R#6: Recanati on Contextual Salience Absorption

> In connection with our discussion of contextual salience absorption Recanati says:
>
> …the contextualist can have her cake and eat it: she can invoke Contextual Salience Absorption to account for the homophonic cases, and she can simultaneously invoke the other cases (the Leslie cases) to argue against the literalist schema.

Since we are not denying that there could be cases where the disquotational reports seem unnatural (see General Comment #4) we have no principled objection to this more limited appeal to contextual salience absorption (it is, of course, not an objection to the argument we run in the book, since we were arguing against someone who denied that there could be *any* reports of the problematic kind). What remains to be explained, for the contextualist, is *what* the shared content is in the cases where these reports are possible. Finally, what we call *collective reports* and *reports under ignorance* are unexplained by this strategy.

Reply to Ann Bezuidenhout

B#1 Theoretical Use of 'red'

IS argues that moderate contextualism collapses into radical contextualism and that radical contextualism is self-defeating. The latter part of the argument is presented in Chapters 7-9, and the last of these chapters argues that the way radical contextualists present their views is inconsistent with radical contextualism. In so doing we use examples from a paper by Bezuidenhout – not because we think her paper is particularly guilty of the point we're trying to make, but because it exemplifies a general feature of the contextualist literature. Our argument goes as follows: the way Bezuidenhout uses the expression 'red' when she talks about the kinds of examples that are meant to establish that 'red' is context sensitive is incompatible with the claim that 'red' is context sensitive. She is using 'red' in a context insensitive way to establish that 'red' is context sensitive. We claim that this is general problem – not specific to Bezuidenhout's particular formulation of radical contextualism.

In response to this line of criticism, Bezuidenhout says:

> Now the word ‘red’ and other color terms like ‘brown’ and ‘green’ have been both used and mentioned frequently in this paper. So how did I understand these terms? What were the conditions of application for these terms that were operative in this context? I don’t think this question makes much sense, because nowhere in this paper did I use the term ‘red’ to make a genuine color attribution to any real object, such as a real apple…So the question as to what counts as red in the context of my paper is moot, as is the question of whether I was using ‘red’ in a self-defeating way.

The claim is that our question about the conditions for application for 'red' in her paper doesn't 'make much sense'. Why not? Because ‘nowhere in this paper did I use the term ‘red’ to make a genuine color attribution to any real object’. If this were a sound reply it would undermine one of the central contentions in our book.

We're unconvinced. In her paper we're asked to imagine various scenarios involving apples, their colors and talk about their colors. These examples are supposed to trigger (or elicit) intuitions about the properties of the word 'red'. We are assuming that those intuitions are not specifically about 'red' when used to ascribe properties to *imaginary* applies -- they are supposed to be generalized. The fact that these are imaginary examples should make no difference – we treat these cases as if they were genuine, as if they exemplified genuine linguistic exchanges. It is when so interpreted, i.e. as making genuine color attributions, that the examples are self-refuting. If they examples do not extend to the application of 'red' to real apples we are owed a story about what the value of these imaginary examples is supposed to be.

In sum, if you use the word ´red´ while speaking English, then you are talking about the color red – whether you like it or not. We are not Humpty Dumpty.

B#2: Bezuidenhout's 'Rebuttal' of our Examples in Chapter 7

Bezuidenhout claims our intuitions about the tests we run in chapter Seven are wrong. She imagines two utterances by Nina of ‘John is ready’. We claim these are cases where someone in a relevantly different context can say ‘Nina said that John is ready’ or ‘In both cases, she said that John is ready’. Bezuidenhout says ‘… it will simply be false to say that what Nina said in both contexts was the same thing’.

If we put aside the concern that the way she sets this up makes it an instance of a BP-Example (see General Comment #4 above), the main charge is that the kind of reports we are focusing on are false. What do we say to someone who claims all such reports are false? In short, we know of no argument for that claim. These reports are not only as intuitive and ubiquitous they also play an important role in our communicative interactions. They are, we have suggested, the bedrock of our conception of shared content. The idea that we can share content is of fundamental importance (for elaboration on this theme, see our 'Shared Content' (2006)). Of course, Bezuidenhout makes it easier for herself than she is entitled to by focusing on examples of the form 'John is ready'. Bezuidenhout is a radical contextualist, so she thinks 'John is ready for an exam' is context sensitive (the sentence itself doesn't express a proposition.). So to test her view (in a way that makes it clearly distinct from a more moderate contextualist position), consider two utterances of 'John is ready for an exam' and ask yourself: Can they be reported (in relevantly different contexts) by 'They both said that John is ready for an exam' (similarly for reports under ignorance, and the other tests we exploit). Ask yourself whether you think this would be false, and you'll be able to settle the dispute between Bezuidenhout and us. (The same kind of comment applies to her discussion of our use of Travis' example involving 'weighs 80kg').

B#3: Bezuidenhout on VP Ellipsis

The above point connects to Bezuidenhout's remark about VP ellipsis. She says:

> If we have already interpreted the antecedent clause 'Bill weighs 80kg' in such a way as to recover the property *weighing x while fully clad on an unknown planet*, then we can't recover the property *weighing x while naked on Earth* which is needed to resolve the ellipsis in the way C&L suggest is permissible.

If you assume two properties were expressed, then, of course, there can't be VP ellipsis. But our point was to elicit the possibility (argue for the possibility) that the property expressed in both cases is the property of weighing 80kg. Of course, if her intuitions clash with ours with respect to that possibility, she is right. You can't get VP ellipsis. But we're quite confident intuitions of non-biased speakers are not on her side in this debate. We claim there are cases where we she would predict that VP ellipsis is impossible, but where it seems perfectly natural. Of course, these will not be cases where the example is

set up in such a way that we specify that the properties in question are different. They will be examples (like those used in the book) where we have two utterances of, e.g., ‘Smith weighs 80kg naked on the moon’, and where VP ellipsis seems natural (i.e. it seems natural to say ‘A said that Smith weighs 80kg naked on the moon, and B said that too’) and where it turns out, that on further investigation, Bezuidenhout's version of radical contextualism implies that different properties were expressed by the two utterances of ‘weighs 80kg on the moon’, and hence, that, by her own standards, VP ellipsis should not be possible.

Reply to Steve Gross

Gross on an 'Implicit Principle' in IS

At the very heart of Gross' commentary is the following principle which he attributes to us:

> Implicit in C&L’s presentation of cases is something like the following principle: if (1) A utters ‘P,’ (2) B utters about A’s utterance ‘A said that Q,’ and (3) speakers judge B’s report accurate, then the proposition semantically expressed by ‘Q’ is part of the speech act content of A’s utterance.

He then presents us with two options for how to interpret 'B's report' in (3):

a. Speakers judge some salient component of the speech act content of the report to be accurate.
b. Speakers judge the semantic content of that report to be true.

Both options lead us into difficulty, Gross argues. If we choose (a), the implicit principle (i.e. (1)-(3)) just doesn't seem plausible, for several reasons; the most important of which is that if we've judged some non-semantic component of the report true, why would we infer that the semantic content is something the speaker said? If we choose (b), things also look bad for us, Gross says:

> When condition (3) is understood this way, however, it is much less obvious when condition (3) is satisfied and whether speakers are in fact sufficiently good judges in the sense required. In particular, C&L do not provide us with reason for confidence in the cases used to support the Controversial Aspect (CA-cases).