Everyone who works on the semantics of natural language admits that no semantic theory is complete without an account of context sensitivity. However, amongst philosophical semanticists, there has been significant divergence over both the nature and the breadth of the phenomenon. Some see a slum of context sensitivity, finding the phenomenon everywhere context potentially effects interpretation. This has offended the aesthetic sense of those semanticists with a taste for desert landscapes. They locate real context sensitivity only in a traditional and conservative list of linguistic items. Others attempt to walk a tight middle ground between the two but at some peril, since it is difficult to devise reliable criteria that teases apart real from merely apparent context sensitivity once the constraints of the conservative list are abandoned.

Cappelen and Lepore (C&L; 2004) issued a series of tests designed to confirm whether or not a sentence (containing a putative context sensitive term) is actually context sensitive. These tests operated on the paradigms provided by the agreed upon context sensitive items such as ‘I’, ‘here’, ‘now’ and were intended to compare the behavior in various contexts of putative context sensitive terms with these terms. The tests *prima facie* justified C&L’s conservatism regarding context sensitivity. Faced with a battery of such test results limiting context sensitivity, contextualists relentlessly persist first by trying to discredit the tests, and then, by trying to supplant them with ones friendlier to their position. We will argue that Cappelen and Hawthorne’s (C&H, 2009) recent attempt fails to uncover non-traditional context sensitivity. In what follows, we first discuss anti-contextualist tests (Part 1), followed by C&H’s criticisms (Part 2), then their replacement tests (Part 3), and finally our critical assessments (Part 4 and Appendix).

*Part 1: Three Tests for discerning context sensitivity*

---

1 The authors are not equally persuaded of the sparseness of context sensitivity; but both are convinced the tests presented in C&L (2004) require explanation.
Cappelen and Lepore (C&L) begin with a not unreasonable intuition that linguistic practices that are indifferent to context should expose those expressions that aren’t context sensitive. These practices include disquoting another speaker in indirectly reporting his utterances as well as collective reporting of distinct speakers’ utterances of the same sentence. Such practices, C&L claimed, underwrite tests for semantic context sensitivity, *inter alii*, Indirect Disquotational Reporting (IDR) and Collectivity.

Disquotation is usually a safe policy in ensuring accuracy in indirect reporting. When Alice says ‘Bob Dole is Italian,’ she is usually and most straightforwardly best reported with ‘Alice said that Bob Dole is Italian.’ Context sensitive language, however, mandates adjustments to report accurately on what was said. If Bob Dole utters ‘I’m Italian,’ the indirect quotation ‘Bob Dole said that I am Italian’ fails to report him (unless the reporter is Bob Dole). Such obvious considerations led C&L (p. 88) to propose a test for context sensitivity: the easier it is to indirectly report an utterance disquotationally, regardless of indifference or ignorance about its context of use, the less likely its constituents are to be context sensitive.

In short, C&L advocate IDR:

If reporters can easily and truly indirectly disquotationally report an utterance u of a sentence S by an agent A, i.e., with ‘A said that S,’ despite indifference or ignorance about its original context of utterance, then it is unlikely S is context sensitive.\(^3\)

Collective reports of utterances of a sentence s often preserve truth. If John and Herman both utter ‘China is larger than Russia’, we easily collectively report them with the single sentence ‘John and Herman said that China is larger than Russia’. An exception is when what’s uttered is context sensitive. Suppose we know that John and Herman each uttered ‘Bill left today’ on different days. We cannot thereby collectively report them with ‘John and Herman both said that

---

2 ‘best’ obviously means ‘in a manner that ensures accuracy.’ If an audience doesn’t understand the words being reported, e.g., it would be best to choose another method of reporting.

3 This is C&H’s reconstruction of the test discussed on pp. 88-90 of C&L (2005); C&H’s (2009) version is on pp.34-35.
Bill left today. ‘today’ blocks collection; and in general, context sensitive expressions resist collective accurate reporting.

Such obvious considerations led C&L to propose a test for context sensitivity based on our practice of collecting what others say: The easier it is to collect distinct utterances of a single sentence into a single disquotational report, regardless of indifference about, or ignorance of, their original contexts of use, the less likely it is that the sentence uttered is context sensitive.

In short, C&L advocated *Collectivity*:

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

In both tests, it is presumed that accurate reporting requires reporter and the reportees to be expressing the same thought (or proposition) *when* the latter’s utterances easily admit of a disquotational or collective indirect report.

*Part 2: Contextualist critical reaction to the tests*

C&H (p. 35) agree that for traditional cases involving context sensitivity, e.g. standard indexical and demonstratives expressions like ‘I’ and ‘that’, the tests work effectively. However, other expressions, despite their context sensitivity, they hold, fail these tests (pp.36-7). They therefore challenge the legitimacy of IDR and Collectively, arguing as follows:

\( P_1 \) Expressions ‘left’, ‘nearby’, ‘it’s raining’, ‘local’, ‘enough’, ‘smart’, and ‘ready’ are obviously context sensitive; to say otherwise is ‘particularly unpalatable’ (C&H, p.39); their context sensitivity is ‘hard not to notice’ (C&H, p. 40).

\( P_2 \) But these expressions satisfy IDR and Collectivity.

\( C_1 \) Therefore, the tests rule *incorrectly* on these expressions.

\( C_2 \) So, they deliver incorrect results in clear cases of context sensitivity.
It is C&L’s (as well as C&H’s\footnote{For many surprising context sensitive expressions indirect quotational reporting ‘seems easy to come by: no matter what the environment of the reporter is like, she has the ability to make a ‘say that’ report of’ the reportee’ (p.36)} contentions that, by and large,\footnote{Of course, as C&L carefully point out, in many contexts they cannot be so reported. The more we know and care about differences between two contexts of utterances, e.g., if we know that one speaker was talking about Boston and the other New York, when each uttered ‘It’s raining’, then the more difficult it is to collect their reports. What is intriguing, however, is that the less we know and care, then the more amenable they are to collection and straight indirect disquotational reporting.} an utterance of, for example, (1) can often be \textit{easily} be reported with (2), ‘no matter what the environment of the reporter is like’ (C&H, p. 36), despite indifference to, or ignorance of, the original context of utterance.

1. It’s raining.
2. John said that it’s raining.

Likewise, when John and Herman each utter (1), they can be \textit{easily} reported collectively with (3) ‘across contexts’ (C&H, p.45), despite indifference or ignorance about John’s and Herman’s original contexts of utterances.

3. John and Herman said that it is raining.

They say of ‘left’ and ‘nearby’ that they ‘submit to collection patterns’ (C&H, p. 46).

Even if one concedes (C2) in the argument, there is a residual mystery: How can an expression behave thusly if it is context sensitive? We take up C&H’s explanation of the relevant data below.

2.1 C&H’s explanation of the data about easy indirect disquotational reporting

According to C&H, a sentence with a context sensitive expression $e$ might still be easily disquoted in an indirect report \textit{because} $e$ might be behaving \textit{parasitically} on the context of the reported utterance; i.e., $e$ shifts its evaluation from the reporter’s context to the reportee’s. As they put it:

If an expression $E$ is context sensitive with respect to feature $F$ and $E$ behaves parasitically in indirect reports, then the context of the report takes on the $F$-value of the context of the reportee – that is, $E$’s parasitism has the result of making the two contexts merge their $F$-values’ (C&H, pp. 41-2)
It is unclear how they intend to flesh out their ‘merging’ metaphor, but the intended upshot is clear: for an expression E that is sensitive to parameter F, in an indirect disquotational report, E can take its F-value in the reportee's context. Since ‘left’, they allege, is both context sensitive to orientation and parasitic, whatever orientation a reportee indexes in his context C can also be indexed in the reporter’s context C’, regardless of differences between C and C’. If A’s utterance of (4) expresses the proposition that Frank turned left with respect to orientation O, then the indirect disquotational report (5) can attribute this same proposition to him, including its reference to O – even though O may not be the reporter’s orientation or anyone else’s in the context of the report; and even though the reporter may be ignorant of the orientation.

4. Frank turned left.
5. A said that Frank turned left.

This explanation severs any direct analogy between traditional context sensitive terms, such as ‘I’, ‘now’, ‘yesterday’, ‘here’, and the rest of the crew for which IDR has been championed. Notice, for example, how unparasitic ‘I’ is; it never behaves parasitically inside indirect reports; and no known operator can effect this sort of shift, without being a monster. Monsters, however, are widely believed not to exist. As Lewis once observed, we seem unable to introduce an operator, ‘as for him’ designed to shift the value of ‘I’ to a third person. This is not for a lack the formal resources to do so; rather, natural language doesn’t generally seem to permit it.

Standards for true reporting usually run as high as identity of proposition or semantic content expressed by reporter and reportee (cf. however, the last chapter of C&L (2005)). C&H embrace the following constraint on indirect disquotational reporting:

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

Of course, with traditionally acknowledged indexicals, it sometimes suffices for acceptable reporting to use merely a description of what was said. With a use of ‘I am Italian’, we can sometimes get by with something like ‘Whoever spoke said that he was Italian.’ This ‘report’, however, does not re-express the original; it only conveys some of what it said. ‘nearby’ and ‘left,’ though, C&H claim, can be easily re-used in a wide array of contexts to re-express the same proposition their original uses (semantically) expressed. If a speaker utters (4), thereby semantically indexing an orientation, an accurate indirect report must also index this orientation. Such co-indexing, C&H claim, can be achieved parasitically: a reporter can effortlessly exploit the context of a reportee, regardless of how ignorant he is of it.

So, a willingness to embrace Parasites provides an alternative explanation for the controversial easy reporting data. Below we will argue the cost of Parasites is not cheap, but before doing so we want to look at other controversial reporting data, data which C&H deny can also be accounted for by invoking Parasites, namely, collectivity data.

2.2 C&H’s explanation of the data about easy collection

C&H deny that easy collectivity mandates context insensitivity.8 They concede that, even though Herman’s and John’s utterances of (1) may express different propositions, they can still be accurately collectively reported with (3). The problem these reports create is that if (1) is context sensitive, its distinct utterances can index distinct locations, but Parasites couldn’t explain how a collective utterance can index distinct locations, since, as C&H note, ‘there is no one context for the report to be parasitic on’ (C&H, p. 45). How then do C&H intend to explain the context sensitivity of, say, (1) while respecting its easy collectivity?

8 C&L never claimed it did, but only that it provides support for the claim.
They begin by noting predictable ambiguities in eliding phrases: not only can an utterance of ‘John wrote to his brother, and Herman did too’ (where the speaker is pointing at Frank) express the proposition that John wrote to Frank’s brother and Herman wrote to Frank’s brother, when the speaker is not demonstrating anyone, it can expresses the proposition that John wrote to John’s brother and Herman wrote to Herman’s brother. To account for this second reading, it is standard to ascribe to it the logical form,\(^9\)

\[ \lambda x (x \text{ wrote } x\text{’s brother}) \] John and \( \lambda x (x \text{ wrote } x\text{’s brother}) \) Herman.

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

\[ 3’. \lambda x (x \text{ said that it rained (near x)}) \] John and Herman.\(^{10}\)

Key here is that (3’) (and so, accordingly, (3)) turns out not to be context sensitive. That is why it is so easy to collect utterances of the context sensitive (1); lambda abstraction transforms an open (i.e. context sensitive) (1) into a predicate in (3), where the plural subject is its argument.

**Part 3: Agree supplants IDR and Collectivity**

After dismissing Easiness and Collectivity as adequate tests for context sensitivity, C&H urge replacing them with a test that utilizes intuitions regarding the accuracy of reporting multiple party agreement and disagreement – a test that delivers verdicts that C&H find most intuitive.

Suppose John and Herman in each uttering (1) indicate different locations. While their utterances may easily admit of the collective report (3), it is difficult in such circumstances to characterize them with (6)

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

Similar difficulties arise for all their favorite cases, including ‘nearby’, ‘left’, ‘local’, ‘ready’, ‘enough’, etc.\(^{11}\)

---

\(^9\) See Chierchia & McConnell-Ginet (2000: Ch7), Heim & Kratzer (2000: Ch 9.) There are a number of other accounts of ellipsis ranging from the purely syntactic (Fiengo and May) to the dynamic (Hardt and Stone (2003)).

\(^{10}\) The explanation provided here is similar to one found in Stanley (2005), \textit{viz.} Ch. 3, pp. 49-51.

\(^{11}\) Intuitions here are delicate; it doesn’t seem felicitous to report them by saying ‘John and Herman agreed that Jerry turned left, just not about the orientation.’ Similarly, it isn’t especially bad to say ‘John and Herman agree that it is raining but not about the (its) location’. What are we to make of these sorts of ‘re-parameterization’? Intuitions are even more delicate when they agree over each other’s report but don’t
Exploiting such judgments, C&H proffer Agree-1 and Agree-2 as tests for context sensitivity.

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

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

If speakers in distinct contexts utter S, but can be reported as agreeing, then S is context insensitive; and if one utters S while the other utters its negation, then S is context sensitive only if they needn’t be disagreeing.

C&H tout agreement judgments over indirect reporting ones in ascertaining context sensitivity, since the former do not admit of *distributive readings* while the latter can. In this regard, agreement and disagreement require co-ordination on a single proposition, while indirect reports do not. Further, because ‘agree’ is not distributive, it does not lend itself to the considerations regarding lambda abstraction suggested above: you can’t ‘double bind’ the lambda-bound variable with the multiple subjects in ‘agree’ reports. Thus, according to C&H, Agree removes the possible noise Collectivity lets in.

**Part 4: Replies**

Theorists can introduce or reject whatever they see fit, including preferring Agree over IDR and Collectivity, and positing Parites, which behave like indexicals in taking values in context but are unlike them inasmuch as these values are determined by contexts other than those of use. But do these maneuvers actually explain (away) the data that led C&L to adopt IDR and Collectivity in the first place?

utter sentences that convey the same information. Since what follows doesn’t depend on the accuracy of these particular judgments, we will put these issues to the side – at least for present.
What, we must ask, is the point of reporting what others say, think, and agree upon, and how can intuitions about such reports bear on semantics? A long standing assumption is that when we report on others, our aim is to pass on information. So understood, reporting requires content matching (though it may achieve more). But if this is the goal in reporting others, then, since we mostly succeed in this task (when we aren’t lying or misleading, or have another goal in mind), semanticists must constrain their theory to render reporting possible in normal circumstances. This condition comes with a natural epistemic requirement— you can manage to report another only when you know which proposition you are reporting on. Even if this is only roughly correct, Contextualists who take on the burden of explaining how we manage easy reporting and collection owe us an explanation as well of our epistemic success in reporting. The less you know about another context of utterance along a parameter F, the worse position you should be in with respect to figuring out what an uttered sentence that is context sensitive along parameter F says. The less you know, the less you should be able to report. As we shall see, while Parasitism may render it easier to report others, it doesn’t make it much easier to explain how reporters know what they are reporting.

4.1 Can Parasitism accommodate easy indirect disquotational reporting?

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

(i) The contribution to what sentences with these expressions say (or express) depends on context in some way or another.

(ii) But no semantic rule directly attaches to these expressions, at least nothing as straightforward as what governs ‘I’, ‘now,’ ‘yesterday’ and the like. In this regard, they act more like ‘that’, with a character something like ‘the most salient object in the context.’ As C&H observe:

Now the key point to notice is that the relevant orientation governing a use of ‘left’ need not be the speaker’s own orientation and the relevant location

---

12 Careful here – one might be able to know that the sentence uttered in a foreign unfamiliar context was true even if he isn’t sure what was said by it.

13 This formulation is intentionally vague to allow for Speech Act Pluralism C&L (2005).
governing ‘nearby’ need not be the speaker’s own location. After all, I can, for example, say ‘Nicole turned left’, where the acceptability of my assertion is dependent on whether Nicole turned left relative to her own orientation, and I can say ‘Nicole went to a nearby bar’, where the relevant location is, for example, some distant place I have been talking about earlier in the conversation. This is already a significant contrast between these terms and simple indexicals, where the physical environment of the speaker places severe constraints on the content of the indexical. (C&H, p. 47; emphasis ours).

(iii) We can, despite the alleged context sensitivity, rather easily indirectly disquotationally report others with their uses, even under circumstances of indifference or ignorance (C&H, p. 39).

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

A prima facie plausible constraint governing indirect speech reports is (T):

(T) A use of a context sensitive expression can be accurately indirectly disquotationally reported only if its reporter knows the value of the parameter to which it is sensitive.\(^{14}\)

The notion of ‘knowing the semantic value’ is wooly. Even when you do not know whether it’s Tuesday or Wednesday, you can accurately disquote A’s utterance of ‘It is nice today’ with ‘A said it is nice today’ if your report is on the same day as the utterance you are reporting (and satisfy (T) if you know it is the same day). You can do this even though in some sense, you don’t know which day it is.\(^{15}\) Of course, in another sense, the one intended in (T), you do know which day it is – it’s the day of your utterance. We want to set issues about what constitutes knowledge aside for now, since they will not impact on the substance of the considerations we advance below. They don’t because the relevant expressions behave more like demonstratives than indexicals, and thesis (T) seems most apt for normal demonstratives, such as ‘this’ and ‘that’.

\(^{14}\) (T) is probably too strong but its general import is clear enough to not quibble over details.

\(^{15}\) Of course, if someone asks you what day it is, you could answer ‘It is today,’ but more likely you would respond ‘I don’t know.’ We leave fussing over direct reference concerns for another time.
If someone points to an object you can’t see, and utters, ‘That is a fine red one,’ there is a clear sense in which you can neither understand nor accurately report him. You certainly cannot faithfully report him with the indirect disquotational report ‘He said that is a fine red one,’ since you are ignorant of what he demonstrated, and so, cannot demonstrate it yourself. Similarly, for ‘he’ – you can’t indirectly report a demonstrative utterance of ‘He was nice’ if you can’t pick out the person in question.

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

7. Jill found a local bar.
Assume (with (ii)) that the salient location in Sal’s context is where Jill is, so that what Sal expresses is what (8) expresses.

8. Jill found a local (to Jill) bar.
Now consider Rob, who, overhears Sal, but is ignorant of Sal’s context of utterance. By (iii), Rob should still be able accurately to report Sal’s utterance with (9) and given Rob’s presumed ignorance, his ability to do so must be explained by (iv).

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

It is easy to identify where the problem lies: Once we concede the easiness of an indirect disquotational reporting for an alleged context sensitive expression, either Parasitism or (T) has to go. Parasitism ensures a reporter can manage to exploit a reportee’s context in reporting his uses of ‘local’, while (T)
epistemically constrains his capacity to do so. Parasitism is intended to explain easiness, (T) limits it. The two inevitably clash.\textsuperscript{16}

Surprisingly, confronted with this problem, C&H opt to challenge intuition: although indirect reporting for Parasites may be easy in most circumstances of ignorance, it is not invariably so. A case in point they consider is where someone indirectly reports another’s use of the apparently context sensitive ‘enemy’ in a circumstance in which the reporter is confused about who the enemy is an enemy of. C&H write:

Suppose Sabrina hears a conversation in which Nicole says ‘Bill Clinton is an enemy and Hillary Clinton is a friend’. Suppose, unbeknownst to Sabrina, Nicole is a reporter that is describing the friends and enemies of a particular politician. Sabrina naturally hears Nicole as describing Nicole. Sabrina goes on to say to someone else ‘Nicole said that Bill Clinton is an enemy and Hilary Clinton is a friend’…Intuitions may be a bit wobbly here, but it is tempting to think that she actually expressed something false by ‘Nicole said that Bill Clinton is an enemy and Hilary Clinton is a friend’ in that context (namely, that Nicole said that Bill is an enemy of hers and Hilary is a friend of hers) (C&H, pp. 42-3)

This means, whether intended or not, that easy indirect disquotational reporting for ‘enemy’ is suspect. In a footnote, C&H suggest this conclusion is desirable:

Assuming that is right, we should say that while ‘an enemy’ can be used parasitically in a ‘say that’ report, it doesn’t have to be; and insofar as it isn’t so being used, the disquotational report may well come out false. (C&H, p.43)

It would seem that as they see it, reporters can opt to use an expression parasitically or non-parasitically. In the latter case, the reporter’s context determines its semantic value; in the former, the reportee’s does. Notice, in

\textsuperscript{16} Might one try invoking deferred reference as a model for parasites? The key idea behind deferred reference is that one can refer to something by using a prop connected to the object. So, e.g., you can hold up your keys and say ‘It’s in the parking lot’ referring to a car by means of the key; a waitress can refer to a customer who absconded by saying ‘The ham sandwich left without paying.’ But deferred reference isn’t completely unconstrained. You cannot, e.g., see a tree at random and say ‘That’s where it’s raining’ to refer to the planter’s location. Deferred reference seems to be possible when you have some idea of the object you are referring to deferentially. It’s hard to formulate constraints on deferred reference, but notice that for C&H’s purposes parasitism is going to be much more unconstrained than deferred reference.
C&H’s case, it is not obvious Nicole is reporting her friend non-parasitically; she is attempting to index the same features her friend did. Using ‘enemy’ parasitically is one way to merge contexts, and Nicole is clearly trying to be faithful to the context she is reporting on. False beliefs shouldn’t matter to how one uses ‘enemy’.

More interestingly, can Sabrina, who knows nothing about Nicole, upon hearing her utter (10) indirectly disquotationally report her?

10. Bill Clinton is an enemy.

Parasitism doesn’t require knowledge of a reportees context and hence it ought to be easy for Sabrina to report Nicole. Thus, (T) must go. But C&L’s case rested on nearly unrestricted indirect disquotational reporting for the expressions in question: no knowledge of the reportee’s context was required to license these reports. If this is how the data fall (and there is a strong prima facie case it does), then we must choose either to adopt Parasitism and violate (T) massively or conclude that the report is context insensitive.\(^\text{17}\)

Contrast C&H’s position with one that supports easy indirect disquotational reporting for the relevant expressions in situations of ignorance and indifference. This is what motivated C&L to declare Contextualism is wrong for these expressions in the first place. (1), e.g., means that it’s raining; no intended or unintended location enters into its semantically determined truth conditions. C&L call these propositions ‘minimal’; they are stable across contexts, and are always faithfully reported by indirect disquotational reports. Their existence guarantees easiness in reporting without a violation of (T)\(^\text{18}\).

Since rejecting (T) is not cost free, a theorist has to measure its costliness relative to other competitors that can respect (T)\(^\text{19}\).

---

\(^{17}\) One possibility is that for many words people ‘forget’ their context sensitivity when reporting. We are not entertaining this sort of error theory as a reasonable hypothesis explaining easy reporting data.

\(^{18}\) See C&L (2005)

\(^{19}\) C&H reject minimal propositions with the following argument: For the expressions in question, ‘there’s something of a strain in accepting that each such thin semantic value cuts the space of possibility into the worlds where it is true and the worlds where it is not, grounded in felt uneasiness at answering very simple questions about what it would take for a thin semantic value to be true. (For example, would Jill be ready; be true at a world where she was ready 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
Notice, invoking Parasitism to accommodate cases where it is seemingly easy to indirectly disquotational report (while denying (T)) elicits its own odd results. You might land in the following unhappy situation: you overhear John uttering (1)’ but don’t know the relevant location. Yet you go ahead and indirectly disquotationally report him with (2):

1. It’s raining.

You might land in the following unhappy situation: you overhear John uttering (1)’ but don’t know the relevant location. Yet you go ahead and indirectly disquotationally report him with (2):

2. John says that it’s raining.

Your report expresses a proposition that, assuming the relevant context sensitivity, includes the location of John’s context. Surprisingly, however, you are unable to differentiate from any of a vast array of other similar propositions – since you are ignorant of the relevant location in John’s context.20

Another cost of denying (T) concerns a classic, though not entirely uncontroversial, assumption in the literature that reference is constrained by acquaintance or causal connection.21 Unconstrained indirect disquotational reports violate any reasonable way of cashing out the notion of acquaintance. If someone can, from his context, report what someone else said in a different context, where the latter’s words can take in their context potentially any value for the relevant parameter, then the reporter’s success depends upon successful reference (perhaps, not as part of the content, but at least as an input to character) to the value of the reportee’s context. But this spells disaster for any

kinds of objects reach the level of propositionality’ (C&H, p. 37). If these were good reasons for rejecting minimal propositions, e.g., the existence of the propositions that Nicola was really smart and that Jill is ready, then they would be equally, as C&L have emphasized, good reasons for rejecting the propositions that Jill is ready to eat and that Nicola was really smart for a child. Indeed, it’s hard to see how any proposition could survive this form of argument.

20 Of course, reporting minimal propositions comes with its own epistemic oddities. But minimal propositions, by virtue of being minimal seem to prima facie require less knowledge than the less minimal propositions. The issue here, remember, isn’t the ability of the reporter to determine if the 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 and throughout.

21 See Russell (1910) for the classic statement of knowledge by acquaintance. The particular features of Russell’s account have been widely discussed both approvingly and disapprovingly. Hawthorne has argued against any general acquaintance constraint – though there might still be a great deal of temptation to keep (T) despite these reflections since it is a particular constraint on indirect reporting rather than referring in general. It doesn’t matter much just how liberal you think the constraints of acquaintance are to make the point at hand so long as there are some.
notion of acquaintance: the abilities of the speaker to report are boundless.\textsuperscript{22}

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

In any case, it satisfies our concern to notice that an appeal to Parasitism at best only partially vindicates our intuitions about easy reporting, since in many cases it seems to reject them. But C&H offer their own reason for ignoring Parasites, namely, their irrelevance.

4.2 Can Lambda Abstraction accommodate easy collections?

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

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

3. John and Herman said that it’s raining.
3’. \( \lambda x(x \text{ said that it raining (near } x)) \) John and Herman
2. John said that it’s raining.
2’. \( \lambda x(x \text{ said that it raining (near } x)) \) John

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

\textsuperscript{22} This is a result at least one of the author’s may well embrace, but it requires substantial argumentation as it brings with it fairly counter-intuitive consequences.
Suppose John, speaking to Michael on the phone and hearing it raining
where Michael is, exclaims (1) (meaning in Berlin); and Herman, speaking to
Jason and hearing it raining where Jason is, exclaims (1) (meaning in Michigan).
A reporter learning of both utterances, but ignorant of these circumstances,
collectively reports\(^{23}\) them with (3) (which C&H treat as (3')). But on its face (3') is
wrong, since neither John nor Herman said of himself it was raining near him.

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

1'’. It is raining (at f(x))

3'’. John and Herman ‘\(\lambda y(y\ said\ that\ it's\ raining\ (at\ f(y))\)’

This modification permits flexibility in reporting: since ‘f’ is context sensitive, the
location indicated needn’t be ‘near’ but rather ‘location being attended to.’ If John
says (1) to Michael, speaking about Michael’s location, f takes the speaker
(John) as argument and returns the place to which he is attending, namely,
Michael’s location. According to C&H, this strategy extends to collective reports:
…we are open to a generalization of the proposal, where the underlying structure
of ‘A and B said that Naomi went to a nearby beach’ is ‘A and B \(\lambda x (x\ said\ that\ Naomi\ went\ to\ a\ beach\ nearby\ (to\ fx))\)’ where ‘f’ in context picks out a function
from individuals to locations (we ignore extra complexities introduced by time and
modality). The simplest assignment to that function variable is a function that
takes each individual to the place where that individual is located—that would
generate the reading described earlier. But there may be other assignments
available. (C&H, p.48)

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

Before evaluating the proposal, note how dialectically odd it is. Recall,
Parasites were invoked to help with indirect speech reports by retrieving a value
not at the reportee’s, context. As already noted, Parasites lack utility for multiple
speech reports collected into one. Parasites can reach out to a single context but

\(^{23}\) We will focus on the elided report, since for C&H these are the same semantically.
collective reports range over many distinct contexts, and so, an expression cannot pick up all at once on different values. The current suggestion replaces Parasites with object level and function variables, where the object level variable takes whoever is reported on (one by one, as it were) and the function variable (e.g., with 'rains) takes a function that maps speakers on to relevant locations. But suppose a reported speaker said (1") with ‘f’ taking in context a particular value; how does a reporter retrieve this relevant function?

The original trick was to hold the function fixed (e.g. ‘near’ for ‘It’s raining’) and lambda abstract over the object level variable position. So how is ‘f’ to receive its value in the context of the report?

First, repeating the lesson from above, if John is speaking of a place near him when he utters (1) and Herman of a place near Jason when he utters it, though, of course, some function will map John to John’s location and Herman on to Jason’s, our question is how does a reporter retrieve it in his context of utterance. It’s hard to see how this is going to get cashed out. Oddly, C&H agree: This illustrates the same point as above: it is exceedingly difficult to get the value of the function in the lambda abstraction to take unusual values (C&H, p. 49). So, easy collection should turn out to be hard, repudiating the data that guided C&L. But if one can report A and B easily with ‘A said that it’s raining’ and ‘B said that it’s raining’, it’s tempting to say one can just as easily report them together with ‘A and B said that it was raining.’ If the indexed function in A’s and B’s contexts are distinct, how can one collect them into a single report?

Things may be rosier if C&H adopt a certain view of propositions: while the semantics interprets the function and object level variables, the proposition only contains the output (i.e., the relevant location for the ‘f’ in ‘It is raining’). This proposal requires a commitment to how propositions are structured and how semantic interpretation delivers objects to propositions – a commitment that would need to be defended.

A second concern is this: Suppose the relevant function is ‘places the speaker is attending to.’ We utter (3), ignorant of which places John and Herman were attending to. You, being linguistically competent, know a description of the
propositions that John and Herman expressed: both said it was raining in a place they were attending to. But you don’t know which propositions these are, because you don’t know which locations were indexed.\textsuperscript{24} In essence, it looks as if something like a Parasite will have to reoccur, albeit in the form of a function rather than by a process of merging contexts.\textsuperscript{25} But in addition to all the misgivings about Parasites we have already registered,\textsuperscript{26} there remains C&H’s own reservations, namely, a single context sensitive function variable has to be used to retrieve distinct functions picked out of distinct contexts – something which C&H agree cannot be achieved.

The way C&H describe successful reporting, the function is given by the context of the reporter. But since the goal is to report on what others say, insofar as these parties don’t have the same function in mind, their speech reports won’t match in content. In other words, it won’t suffice merely to retrieve a function that maps things in the right ways. Which function is right is dictated by the propositions expressed by whomever the speaker is reporting on.\textsuperscript{27}

\textbf{4.3 How pertinent is Agree for discerning context sensitivity?}

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

\textsuperscript{24} One might worry about the difference between what is expressed by a proposition and how the hearer figures out what is so expressed. C & L’s test assume that one indirectly reports someone else’s assertion only if they know what proposition was expressed by the utterer. Thus, if contextualism about ‘rain’ is right, the reporter knows that some location was relevant to the proposition expressed but has no ability to tell what that location was is not in a position to report the same proposition. If propositions are minimal propositions, there is less to know and hence the ability to knowingly report someone else looks like it is more easily explained. Thanks to Barry Smith for helpful discussion.

\textsuperscript{25} One actually wonders why the parasite story was necessary in the first place.

\textsuperscript{26} On a final note, the account that they provide requires ‘and’ to be treated roughly as a sentential operator. It is worth noting this is not straightforwardly obvious. While it is plausible ‘John and 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 also obvious that (i) is not equivalent to (ii):

\begin{enumerate}
  \item John and Herman said that it was raining and hugged.
  \item John said that it was raining and hugged and Herman said that it was raining and hugged.
\end{enumerate}

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

\textsuperscript{27} There is a subtle issue here about what ‘gets into the proposition’ – one may claim that the semantics of the report are such that the proposition believed doesn’t contain a function or the value of an object level variable but the output of the function. In that case, this complaint goes away, but we would like to see an account that is motivated properly that gives us this result.
One objection to Agree as a test for context sensitivity is, ironically, inspired by C&L (Ch.5); viz. the slippery slope arguments against Contextualism. These arguments extend naturally to Agree. The structure is as follows: any reasoning for S’s context sensitivity also establishes that its expansions (or completions) are context sensitive. If your reason for concluding ‘It’s raining’ is context sensitive is R, then, according to C&L, R extends to any sentence that expresses whatever S is alleged to express in context. If S is context sensitive according to behavior responsive to these aspects, so too are its expansions.28 But, then, it’s easy to thwart Agree, because rendering features of context salient often spoils agreement/disagreement data. Allegedly, ‘is strong enough’ is context sensitive because if A affirms (12) in context C and B affirms (12) in C’, we are not forced to affirm (13) in context C”.

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

14. The steel beams are strong enough to support the roof.
Since (14) is not supposed to be context sensitive, aren’t we required to affirm (15)?

15. A and B agree the steel beams are strong enough to support the roof
The answer, however, is not obvious, since if A is on the moon and B is on Earth, there is no reason to suppose they agree. And so it goes. If both affirm (16), speaking of same beam, we still needn’t report them as agreeing.

16. The steel beam is strong enough to support the roof on Earth.
If A needs the roof to stay up for more than ten minutes, while B needs only ten minutes for an art installation, we won’t affirm (17)

28 This is mildly overstated – C&L are happy to acknowledge that some sentences are genuinely context sensitive such as those containing ‘I’ and ‘now’. These are special, however, in virtue of passing C&L’s indirect reporting tests for context sensitivity.
17. A and B agree that the steel beam is strong enough to support the roof on Earth.

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

We are *not* claiming ‘agree’ is semantically context sensitive; but we are making the plausible conjecture that your comfort level on agreement reports varies with interests. We make no claims about the truth-conditions of agreement sentences, other than one both C&H and we agree about, *viz*., agreement reports are true only if both participants affirm the same propositions.²⁹

For one final, somewhat speculative, point about Agree consider (18):

18. John and Bill agreed that it was raining, but disagreed over where it was raining.

(18) sounds peculiar at first blush. However, there are contexts against which (18) receives different reactions.

Case 1: John is in Vancouver, Bill is in Portland. Both notice independently that it is raining where they are but they each believe that it is not raining in the other’s location. (18) sounds terrible in this context, as per C&H’s expectations.

²⁹ It is worth noting that these considerations may well threaten the entire enterprise of determining context sensitivity and context insensitivity by considering reports of what people said, believe, agree upon, etc. One may well worry that the pragmatic features governing acceptable (rather than true) reporting are such as to interfere with any attempts to deduce context sensitivity or insensitivity. This is probably an overreaction but it is worth trying to determine to what extent the reaction is appropriate. This should provide no relief to the Contextualist, however, as they frequently try to justify their position by recourse to just this sort of data. C&L (p.122) are sensitive to such worries, since their book defends the view that utterance can and often does result in a massive number of propositions being said by the speaker, making accurate reporting (in the sense of matching with your report exactly 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 this point.
Case 2: John and Bill are watching television together (or independently – it doesn’t matter) and they hear the meterologist say that a large rain storm is hitting but the location is entirely muffled. John thinks that the storm is going to hit Vancouver, Bill thinks it will hit Portland. (18) sounds fine in this context.

There are a few ways to account for this difference: our favorite is that in Case 1 two events are involved, whereas in Case 2 there is intuitively one event involved but its location is hard to determine. Another difference is that it is easier to interpret Case 2 as having them agreeing that it will rain somewhere but disagreeing about where (then again, it’s not especially clear why this reading isn’t available in the first case). Perhaps it’s easier to think of the participants in Case 2 as in the same context, and thus, more co-ordinated. Luckily, we need not take a stand on this issue; what is important is that sans supplementation, it is not easy to apply Agree and expect unequivocal results in mundane cases.

Conclusion

There is much to admire in attempts to accommodate and evade C&L’s (2005) barrage of tests designed to show Contextualism is (much) less widespread than some have thought. Invoking Parasites and Agree to enlarge the apparatuses that Contextualists can invoke is also welcome: it is useful to foster a broader range of tools to bring to bear on the semantic problems we confront and the interesting and conflicting data that must be explained. Nonetheless, we hope it is clear that there are definite and persistent costs to Parasites and Agree, and that C&H face a challenge in trying to accommodate and explain the full range of phenomenon such as easiness in reporting and collecting.

Appendix I: The Agree Test and Philosophical Concern:

Since C&H defend Contextualism over Relativism, one would have expected their Agree to support former over the latter. But much of the evidence for Relativism (and Minimalism) derives from agreement data. And in the cases of contention among philosophers and linguists, agreement data seem, contrary to intent, to ratify context insensitivity.

30 Thanks to Michael Glanzberg for discussion on this point.
A (normal context): I know that I have hands.
B: (a skeptic): A doesn’t know he has hands.
C: A and B disagree over whether A knows he has hands.
Since this report is both felicitous and intuitively correct, ‘know’ turns out to be context insensitive according to Agree.
A: This cookie is tasty.
B: This cookie is not tasty.
C: A and B disagree over whether this cookie is tasty.
Since there is no problem in this report, verbs of taste turn out to be context insensitive according to Agree.
A (who gets evidence John is in prison): John might be in prison.
B (who can see the prison is empty): A is wrong.
C: A and B disagree over whether John might be in prison.
Since the report is acceptable, epistemic modals turn out to be context insensitive according to Agree.

In the majority of the cases of greatest interest to philosophers and linguistics, Agree militates against context sensitivity. C&H know this; and they spend all of Ch. 4 trying, in part, to explain away the data generated by Agree. In their words:

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

In other words, Agree require reflection in order to run effectively, and so, it’s not true we can simply take the deliverances of folk judgments and call it a day. Reflection is needed in the case at hand, reflection on what leads and misleads people to judgments in given instances. The same sort of reflection should be afforded to all cases of alleged context sensitivity. The lesson is clear: evidence for or against context sensitivity is not easy to come by; it is difficult and subject to much interpretation.

Appendix II: Propositional Anaphora

Anti-monadicists about truth have long made use of certain arguments stemming from the nature of anaphora, in particular, propositional anaphora. Thus, it is standard to assume that ‘that’ in the following picks up on the proposition that Karl Mark believed:

Karl believed Communism is great and Engels thought that too.

The hypothesis that ‘that’ in these contexts picks up on a proposition is well supported. It grounds inferences such as the following:

John is at home. Karl believes that. Therefore, what Karl believes is true.

The ‘that’ seems to be an anaphor on content, not character since one cannot claim:

A: I am hungry.
B: I don’t believe that.

Whatever else is true about interpretation, it doesn’t look like B’s utterance can be construed as denoting B (unless, of course, B is A!).

Such linguistic considerations have been used in arguments against monadic truth. If someone tells you ‘There are no talking donkeys,’ you might reply ‘That’s but it could have been false.’ This datum suggests that the proposition expressed by ‘There are no talking donkeys’ is neither true nor false

---

31 Discussion with Michael Glanzberg was particularly helpful for getting us clear on some of the issues in this section.
\textit{simpliciter}, but true or false relative to a world. Similarly, two people can argue over whether ‘Chili is spicy’ is true, referencing each other’s propositions with ‘That’s not true’. Contextualism, however, makes it look as if they are talking past each other, since the proposition expressed by A is \textit{not} typically the one expressed by B. It would make no sense for B to say ‘That’s not true’ if the proposition A expressed was ‘Chili tastes good (to A)’ except in special circumstances.\textsuperscript{32}

C&H observe that anaphoric ‘that’ can be used anaphorically in cases of context sensitivity, where the referent of the context sensitive term shifts, e.g. one interpretation of B’s comments in the following exchange:

A: My parents don’t get along.
B: That is my problem too.

If B is saying his parents (not A’s) do not get along, the anaphoric ‘that’ is not recovering a referent for ‘my’ that refers to A (namely, that A’s parents do not get along) as value. C&H exploit this fact about anaphora in trying to explain (away) collectivity and ellipsis data without sacrificing context sensitivity.

Their point is well taken, but matters are more complex than they represent them; in particular, their examples aren’t clear cases of \textit{propositional} anaphora. B’s use of ‘that’ doesn’t refer to a proposition, since a proposition can’t be B’s problem – notice that putting in the corresponding sentence results in ungrammaticality:

B': *My parents don’t get along is my problem too.

It looks to be an anaphor on a state:

B'': My parents not getting along is my problem too.

Of course there is an interesting question: Why is it that when it is not a propositional anaphora you can switch the referent of the indexical. However, when the ‘that’ is used clearly as propositional anaphora it is very difficult, i.e.:

A: My parents don’t get along.
B: That’s not true.

\textsuperscript{32} We are assuming that an error theory about the typical uses of ‘that’ is not a reasonable view.
There is no way to hear B’s utterance as meaning the same as B’s parents don’t get along is not true. This isn’t a knockdown argument, but it does suggest that their counterexamples aren’t very persuasive as they all suffer a similar defect. One may try to resuscitate things by reconstructing what B says as:

B: That my parents don’t get along is my problem too

Then one might try to argue from the fact that the sentence is headed by ‘that’ that it is propositional in nature. This is also hasty, however, since it seems parallel to the following:

B: That John is so angry frightens me.

Presumably it is the state of John’s being angry that frightening rather than the proposition. This should raise some alarms regarding C&H’s attack since some odd features of anaphora follow. First, one can use ‘that’ when not propositional anaphorically on context sensitive term and recover a referent whose referent is shifted. However, it is difficult to do this when the anaphor is propositional rather than anaphoric on a state or an event. We have no clear idea why this is but it is worth exploring. But monadicists about truth shouldn’t be thrilled with the result since what is at issue is propositional anaphora, and not simply uses of ‘that’.
**Bibliography**


