquotational reporting for some alleged context sensitive expression,  
32 either Parasitism or (T) has got to go. Parasitism ensures that a reporter can manage  
33 to exploit a reportee's context in reporting his uses of 'local', while (T) epistemically  
34 constrains his capacity to do so. Parasitism is intended to explain easiness, (T) limits  
35 it. The two inevitably clash.<sup>23</sup>  
36  
37

38 <sup>22</sup> You can, of course, report what the person says with 'He said that the thing he was  
39 demonstrating was a fine red one'. This is like reporting someone who says 'I'm hungry'  
40 (where you don't know who the speaker is) with 'The speaker said he was hungry'. These are  
41 clearly not CMRs and aren't intended to be offered as such. Thanks to an anonymous referee  
42 for clarifying this point.

43 <sup>23</sup> Might deferred reference be a model for parasites? Behind deferred reference is the idea that  
one can refer to something by using a prop connected to the object. So, for example, you can

1 Let's consider a case that may help in determining which of the two should go.  
 2 Can Sabrina, who knows *nothing* about Nicole or her context of utterance, upon  
 3 hearing her utter (10), indirectly disquotationally report her?

4 (10) Bill Clinton is an enemy.  
 5

6 Parasitism doesn't require knowledge of a reportee's context and hence it ought to  
 7 be easy for Sabrina to report Nicole. Thus, (T) must go. But C&L's case rested on  
 8 nearly unrestricted indirect disquotational reporting for the expressions in question:  
 9 *no* knowledge of the reportee's context was required to license these reports. If this  
 10 is how the data fall (and there is a strong *prima facie* case it does), then we must  
 11 choose to adopt Parasitism and violate (T) massively, or we should conclude that  
 12 the reports in question are context *insensitive*.<sup>24</sup>

13 Contrast C&H's position with one that supports easy indirect disquotational  
 14 reporting for the relevant expressions in situations of ignorance and indifference.  
 15 This is what motivated C&L to declare Contextualism is wrong for these expressions  
 16 in the first place. (1), e.g. means *that it's raining*; no intended or unintended location  
 17 enters into its semantically determined truth conditions. C&L call these propositions  
 18 'minimal'; they are cross-contextually stable and are faithfully reported by indirect  
 19 disquotational reports. Their existence guarantees easiness in reporting without a  
 20 violation of (T) (see C&L).

21 Of course, we could reject (T). This would amount to either denying that we  
 22 report accurately easily in cases of ignorance or that we fail to know what we are  
 23 reporting, even though our reports are accurate. Both options incur considerable  
 24 costs and do damage to our conception of reporting on either the level of general  
 25 accuracy, or at the level of epistemic access to what we are reporting. So a theorist  
 26 has to measure the costliness of dropping (T) relative to other competitors that  
 27 respect it.<sup>25</sup>  
 28

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29  
 30 hold up your keys and utter 'It's in the parking lot' referring to a car by means of the key;  
 31 a waitress can refer to a customer who absconded by saying 'The ham sandwich left without  
 32 paying'. But deferred reference isn't completely unconstrained. You cannot, for example, see  
 33 a tree at random and say 'That's where it's raining' to refer to the planter's location. Deferred  
 34 reference seems to be possible when you have some idea of the object you are referring to  
 35 differentially. It's hard to formulate constraints on deferred reference, but notice that for C&H's  
 36 purposes parasitism is going to be much more unconstrained than deferred reference.

35 <sup>24</sup> One possibility is that for lots of words people 'forget' their context sensitivity when reporting.  
 36 We are not entertaining this sort of error theory as a reasonable hypothesis explaining easy  
 37 reporting data.

38 <sup>25</sup> C&H reject minimal propositions with the following argument: For the expressions in question,  
 39 'there's something of a strain in accepting that each such thin semantic value cuts the space  
 40 of possibility into the worlds where it is true and the worlds where it is not, grounded in felt  
 41 uneasiness at answering very simple questions about what it would take for a thin semantic  
 42 value to be true. (For example, would "Jill be ready"; be true at a world where she was ready  
 43 to play golf, but not ready to get married? Would the proposition that Nicola was really smart  
 be true in a world where she's smart by the standards of Swedish short-order cooks, but not  
 by the standards of Norwegian roughnecks? Etc.) It is immensely tempting to deny that these

1 Notice, invoking Parasitism to accommodate cases where it is seemingly easy to  
 2 indirectly disquotational report (while denying (T)) elicits its own odd results. You  
 3 might wind up in the following unhappy situation: you overhear John uttering  
 4 (1') but don't know the relevant location. Yet you still indirectly disquotationally  
 5 report him with (2'):

6 (1') It's raining.

7 (2') John says that it's raining.  
 8

9 Your report expresses a proposition that, assuming the relevant context sensitivity,  
 10 includes the location of John's context. Surprisingly, however, you are unable to  
 11 differentiate it from any of a vast array of other similar propositions—since you are  
 12 ignorant of the relevant location in John's context.<sup>26</sup>

13 Since rejecting (T) is unattractive and requires argument, and since denying  
 14 acquaintance or causal connectedness similarly requires argument, we leave it to  
 15 the reader to decide whether to reject intuitions about the easiness of indirect  
 16 disquotational reporting of utterances from positions of indifference or ignorance.  
 17 We ourselves see much plausibility in (T) and acquaintance. We are also loath to  
 18 ignore intuitions about unrestricted easy indirect disquotational reporting.

19 In any case, it satisfies our concern to notice that an appeal to Parasitism can  
 20 at best only partially vindicate our intuitions about easy reporting, since in many  
 21 cases it seems to reject them. C&H offer a reason for ignoring Parasites, namely,  
 22 irrelevance.  
 23  
 24

#### 25 4.2 Can Lambda Abstraction Accommodate Easy Collection?

26 In their effort to accommodate easy collective reporting of others' uses of the  
 27 controversial context sensitive expressions, they invoke binding. So construed,  
 28 the collective report (3) of distinct utterances of (1) in contexts about which the  
 29 reporter is ignorant or indifferent, can be still be interpreted as John and Herman  
 30 speaking of different locations. But, the idea faces problems that make us think, on  
 31 balance, it is wrong.  
 32  
 33  
 34

---

35 kinds of objects reach the level of propositionality' (C&H, p. 37). If these were good reasons  
 36 for rejecting minimal propositions, for example, the existence of the propositions that Nicola  
 37 was really smart and that Jill is ready, they would be equally, as C&L repeatedly stressed, good  
 38 reasons for rejecting the propositions that Jill is ready to eat and that Nicola was really smart  
 39 for a child. Indeed, it's hard to see how any proposition would survive this form of argument.  
 40 <sup>26</sup> Of course, reporting minimal propositions comes with its own epistemic oddities. But minimal  
 41 propositions, in being minimal, seem to prima facie require less knowledge than less minimal  
 42 propositions. The issue here, remember, isn't the ability of the reporter to determine if the  
 43 content of the belief he is reporting on is true, but what he needs to know about the content  
 of the belief he is reporting in order to make the report. Thanks to Barry Smith for discussion  
 on this point.

1 First of all, note that if the account were adequate, it would render the appeal  
 2 to Parasites otiose. For if (3) is best construed as (3'), why shouldn't (2) be best  
 3 construed as (2')?

- 4 (3) John and Herman said that it's raining.  
 5 (3')  $\lambda x(x \text{ said that it raining (near } x))$  John and Herman  
 6 (2) John said that it's raining.  
 7 (2')  $\lambda x(x \text{ said that it raining (near } x))$  John

8 So construed, the need for Parasites disappears. However, the account of  
 9 collective reports is incorrect.

10 Suppose John, speaking to Michael on the phone and hearing it raining where  
 11 Michael is, exclaims (1) (meaning in Berlin); and Herman, speaking to Jason and  
 12 hearing it raining where Jason is, exclaims (1) (meaning in Michigan). A reporter  
 13 learning of both utterances but ignorant of these circumstances, collectively reports<sup>27</sup>  
 14 them with (3) (which C&H treat as (3')). But on its face (3') is wrong, since neither  
 15 John nor Herman said of himself it was raining near him.

16 To remedy this problem, C&H suggest introducing another variable in (1), a  
 17 function variable that takes values in context. (1) and (3), so construed, are treated  
 18 as (1'') and (3'') respectively:

- 19 (1'') It is raining (at  $f(x)$ )  
 20 (3'') John and Herman  $\lambda y(y \text{ said that it's raining (at } f(y))$

21 This modification permits flexibility in reporting: since  $f$  is context sensitive, the  
 22 location indicated needn't be 'near' but rather might be 'the location being attended  
 23 to'. If John says (1) to Michael, attending to *Michael's* location,  $f$  takes the speaker  
 24 (John) as argument and returns Michael's location. According to C&H, this strategy  
 25 extends to collective reports:

26  
 27 ... we are open to a generalization of the proposal, where the underlying  
 28 structure of 'A and B said that Naomi went to a nearby beach' is 'A and  
 29 B  $\lambda x(x \text{ said that Naomi went to a beach nearby (to } f(x))$ ' where ' $f$ ' in  
 30 context picks out a function from individuals to locations (we ignore extra  
 31 complexities introduced by time and modality). The simplest assignment to  
 32 that function variable is a function that takes each individual to the place where  
 33 that individual is located—that would generate the reading described earlier.  
 34 But there may be other assignments available (C&H, p. 48).

35  
 36 They predict (3) can express the proposition *that John and Herman said that it is*  
 37 *raining near Michael and Jason.*

38 Before evaluating their proposal, we want to note how dialectically odd it is.  
 39 Recall, Parasites were invoked to help explain easy indirect speech reports by  
 40

41  
 42  
 43 <sup>27</sup> We will focus on the elided report, since for C&H these are the same semantically.

1 retrieving a value *not* at the reporter's context. As we already noted, parasites lack  
 2 the utility for multiple speech reports collected into one. Parasites can reach out  
 3 only to a *single* context but collective reports can range over many distinct contexts,  
 4 and so, a single expression cannot pick up all at once on different values. The  
 5 current suggestion replaces Parasites with both object level and function variables,  
 6 where the object level variable takes whoever is reported on (one by one, as it  
 7 were) and the function variable (e.g. with 'rains') takes a function that maps speakers  
 8 on to relevant locations. But suppose a reported speaker said (1'') with *f* taking  
 9 in context a particular value; how does a reporter retrieve this relevant function?  
 10 The original trick was to hold the function fixed (e.g. as expressing the semantic  
 11 value of 'near' for 'It's raining') and lambda abstract over the object level variable  
 12 position. So how is *f* to receive its value in the context of the report?

13 First, repeating the lesson from above, if John is speaking of a place near him  
 14 when he utters (1) and Herman of a place near Jason when he utters it, though, of  
 15 course, *some* function will map John to John's location and Herman on to Jason's,  
 16 our question is how does a reporter retrieve it in his context of utterance. It's hard  
 17 to see how this is going to get cashed out. Oddly, C&H agree:

18 This illustrates the same point as above: it is exceedingly difficult to get the  
 19 value of the function in the lambda abstraction to take unusual values (C&H,  
 20 p. 49).  
 21

22 So, easy collection should turn out to be hard, repudiating the data that guided  
 23 C&L. But if one can report A and B easily with 'A said that it's raining' and 'B said  
 24 that it's raining', then it's tempting to say one can just as easily report them together  
 25 with 'A and B said that it was raining'. If the value of the function variable in A's  
 26 and B's contexts are distinct, how can one collect them into a single report?<sup>28</sup>

27 A second concern is this: suppose the relevant function is 'places that the  
 28 speaker is attending to'. We utter (3), ignorant of which places John and Herman  
 29 were attending to. You, being linguistically competent, know a description of the  
 30 propositions that John and Herman expressed: both said it was raining in a place  
 31 they were attending to. But you don't know which propositions these are, because  
 32 you don't know which locations were indexed.<sup>29</sup> In essence, it looks as if something  
 33  
 34

35  
 36 <sup>28</sup> Things may be rosier if C&H adopt a certain view about propositions: while the semantics  
 37 interprets the function and object level variables, the proposition only contains the output  
 38 (i.e. the relevant location for the function 'f' in 'It is raining'). This proposal requires a  
 39 commitment to how propositions are structured and how semantic interpretation delivers  
 40 objects to propositions—a commitment that would need to be defended.

41 <sup>29</sup> One might worry about the difference between what is expressed by a proposition and how  
 42 the hearer figures out what is so expressed. C&L's test assume that one indirectly reports  
 43 someone else's assertion only if they know what proposition was expressed by the utterer.  
 Thus, if contextualism about 'rain' is right, then the reporter knows that some location was  
 relevant to what proposition was expressed but she has no ability to tell what that location is

1 like a Parasite will have to reoccur, albeit for the value of a variable ranging over  
 2 functions rather than objects.<sup>30</sup> But in addition to all the misgivings about Parasites  
 3 already registered,<sup>31</sup> there remain C&H's own reservations, *viz.* that a single context  
 4 sensitive function variable has to be used to retrieve distinct functions picked out  
 5 of distinct contexts—something C&H agree cannot be achieved.

6 The way C&H characterize successful reporting, the function is given by the  
 7 context of the reporter rather than parasitically. But if matching content is what is at  
 8 issue, then, insofar as the reports don't express propositions that have the same value  
 9 for the function variable, the collective speech report won't match the reported  
 10 speech in content. In other words, it won't suffice merely to retrieve a function  
 11 that maps things correctly. The 'right' function is one that matches the value of  
 12 the function variable in the propositions expressed by whomever the speaker is  
 13 reporting on.<sup>32</sup>

14 In short, a lot of weight is resting on the function variable, which seems required  
 15 in order to ensure that the collective reports come out right. If A and B utter a  
 16 sentence S that has as a constituent the relevant function variable, then, when C  
 17 reports that A and B said that S, the function variable in the report has to match  
 18 A's and B's value for the function variable. If these come apart, then the content  
 19 of C's report won't match, and no amount of Parasitism seems to help. One could  
 20 wonder whether content really has to match to this level of specificity; perhaps not,  
 21 but the sort of skepticism that motivated rejecting *perfect* matching is notoriously  
 22 hard to contain and without principle can make one suspicious of any particular  
 23 level of matching, vitiating the speech report tests. Insofar as the dialectic is one in  
 24 which matching is required for easy reporting, it looks like the function variable

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26 and so is not in a position to report the same proposition. If propositions are minimal, then  
 27 there is less to know and hence the ability to knowingly report someone else looks like it is  
 28 more easily explained. Thanks to Barry Smith for helpful discussion.

29 <sup>30</sup> One actually wonders why the parasite story was introduced in the first place.

30 <sup>31</sup> One final note: the treatment they give requires that 'and' be treated roughly as a sentential  
 31 operator. It is worth noting that this is not straightforward. While it is plausible that 'John and  
 32 Herman said that it was raining' is logically equivalent (at least on its dominant reading) to  
 'John said that it was raining and Herman did too', it is obvious that (i) is *not* equivalent to (ii):

33 (i) John and Herman said that it was raining and hugged.

34 (\*ii) John said that it was raining and hugged and Herman said that it was raining and hugged.

35  
 36 One can attach a non-distributive predicate that disallows the easy treatment of 'and' as a  
 37 sentential operator. These considerations take us beyond the scope of the present considerations  
 38 but it is worth noting that a theory of distributivity may not allow the sort of semantic  
 39 decompositions C&H require. See Schein, 1993; McKay, 2006; and Schwartzchild, 1996 for  
 three different semantics of plurality.

40 <sup>32</sup> There is a subtle issue here about what 'gets into the proposition'—one may claim that the  
 41 semantics of the report are such that the proposition believed doesn't contain a function nor  
 42 the value of an object level variable but the output of the function. In that case, this complaint  
 43 goes away, but we would like to see an account that is motivated properly that gives us this  
 result.

1 causes trouble for C&H on any view. Without it, however, things are semantically  
2 bleak for matching content reports.

### 5 4.3 How Pertinent is Agree for Discerning Context Sensitivity?

6 What about their agreement data? Don't we need to explain (away) how Agree  
7 diverges from IRD and Collectivity?

8 First, a comment on the data: it doesn't seem infelicitous to report Herman's  
9 and John's separate utterances of 'Jerry turned left' with 'John and Herman agreed  
10 Jerry turned left, but not about orientation'. Similarly, it isn't especially bad to  
11 report their separate utterances of 'It is raining' with 'John and Herman agree that  
12 it is raining but not about (its) location'. What are we to make of these sorts of  
13 're-parameterization'? Similar considerations attend to cases in which they agree  
14 over each other's report but don't utter sentences that convey the same information.

15 In a majority of cases of greatest interest to philosophers and linguistics, Agree  
16 militates *against* context sensitivity. C&H know this, and in fact spend all of Chapter  
17 4 trying, in part, to *explain away* data generated by Agree that they disagree with.  
18 In their words:

19 It may be helpful to look at a contrast case involving 'filling': suppose that a  
20 tiger doesn't find a one-pound T-bone steak very filling at all, but Jones does.  
21 Informants were not particularly happy with 'The tiger and the human disagree  
22 about whether a one-pound T-bone steak is filling'. Why the contrast between  
23 this case and 'disgustingness' cases described above? . . . But in the case of a range  
24 of predicates of personal taste the folk are primitively tempted towards such  
25 a perspective . . . . The relevant linguistic intuitions that are slightly awkward  
26 for the contextualist to accommodate are, we conjecture, rooted in the fact  
27 that these primitive folk perspectives influence those linguistic intuitions. What  
28 should the reflective contextualist say, then, in light of this apparent awkward-  
29 ness? . . . The conflict between our primitive practices and the deliverances of  
30 reflective judgment often results in confusing, wobbly data. When there is  
31 *prima facie* conflict there are various procedures we can go through that make  
32 us question whether the disagreement is real (C&H, pp. 116–17).

33  
34 In other words, Agree requires reflection in order to be run effectively, and so, we  
35 cannot simply take the deliverances of folk judgments and call it a day. Reflection  
36 is needed in the cases at hand, reflection on what leads and misleads people to  
37 judgments in given instances. The same sort of reflection should be afforded to  
38 all cases of alleged context sensitivity. We believe the lesson is clear: evidence for  
39 or against context sensitivity is not easy to come by; it is difficult and subject to  
40 much interpretation. With that said, we still object to Agree as a test for context  
41 sensitivity.

42 Our main gripe about Agree as a test for context sensitivity is, ironically, inspired  
43 by C&L (ch. 5); *viz.* the slippery slope arguments against Contextualism. These

1 arguments extend naturally to Agree. The structure runs as follows: any reasoning for  
 2 S's context sensitivity also establishes that its expansions (or completions) are context  
 3 sensitive. If your reason for concluding 'It's raining' is context sensitive is R, then,  
 4 according to C&L, R extends to *any* sentence that expresses whatever S is alleged  
 5 to express in context. If S is context sensitive according to behavior responsive  
 6 to these aspects, so too are its expansions.<sup>33</sup> But, then, it's easy to thwart Agree,  
 7 because rendering features of context salient often spoils agreement/disagreement  
 8 data. Allegedly, 'is strong enough' is context sensitive because if A affirms (12) in  
 9 context C and B affirms (12) in C', we are not forced to affirm (13) in context C''.

10 (12) The steel beam is strong enough.

11 (13) A and B agree that the steel beam is strong enough.  
 12

13 A may be thinking of the steel beam as holding up a roof, while B as holding up  
 14 a teddy bear, and so, they might not agree. The normal conclusion drawn is that  
 15 a completion or expansion of 'enough' will deliver a context *insensitive* sentence.  
 16 Suppose, though, (14) were that expansion and suppose both A and B were to  
 17 affirm it.

18 (14) The steel beams are strong enough *to support the roof*.  
 19

20 Since (14) is not supposed to be context sensitive, mustn't we affirm (15)?

21 (15) A and B agree the steel beams are strong enough to support the roof.  
 22

23 The answer, however, is not obvious, since if A is on the moon and B is on Earth,  
 24 there is no reason to suppose they agree. And so it goes. If both affirm (16), speaking  
 25 of same beam, we still needn't report them as agreeing.

26 (16) The steel beam is strong enough to support the roof on Earth.  
 27

28 If A needs the roof to stay up for more than ten minutes, while B needs only ten  
 29 minutes for an art installation, we won't affirm (17):

30 (17) A and B agree that the steel beam is strong enough to support the roof on  
 31 Earth.  
 32

33 These data suggest that whatever we collect from applications of Agree won't  
 34 fare any better than the shifting truth value tests Contextualists try to exploit. We  
 35 can *easily* report agreement when the facts over which parties disagree *don't* matter.  
 36 Once rendered salient, however, we may withhold agreement. This suggests agree-  
 37 reports are subject to contextual features. If this is so, then we should be suspect of  
 38 Agree, since conditions for reporting are themselves subject to variation.  
 39  
 40

41 <sup>33</sup> This is mildly overstated. C&L are happy to acknowledge that some sentences are genuinely  
 42 context sensitive such as those containing 'I' and 'now'. These are special, however, in virtue  
 43 of passing C&L's indirect reporting tests for context sensitivity.

1 We are *not* claiming ‘agree’ is semantically context sensitive; but we are making  
 2 the plausible conjecture that your comfort level on agreement reports varies with  
 3 interests. We make no claims about the truth-conditions of agreement sentences,  
 4 other than one both C&H and we agree about, *viz.*, agreement reports are true  
 5 only if both participants affirm the same propositions.<sup>34</sup>

## 6 7 8 **5. Conclusion**

9  
10 Parasites and lambda abstraction are intriguing and Agree may provide a powerful  
 11 tool for defending a non-conservative list of context sensitive terms. However, we  
 12 remain unconvinced that a case has been made by Contextualists for their use in  
 13 successful explanation. We have illustrated some costs and pitfalls in the careless  
 14 application of these tools to interesting semantic questions.

15  
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31  
32 \_\_\_\_\_  
 33 <sup>34</sup> It is worth noting that these considerations may well threaten the entire enterprise of  
 34 determining context sensitivity and context insensitivity by considering reports of what people  
 35 said, believe, agree upon, etc. One may well worry that the pragmatic features governing  
 36 acceptable (rather than true) reporting are such as to interfere with any attempts to deduce  
 37 context sensitivity or insensitivity. This is probably an overreaction but it is worth trying to  
 38 determine to what extent the reaction is appropriate. This should provide no relief to the  
 39 Contextualist, however, as they frequently try to justify their position by recourse to just this  
 40 sort of data. C&L (2005, p. 122) are sensitive to such worries, since their book defends the  
 41 view that utterance can and often does result in a massive number of propositions being said  
 42 by the speaker, making accurate reporting (in the sense of matching with your report exactly  
 43 what the reportee said) virtually impossible. At least one of author’s worries that trying to focus  
 on what is said as a way to get at context sensitivity requires a great deal of serious meditation  
 on the nature of reporting *in general*. Thanks to Michael Glanzberg for helpful discussion on  
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