

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).

Gross here runs an internal argument against us, appealing to what we say about speakers' access to the semantic content of sentences.

C&L point out that, indeed, the semantic content of most utterances is 'not even the most important proposition the speaker intended to communicate to her audience.' (205, punctuation adjusted) Similarly from the audience's perspective: in 'most regular-life contexts, the semantic content is not what is focused upon.' (207) If indirect speech reports are no exception to these claims (C&L provide no reason to think otherwise), then 'nontheoretic beliefs and intuitions about what people say,' as expressed in indirect speech reports and judgments thereof, are more likely keyed to some aspect of the reports' speech act content other than its semantic content.

He goes on to consider various ways in which we could reply to this dilemma. He says, for example, that we can't appeal to the context of our book being one in which semantic content is salient – because these examples are supposed to be ubiquitous, not just confined to philosophy books.

### *Reply*

This is a very clever objection: one that exhibits genuine understanding of fundamental features of our position. These are issues we should have addressed in more detail, and issues we wish we were clearer on. Gross' reply is also a sustained argument, rather than a collection of various objections. For this reason, our reply to him will be relatively brief (simply because all we will do is point out where in the argument we disagree with him, not because the point merits little discussion.)

There is a point rather early in this argument where we would like to get off. If you look back at (1)-(3), we object to a part Gross does not discuss. Having presented (1)-(3), he adds the consequence, i.e. '... then the proposition semantically expressed by 'Q' is part of the speech act content of A's utterance.' This is the part we object to. Before we tell you how we object, note that this is independent of how to understand the expression 'B's report' in (3). No matter how that is understood, there's an independent assumption made by Gross about the effect of (1)-(3), namely, that it is the proposition semantically expressed by 'Q' should (on the basis of (1)-(3)) be included in the speech act content of A's utterance.

The possibility Gross does not consider is *that it is the proposition saliently asserted by 'Q' that should be included in A's speech act content*. We want to run the entire set of intuitions on what is saliently asserted. So understood, it is unproblematic to understand the 'B's report' as referring to the speech act content of that report. In other words, the principle we would like to endorse goes something like this:

If (1) A utters 'P,' (2) B utters about A's utterance 'A said that Q,' and (3) speakers judge what B said accurate, then we have evidence that the proposition saliently asserted by the complement clause of that report is part of the speech act content of A's utterance.

As far as we can tell, Gross' objections do not apply to this principle. What we in effect have done is to choose (a version) of interpretation (a) above, but that's unproblematic when the consequent talks about what's saliently asserted, rather than the semantic content.