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Contextualism and the Meaning-Intention Problem

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I) Contextualism and Semantic Context Dependence

The relevant alternatives approach in epistemology¹ arose some years ago partly out of the hope to be able to reconcile our ordinary claims of knowledge with our inability to answer the skeptic. It was supposed to give rise to an account of knowledge according to which our ordinary claims of knowledge are true, even though the claims about our lack of knowledge that the skeptics make in one of their more persuasive moments are also true. To know, according to such an account, is to have evidence sufficient to rule out all the relevant alternatives. In ordinary life few alternatives are relevant. For example, whether or not we are brains in a vat is not a relevant alternative that we have to be able to rule out. In the debate with the skeptic it may become relevant, and accordingly we might not know something any more then, even though we have the same evidence as in ordinary life. The skeptics cleverly make more and more alternatives relevant, and that is how they succeed. But their success in the philosophy seminar is no threat to our ordinary claims of knowledge, or so the theory goes.

Originally the formulations of relevant alternatives theories have not been very explicit about whether or not this theory should be understood as a theory about the content of knowledge ascriptions, or as a theory stating conditions for whether or not a person knows a proposition in certain circumstances. In the first case one would have to spell out under what conditions an ascription of knowledge in a certain context is true. In the second case one would have to spell out under what conditions a person knows a proposition in a certain context. This might not seem to be a big difference. But once we

look more closely at what role the context plays in these two we will see a difference. In the first the context is the context of the utterance of the ascription of knowledge, in the second it is the context of the alleged knower. So what contextual features will be relevant will be quite different in the two cases.²

In more recent years, several philosophers³ have developed the relevant alternatives approach to knowledge into a theory that is very clear and explicit about which of these two formulations it should take. According to these philosophers this set of ideas should be understood as a theory about the content of knowledge ascriptions, as a theory about what is said with an ascription of knowledge in a certain context. It is claimed that the content of a knowledge ascription can change from context to context, and it is because of this that our ordinary claims to knowledge and the claims the skeptic makes are compatible. Because in ordinary life and in the debate about skepticism we are in contexts that are in important respects different, what we say with our ascriptions of knowledge and of lack of knowledge are compatible. Simply put, one speaks truly when one says "I know that I have hands" in a context where the low standards for knowledge of everyday life are relevant, but falsely in a context where the high standards of knowledge in the debate about skepticism are relevant. A position of this kind is called *contextualism* (to be more precise one should call it a contextualism about knowledge ascriptions).

Thus a contextualist claims that knowledge ascriptions are context sensitive in the sense that what is said with such an ascription depends on the context of its utterance. Knowledge ascriptions are thus a case of semantic context sensitivity. In general, a sentence is semantically context sensitive if the content of an utterance of it depends on the context in which it was uttered. A term is semantically context sensitive if the contribution it makes to the content of an utterance of a sentence in which it occurs

depends on the context of this utterance. Semantic context sensitivity is a well known linguistic phenomenon, and there are a number of well described and investigated cases of it. Most obviously, there is the case of indexicals like "I". It contributes the speaker of the utterance to the context of the utterance. Then there is the case of ambiguity and semantic underdetermination. What is said with an utterance of a certain sentence depends in these cases on other much more complicated features of the context.

Consider examples like:

- (1) Three girls wrote four letters.
- (2) John's book is blue.

For (1) it will have to get determined in the context of utterance what exactly the truth conditions of an utterance of it are. Is it claimed that each of the three girls wrote four letters by herself, or did they write four letters together? For (2) the context will have to fill in what relation is supposed to hold between John and a certain book. Is he the writer, the owner, the one who is holding it, etc.?

These cases, however, do not seem to have much to do with knowledge ascriptions, at least on the face of it. What seems to be much closer to the case of knowledge ascriptions, and what is usually used by contextualists as an example to motivate contextualism, are expressions like "tall" or "flat". These are semantically context sensitive because something is not tall or flat *simpliciter* but only tall or flat relative to a comparison class. A sentence like

- (3) Joe is tall.

can be uttered to express different propositions. What the relevant comparison class is will differ from context to context. The same sentence with reference to the same Joe, can be uttered truly when talking about 12 year olds, or falsely when talking about basketball players.

To understand this case better and how it relates to the case of knowledge ascription I would like to bring in some terminology. Lets, for the sake of a distinction to be made, take propositions to be modeled by structured entities, like n-tuples, that contain constituents. Thus the proposition that Joe is male will be modeled by the pair consisting of Joe and the property of being male as its only two constituents. Given this model of propositions, we can distinguish between articulated constituents and unarticulated constituents.⁴ A constituent of a proposition expressed by an utterance of a certain sentence is articulated if there is a phrase in the sentence uttered that contributes that constituent to the proposition expressed. For example, the proposition expressed by an utterance of "Joe is male" has only articulated constituents, since Joe is contributed to the proposition by "Joe", the property of being male is contributed by the phrase "is male", and there are no other constituents. However, the proposition expressed by an utterance of "Joe is tall" will contain an unarticulated constituent, since it will express the proposition that Joe is tall for an F. The proposition expressed by this utterance will contain the class of Fs as a constituent, even though there is no phrase in the sentence uttered that contributes that constituent to the proposition expressed. So, in the case of "Joe is tall" it will be such that the proposition expressed will contain a comparison class as an unarticulated constituent, and which one this is depends on the context of the utterance.

We can distinguish between two cases of unarticulated constituents. These differ in the cognitive relation that the utterer has towards the unarticulated constituent that is contributed to the proposition expressed. We will say that we are dealing with a case of implicit relativity if the proposition express with an utterance of a certain sentence contains an unarticulated constituent and the speaker has cognitive access to the fact that this is so and what this constituent is. This can be tested simply by asking the speaker

relative to what they meant to say that X. This is will occur in the case of an utterance of "Joe is tall". When we ask the speaker relative to what they meant to say that Joe is tall then they will rightly answer that they meant to say that Joe is tall for a basketball player, or for a 12 year old etc. This first case certainly occurs and seems to be quite common. The other case is much more problematic and controversial, as we shall see. We shall say that we are dealing with a case of hidden relativity when the proposition expressed by an utterance of a sentence contains an unarticulated constituent, and the speaker of that sentence has no cognitive access to the fact that this is so. In this case the speaker will simply look puzzled when we ask them relative to what they meant to say that X. Just as they would in the case of "Joe is male". If we ask a speaker relative to what they meant to say that Joe is male they will give us at best a strange look. Whether or not the case of hidden relativity can occur will be debated shortly.

Since contextualists about knowledge ascriptions claim that knowledge ascriptions are semantically context sensitive, we can distinguish two parts in such an epistemological theory. The first part might be called the philosophy of language part of the theory and consists in spelling out how it should be understood that knowledge ascriptions are semantically context sensitive. To do this one might either claim that knowledge ascriptions belong to one of the well understood classes of semantic context sensitivity, or describe a new such class. The second part of contextualism about knowledge ascriptions might be called the epistemology proper part of contextualism. In this part contextualists have to spell out what aspects of the context contribute to the content of the knowledge ascription, and how they contribute to the content. In praxis contextualists focus much more on the epistemology proper part, and say very little about the philosophy of language part of their theory. In this paper we will look almost exclusively at the philosophy of language part of contextualism. This part brings with it

the worry that the kind of semantic context sensitivity that the contextualist claims knowledge ascriptions exhibit is in conflict with certain general truths about language use. We will look at one argument by Stephen Schiffer to that effect in a moment. First we will have to get more clear about how the contextualist wants to use the semantic context sensitivity of knowledge ascriptions to ease the tension between our ordinary claims of knowledge and our inability to answer the skeptic.

II) Contextualist Solutions to the Skeptical Paradox

As I said above, one of the motivations for contextualism is that it seems to have the potential to reconcile our ordinary claims of knowledge with our claims of lack of knowledge in the case of skepticism. But how can this be true? To answer this essentially comes down to answering the skeptical paradox. This paradox consists in a set of three sentences that apparently express propositions that are inconsistent with each other, but that also have quite some plausibility when considered by themselves. Consider:

- (I) I know that I have hands.
- (II) If I know that I have hands then I know that I am not a brain in a vat.⁵
- (III) I don't know that I am not a brain in a vat.

It seems that (I) is just a trivial ordinary claim of knowledge which is true, (III) is a standard claim of lack of knowledge, also true and well motivated by skeptical considerations, but (II) seems to allow one to infer from (I) to the negation of (III). It seems that (I)-(III) are inconsistent. To solve the skeptical paradox, or in Schiffer's terminology⁶, to give a happy-face-solution of it, is to show why these really aren't all

true or why they really aren't inconsistent. Either one has to show which one of the three isn't true, or why the apparent inconsistency between them isn't real.

This alone, however, is still not enough for a complete solution, as everyone in the debate notices. One also has to give an account of why it seemed to us that we are dealing with an inconsistency here. We have to diagnose what went wrong in our thinking about these matters so that we were fooled into believing that we are dealing with a paradox here. So, to give a happy face solution of the skeptical paradox one has to do both:

- (A) Say which one of (I)-(III) is really false, or why they are consistent after all.
- (B) Say what fooled us into believing that (I)-(III) are true and inconsistent.

The contextualist solution to the skeptical paradox is the following⁷. Since knowledge ascriptions are context sensitive we have to be careful what the relevant standards of knowledge are that are unarticulated constituents of the propositions expressed. As we saw above, ordinary claims of knowledge are true relative to low standards, and skeptical claims of lack of knowledge are true relative to high standards. So (I) is true relative to low standards, and (III) is true relative to high standards. Now, (II) seems to be true both to high and to low standards. But which ever we take it to be, we will not get an inconsistency. If we read it relative to low standards then it implies together with (I) that we do know relative to low standards that we are not a brain in a vat. That, however, is perfectly consistent with that we do not know this relative to high standards. And if we read (II) relative to high standards then it, together with (III) implies that I do not know relative to high standards that I have hands. This, again, is perfectly consistent with knowing this relative to low standards.⁸ This is the contextualist answer to (A).

The contextualist answer to (B) is simply that we are not aware of the context sensitivity of knowledge ascriptions, and of subtle context changes that occur when we debate skepticism. And because we are not aware of this it seems to us that what we say in (I)-(III) is in contradiction. Our ignorance of the context sensitivity and the context changes that occur in the debate about skepticism fool us into thinking that we are dealing with a paradox even though there is no inconsistency here.

III) The Meaning-Intention Problem

Stephen Schiffer argued⁹ that the contextualist solution to the skeptical paradox can't work because the two parts of this solution, the answer to (A) and the answer to (B), can't both be true. His argument comes down to that according to the contextualist solution knowledge ascriptions are a case of semantically context sensitive sentences where the speakers are not aware of the fact that they are semantically context sensitive. This, Schiffer argued, violates general truths about language, namely that what the content of an utterance is has to be backed up with communicative intentions that the speaker has. If the speaker has no communicative intentions to ascribe knowledge relative to low or high standards then the content of the utterance can't be about such standards either. The answer to (B) refutes the answer to (A).

In an earlier paper about the semantics of belief ascriptions Schiffer used a very similar argument and there he entitled it *the meaning-intention problem*.¹⁰ This argument is very plausible for many cases of semantic context sensitivity, and Schiffer goes through a few of them and makes it plausible. For example, he considers the case that was called implicit relativity above, the case where the proposition expressed contains an unarticulated constituent and the speaker is aware that this is so. It seems that in this case the speaker has to have cognitive access to relative to what they meant to say that X. The speaker has to have access to where they meant to say it was raining when they say "It's

raining". When we ask them where they meant to say it was raining, we will get an answer. Whatever place the speaker intended to talk about will be the one that is the unarticulated constituent. It could not happen that the speaker is mistaken about what place they were really talking about. In analogy, it could not be that the speaker thinks they are talking about knowledge relative to low standards, whereas they are really talking about knowledge relative to high standards. But something like this seems to be required for the contextualists solution to the skeptical paradox.

Schiffer's conclusion can be nicely stated using the terminology introduced above. According to Schiffer, the proposition expressed by an utterance can only contain a certain unarticulated constituent if the speaker has intentions backing up that this is so and what this constituent is. So, according to Schiffer, the only case of unarticulated constituents can be the case of implicit relativity. According to him, the case of hidden relativity is impossible. It can not be that an utterance expresses a proposition with an unarticulated constituent, but the speaker would not know what to say to the question relative to what they meant to say that X. In Schiffer's words:

"For the speaker would not only have to be confounding the proposition she's saying; she'd also have to be totally ignorant of the sort of thing she's saying. One who implicitly says that it's raining in London in uttering "It's raining" knows full well what proposition she is asserting; if articulate, she can tell you that what she meant and was implicitly stating was that it was raining in London. But no ordinary person who utters "I know that p", however articulate, would dream of telling you that what he meant and was implicitly stating was that he knew that p relative to such-and-such standard." (Schiffer 1996, p. 326f.)

The situation Schiffer finds unacceptable is exactly the situation of hidden relativity, where the proposition expressed by an utterance of a speaker contains an unarticulated

constituent even though the speaker is unaware of that this is so and what this constituent is.

IV) The Case for Hidden Relativity

It seems to me, however, that there is good reason to assume that hidden relativity actually occurs. There are examples where we have good reason to assume that they are a case of hidden relativity. This reason is not conclusive, in the sense that this is the only possible analysis of these examples. But I think it is the best and most reasonable analysis. I will give two such examples. Both examples are based on the same idea, namely that sometimes it is an empirical discovery that a relation that we thought was an n -ary relation, and that we represented as an n -ary relation, really is an $n+1$ -ary relation. This is, in fact, not uncommon. Sometimes it is a simple discovery, and sometimes it is a substantial discovery.

As a first example, consider the case of motion. Naively it seems that moving 15 mph is a property of objects, and we usually talk about motion as if this were so. But this is false. Moving 15 mph is a relation between an object and a frame of reference. Thus moving 15 mph is not a unary property, but a binary relation. That this is so is an empirical discovery, namely the discovery that there is no absolute space and no objectively distinguished frame of reference. Thus there is no such thing as absolute motion, and thus there is no such thing as moving 15 mph *simpliciter*. That this is so is pretty much common knowledge these days, but that was not always so. There was a time when people believed that the earth was at rest and that motion is absolute motion. If we would ask a speaker of "I move 15 mph" relative to what frame of reference they meant to say that they move 15 mph we would get as an answer that they did not mean to talk about frames of reference, just about how fast they move.

There are at least four ways to try to deal with this situation. First, we could say that such speakers express the proposition that they have the property of moving absolutely 15 mph and thus the proposition expressed by their utterance contains only two constituents, the speaker and the property of moving absolutely 15 mph.

Secondly, we could say that the speaker only expressed an incomplete proposition, where one of the constituents necessary to complete it was left undetermined.

Thirdly, we could say that these speakers are not talking about motion, but about something else.

Fourthly, we could say that the propositions they express contains the relation of relative motion, the speaker and a frame of reference that is an unarticulated constituent.

It seems to me that the fourth option is the best. The first one seems to make all statements about motion of people who are not aware of the relativity of motion false. Nothing has the property of moving absolutely 15 mph since there is no such thing as absolute motion. In fact, given the laws of physics, there could not be such a thing.

The second option leaves all such statements truth value less, since a proposition that is incomplete can't be evaluated with respect to its truth value.

The third one has at least two problems. On the one hand the problem that it doesn't seem right that the people who do not know that motion is relative talk about something else when they use the same word. On the other hand the problem that it seems to be a discovery about motion, and not something else, that it is relative, and not absolute as was generally assumed.

The fourth option has none of these problems. According to it, there will be a frame of reference as an unarticulated constituent in the proposition expressed. The proposition will thus be about relative motion, even though speakers do not know that motion is

relative. But which frame of reference is contributed to the proposition as an unarticulated constituent? The following seems to be a reasonable assumption. There is one distinguished frame of reference for the linguistic community using the word "motion". It is the default frame of reference, and this default is the same for everyone, namely the surface of the earth. The important point, I think, is that this frame of reference is the distinguished one for everyone in the linguistic community. It will be the unarticulated constituent for everyone, thereby leading to no weird results about disagreement, or agreement, between speakers. So, when one person utters "Joe is moving 15 mph", and another person utters the same sentence, the propositions expressed will be the same.

Let me give you another example.¹¹ Being a summer month seems to be a property of months. August has it, December lacks it. But as it turns out, and as was discovered, it is a relation between a month and a hemisphere. August is only a summer month in the Northern hemisphere. It is a winter month in the Southern hemisphere. It seems that before this relativity was discovered people were talking about summer months with no intentions about unarticulated constituents. But within a linguistic community that was entirely in the Northern hemisphere it seems reasonable to say that the speakers there expressed complete propositions with their utterances of "August is a summer month", or "It's summer now". Once the members of a linguistic community entirely located in one hemisphere travel to the other hemisphere they encounter that being a summer month is a relation between a month and a hemisphere.

All this seems to make perfect sense, in particular if we consider that one of the reasons why it was not discovered earlier that being a summer month is a relation is that all the

people within a linguistic community lived in the same hemisphere. And if you are always within one hemisphere being a summer month seems to be an absolute property.

It seems to me that the most plausible analysis of these cases is that the propositions expressed by utterances of "I move 15 mph" and "It's summer now" contain unarticulated constituents even though the speakers of these utterances are not aware of the fact that this is so. In other words, these are cases of hidden relativity.

V) The Meaning-Intention Problem, Again

Does the acceptance of the above examples as cases of hidden relativity force one to deny intention based semantics and roughly Gricean ideas of meaning? I don't think so. To see this we have to look at the meaning-intention problem again. This problem is based on the belief that meaning has to be backed up by speaker's communicative intentions. There are two readings of this claim. One of them is in contradiction with hidden relativity, the other one is compatible with it. However, only the second one is well motivated. Let me explain.

Suppose you believe, which seems to be quite reasonable, that the proposition expressed by an utterance of a speaker is determined by the speaker's communicative intentions. Let's call this the thesis of Intention Based Content (IBC). It could be understood in at least two ways. On one reading of it the speaker has to have intentions what exactly the proposition expressed is supposed to be, and this is understood in the sense that there will be no constituents in the proposition expressed that are not explicitly intended to be part of the proposition by the speaker. Lets call this *the strict reading*. According to the strict reading the speaker will know what the proposition expressed looks like and what

its constituents are.¹² This reading of IBC is incompatible with hidden relativity. If hidden relativity occurs then the proposition expressed contains a constituent without the speaker being aware that this constituent is part of the proposition. However, I do not see how such a strict reading of IBC is motivated by the motivation for IBC in general.

There is a much more plausible reading of IBC, *the loose reading*. According to it it is required for the utterance to have content p that this content is reflected in the right way in the communicative intentions of the speaker. How it is reflected will depend on what the correct theory is of how the content of an utterance is based on communicative intentions. Simply put, an utterance can only have the content that p if the speaker intended to communicate that p with that utterance. The real answer will of course be much more complicated, but this does not matter right now.¹³ What is important here is that such a story is perfectly compatible with hidden relativity. The reason is that hidden relativity will apply to the content of mental states just as well as to the content of utterances. When someone ignorant of the relativity of being a summer month believes that it is summer now then the content of this belief will contain an unarticulated constituent, too. In the situation of such a belief we will have the same problem and the same options of solving this problem as we had above in the case of an utterance. And the same reasons will speak in favor of an unarticulated constituent solution to this problem. However, in the case of mental states these constituents should better be called unrepresented constituents. So, it is perfectly consistent with the theory of unarticulated constituents that an utterance can't have the content that p unless the speaker has the intention to communicate that p. The theory of unarticulated constituents applies to mental states as well as utterances. It is in no way required that the person having the intention is aware of all the constituent of the proposition that is, or models, the content of this intention. The loose reading of IBC is well motivated through general

consideration in the philosophy of language, but perfectly compatible with hidden relativity.

VI) Hidden Relativity and Contextualism

We have seen that a contextualist theory about knowledge ascriptions has two parts, a philosophy of language part and an epistemology proper part. In order for contextualism to be able to answer the skeptical problem a contextualist will have to claim that the philosophy of language part involves something like hidden relativity. There has to be an aspect of the content of an utterance of a knowledge ascription that the ordinary speaker is unaware of (in the strict sense spelled out above). Schiffer argued that this can't be right since it violates general truths about language use. According to him, hidden relativity can't occur. We saw, however, that there are cases that should be understood as cases of hidden relativity. Schiffer's very general worry is thus no refutation of contextualism. However, this should be taken with caution. Schiffer's worry was that hidden relativity can never occur since it violates general truth about language use. We saw that hidden relativity can occur in certain circumstances. The question remains whether or not knowledge ascriptions can be understood as a case of hidden relativity. As a first step towards answering this we should ask whether or not knowledge ascriptions are similar or dissimilar in certain respects to the cases of hidden relativity we saw above. And here one dissimilarity comes to mind right away. In all the cases of hidden relativity we saw above the unarticulated constituent that was contributed to the content without the (strong) awareness of the speaker was the same one for everyone within the language community. Take the case of "summer month". In the example everyone in the language community was within the same hemisphere.¹⁴ And everyone's summer month ascriptions had the same unarticulated constituent in their content (the

hemisphere they are in). This has the following effect. Whenever two speakers in that language community utter “August is a summer month” they will have produced an utterance with the same content. And whenever one speaker utters “August is a summer month” and another speaker utters “August is not a summer month” their contents will be incompatible with each other, in the sense that not both of them can be true. Thus when it comes to sameness and difference (or incompatibility) of contents, the unarticulated constituent doesn’t make a substantial contribution. It cancels out, since it is the same for everyone. Not so in the case of knowledge ascriptions, as understood by the contextualist about knowledge ascriptions. According to the contextualist the contextual contribution to the content of a knowledge ascription will differ substantially from utterance to utterance within the language community. According to the contextualist, it is not so that when one speaker utters “A knows that p” and another speaker utters the same sentence then the content of the two utterances will be the same. And it is not so that if one speaker utters “A knows that p” and another speaker utters “A does not know that p” then the contents of these two utterances are incompatible. Furthermore, according to contextualism, the speakers won’t be aware of these facts about difference and compatibility of contents. This follows from the fact that ordinary speakers are not aware of the semantic context sensitivity of their knowledge ascriptions, and from the claim that lots of details of the context are relevant for what the content of a knowledge ascription is.¹⁵

This is simply an observation of a disanalogy between the cases of hidden relativity we saw above and what a contextualist will have to claim holds of knowledge ascriptions. A contextualist will thus not only hold that speakers have no access (in the strong sense spelled out above) to the content of their utterances, but also no access to sameness, difference and incompatibility of the contents of their utterances. This is necessary to run the contextualist solution to the skeptical problem. I think that it, not hidden relativity

per se, is the really problematic aspect of the philosophy of language part of a contextualist theory about knowledge ascriptions. It is one thing to deny that speakers have access to the content of their utterances in the strong sense spelled out above. After all, it often is an empirical question what the arity of the relations is that they talk about. It is quite another thing to deny that sameness, difference and incompatibility of contents of utterances is inaccessible to ordinary speakers. But what exactly is wrong with that? And how does it affect contextualism as an epistemological theory?

VII) Further Issues

We are left with two questions:

- 1) Is the inaccessibility of sameness, difference and incompatibility of contents to the speakers in conflict with general truth about language use? And if yes:
- 2) Does this show that contextualism as an epistemological theory is mistaken, or only that the formulation that contextualism was given, namely as a theory about the content of knowledge ascriptions, is mistaken?

These are difficult questions that I can't address here in a satisfactory way.¹⁶ However, I can't help but saying what I think is the correct answer to these questions. I think that Schiffer was on the right track in finding the philosophy of language aspect of contextualism about knowledge ascriptions rather fishy. In fact, I think that the answer to question 1) is "yes". However, and, I guess, contrary to Schiffer, I don't think this shows much about contextualism as an epistemological theory. I think that the choice to develop the relevant alternatives approach in epistemology as a theory about the content of knowledge ascriptions was a mistake. However, all that is well motivated about contextualism about knowledge ascriptions does not rely on contextualism having this formulation. The philosophy of language of contextualism about knowledge ascriptions

is wrong, but this doesn't affect the epistemology of it, or at least not in a bad way. I will spell this out in Hofweber (n.d.).

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¹ See Dretske 1970, 1971, 1981, Goldman 1976.

² See Cohen 1991.

³ For example Cohen 1988, DeRose 1992 and Lewis 1996.

⁴ See Perry 1986.

⁵ This second premise sometimes gets formulated as

(II*) I know that if I have hands then I am not a brain in a vat.

This is a subtle but potentially important difference. It does not matter for the present discussion, however, and I will ignore it.

⁶ See Schiffer 1996.

⁷ See DeRose 1995 for a much more detailed solution like the one sketched here. DeRose does not use the terminology of unarticulated constituents. He could have, though, and it is perfectly consistent with his theory to do so.

⁸ I ignore the issues about whether or not considering brains in a vat automatically raises the standards to tough. This is not relevant for the present discussion, even though a central issue in contextualism and how skepticism works.

⁹ In Schiffer 1996.

¹⁰ See Schiffer 1992.

¹¹ I owe it to John Perry.

¹² At least if we assume that the speakers have cognitive access to their communicative intentions, which seems reasonable in this context.

¹³ For Grice's account of this see Grice 1989, and Schiffer 1972.

¹⁴ Of course, the example was a simple case, and in real life with global travel and the like, language communities go across hemispheres. This makes the situation more complicated, in particular what we should say what the content of an ascription is in, say, a phone call across hemispheres. The simple example above was simply one were it seems plausible that they are a case of hidden relativity.

¹⁵ See DeRose 1992, for example. Contextual features that are supposed to be relevant are for example importance to know, which is not easily accessible to the hearer.

¹⁶ They are addressed in detail in my "Contextualist Theories of Knowledge and of Knowledge Ascriptions", in preparation.

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