Minimal propositions and real world utterances

Nellie Wieland

Abstract   Semantic Minimalists make a proprietary claim to explaining the possibility of utterances sharing content across contexts. Further, they claim that an inability to explain shared content dooms varieties of Contextualism. In what follows, I argue that there are a series of barriers to explaining shared content for the Minimalist, only some of which the Contextualist also faces, including: (i) how the type-identity of utterances is established, (ii) what counts as repetition of type-identical utterances, (iii) how it can be determined whether semantically minimal content has been repeated, and (iv) what the nature of such content is.

> 'We forget there is no such thing as a language apart from the sounds and marks people make, and the habits and expectations that go with them. "Sharing a language" with someone else consists in understanding what they say, and talking pretty much the way they do'. (Davidson 1997, p. 18)
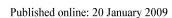
The basic position of Semantic Minimalism[1] is that what is said by any given utterance is a semantically minimal proposition that can be captured in disquotational terms. Thus, the favored presentation of the Minimalist view is the following:

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[1] It is difficult to know how to attribute this view. Cappelen and Lepore (2005) and Borg (2004) self-describe as Semantic Minimalists. Others are less obvious cases, including Grice (1957), and, perhaps, Salmon (1991, 2005). Consider this alternative description of what I am calling here Semantic Minimalism and which Salmon calls 'the expression centered conception of semantics': 'According to this alternative conception [of semantics], the semantic attributes of expressions are not conceptually

N. Wieland (✉)
Department of Philosophy, CSU Long Beach, 1250 Bellflower Blvd,
Long Beach, CA 90803-2408, USA
e-mail: nwieland@csulb.edu

'Rudolph is a red-nosed reindeer' expresses the proposition that *Rudolph is a red-nosed reindeer* and is true just in case Rudolph is a red-nosed reindeer.[2]

The view really is that straightforward. It only requires one minor modification. This can be illustrated by the example 'she's tall'. This utterance contains an indexical term, namely the personal pronoun 'she' that needs to have some female assigned to it from the contextually specified domain of discourse, e.g., 'John's niece'. Once that is done we have a truth-evaluable proposition, namely that *John's niece is tall*. And, we know it is true just in case John's niece is tall. Indexicals such as 'she' and demonstratives form what Minimalists call the Basic List. This list is very short and only contains the following expressions:

'I', 'you', 'he', 'she', 'it', 'that', 'this', 'here', 'there', 'now', 'today', 'yesterday', 'tomorrow', 'ago', 'hence(forth)', 'actual', and 'present'.

However, recalling the example above, you'll notice that 'is tall' is not on the Basic List. This suggests that the minimal proposition *John's niece is tall* is true just in case John's niece is tall.[3]

The natural frustration with this response is what motivates the variety of Contextualist[4] positions. Contextualists generally agree that the Basic List should be longer. Some think that it should just be a little bit longer and that each addition to the list should be syntactically motivated, while others think that the list should be much longer and that additions to the list could be motivated by non-syntactic concerns. Clear examples that Contextualists have used to make their point include the following:

'Steel isn't strong enough'.
'Dumbo is big'.
'There's no beer left'.
'The apple is red'.
'My niece is tall'.

Footnote 1 continued

derivative of the speech acts performed by their utterers, and are thought of instead as intrinsic to the expressions themselves, or to the expressions *as* expressions of a particular language (and as occurring in a particular context). The expression centered conception takes seriously the idea that expressions are symbols, and that, as such, they have a semantic life of their own…[T]he expression centered conception marks a definite separation between semantics and pragmatics, allowing for at least the possibility of extreme, pervasive, and even highly systematic deviation' (2005, p. 324). However, insofar as Semantic Minimalism has the greatest allegiance with traditional formal semantic theories, this view has been the dominant view for some time and has only really become a minority view in recent years.

[2] Cappelen and Lepore (2005, pp. 2–3).

[3] And, as an anonymous referee has pointed out to me, the Minimalist would claim that this can in turn be unpacked along Russellian lines.

[4] It is also difficult to know who to put in this camp without some exaggeration. Candidates for this view include Austin (1962), Travis (1975, 1985, 1989, 1997, 2000), Searle (1978) and Bezuidenhout (2002), Recanati (2004), Sperber and Wilson (1986), Carston (2002). Counted among the Contextualists could also be Bach (1994, 2001, 2005), Stanley and Szabó (2000), Pagin and Pelletier (2007), Korta and Perry (2007), Maitra (2007), Leslie (2007), Corazza and Dokic (2007), Camp (2007), Atlas (2007), MacFarlane (2007), Clapp (2007) and Elugardo (2007). Most of these folks would modify their description from mere 'Contextualist' but the arguments of this paper do not turn on these nuances.

For each of these cases, situations are described such that the utterances are true in some contexts and false in others, or where the utterances are simply not truth-evaluable without additional information supplied by the context (e.g., steel isn't strong enough for what? to hold up the World Trade Center or to stop a bullet? There is no beer left in the universe or in the fridge? Dumbo is big for an elephant or for a mammal? The apple is red on the inside or on the outside? My niece is tall for a 7 year old or for an NBA player?).

The challenge to Contextualism that I will address in this paper is that of shared content and what it is that makes communication possible. Here is a Minimalist argument:

> P1: If Contextualism were true, it would be miraculous if people ever succeeded in communicating across diverse contexts of utterance.
> P2: There are no miracles; people do succeed in communicating across diverse contexts of utterance with boring regularity.
> C1: Therefore, Contextualism is false.[5]

The challenge here is the following: if many expressions in a language are deeply context-sensitive, then how is it that content is shared between contexts by speakers in diverse or impoverished contexts? For example, some Minimalists claim that without knowing anything about an earlier context of utterance, I can say something meaningful about an earlier utterance, such as, 'Anne said the apple is red'. In this case, I may not know whether Anne was talking about red-skinned apples or red-fleshed apples, but I can still share some content about redness. If many utterances required individuated contextual buttressing, it would be difficult to explain how it is that speakers move with ease from context to context using the same expressions. The pervasive success of our communication would appear to be inexplicable.

With this move, the Minimalist wants to force the Contextualist into accepting that no two context-sensitive utterances have the same content. Widespread context-sensitivity would make it the case that for many utterances such as 'Anne said that the apple is red' no proposition is expressed unless assignments are made from a contextually specified domain of discourse. If no proposition is expressed, or if a unique, contextually-specified proposition is expressed in each context, then we can not say that the same proposition is expressed in multiple contexts by the mere act of using the expression, which is just what we do when we report on or otherwise share content across contexts. The Contextualist may say that there is something about the context of utterance that allows for sharing—for example, that different contexts have relevant or salient or demonstrated aspects in common—rather than something that exists at the semantic level. The extent to which contexts (and not expressions) share features may determine the extent to which utterances in those contexts share content. Defending this (admittedly wild-sounding) view goes beyond this paper. Instead, I want to focus on what it is that Minimalists claim happens when content is shared across contexts.

Here is an example from Cappelen and Lepore (2006):

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[5] This is taken, with slight modifications, from Cappelen and Lepore (2005, p. 123).

'What an utterance of (1) says depends in part on the contextually salient comparison class, standards of measurement, and other such things.

(1)   Serena is really smart.

…Suppose all we tell you is that Venus uttered (1). We predict the following:

- There is a sense in which you can understand what Venus said, *viz.* that Serena is really smart.
- You can repeat what Venus said, i.e. do what we're about to do right now, *viz.* say the same as Venus did: Serena is really smart.
- You can indirectly report Venus by uttering (2):

(2)   Venus said that Serena is really smart.' (2006, pp. 1020–1021)

And here is another example of an even more contextually deprived case of shared content:

In some unspecified context, Herman utters: 'Napolean was an interesting guy'. Herman thinks it is obviously true that other people in other contexts have said, could have said, and will say exactly what Herman said with this speech act. (With modification from Cappelen and Lepore, 2005, p. 127)

If this were correct, it would be a miracle if Contextualism were true, according to Semantic Minimalism. However, here is the basic problem with the Minimalists' claims: as described, it is underdetermined whether other people in other contexts have said, could have said, and will say exactly what Herman said in this speech act. Given that this is a speech act, and can have a plurality of speech act content,[6] taking this claim minimally and disquotationally does not tell us anything about whether other people have said, could have said, and will say exactly what Herman said with this speech act. What we really get with this account of shared content is a claim about phonetic reduplication, and nothing about the sharing of actual content, independent of any given context, between speakers.

This point deserves elaboration. If Herman utters (u) 'Napolean was an interesting guy' and means by that p_1, the Minimalist claims that there is something about (u) that makes it the case that others in other contexts have said, could have said, and will say something that means p_1 and we intuitively think this is possible, plausible, and commonplace. This is supposed to be a definitive argument against Contextualism because Contextualist explanations appear to have no mechanism for

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[6] The Minimalist is not arguing here that the plain or minimal content is the *only* content that gets communicated in a conversational context. At least some Minimalists also identify with a version of pluralism such that they maintain that any given utterance can communicate a plurality of propositions. When they claim that content can be shared across disparate contexts, they are saying that it is the minimal semantic content that is shared (see Part III of Cappelen and Lepore 2005).

securing the same-saying of something that means p_1 across diverse contexts.[7] This might be a good argument against Contextualism just as long as their position implies the following: if context itself contributes to the meaning of any given utterance, then it will be impossible to mean the same thing in sufficiently diverse contexts. Since Contextualists appear to accept the antecedent, it looks like their position makes communication across contexts impossible. That is, the Contextualist looks like she must accept that, given that no two contexts are identical, no two utterances could have the same meaning even when they appear to be type-identical. This need not be the case if, as I claimed above, the Contextualist treats context with a broad brush, focusing on what is relevant, or salient, in any given instance of utterance. They need not treat every detail of context as definitive or relative to the content of the utterance at hand. This may allow them to ignore the fact that no two contexts are alike in every respect, and salvage the possibility of shared content across contexts just as long as content tracks stable features of contexts.

However, there may be even more interesting problems with the Minimalists' proprietary claims to shared content, in particular concerning the content of disquoted utterances. In their discussion of the utterance 'Serena is really smart', Cappelen and Lepore write as a way of establishing that content can be shared across contexts: 'You can repeat what Venus said, i.e. do what we're about to do right now, viz. say the same as Venus did: Serena is really smart' (2006, p. 1020). What is problematic about this passage is that they fail to show that they have produced a second utterance with the same content. Given that they acknowledge that an utterance of 'Serena is really smart' can vary in content—e.g., p_1: *Serena is really smart on the tennis court* and p_2: *Serena is a really smart business negotiator*—it is underdetermined whether the two utterances of 'Serena is really smart' in fact have the same content. Cappelen and Lepore cannot claim that they do without begging the question against the Contextualist. It seems obvious to them that if you utter 'Serena is really smart' and I utter 'Serena is really smart' then it is exasperating to contend that we did not say the same thing, i.e., utter something with the same content. This position, however, appears to ignore the purpose of the quotation marks in the representation of the utterances. Their disquotationalism trades on the failures of our tools for orthographic and phonetic representations rather than on something revealing about semantic content. Given their acceptance of the Basic List, Cappelen and Lepore know that two utterances can sound or look the same without being type-identical. For example, if I say, 'I am hungry' and you say, 'I am hungry' we will readily admit that our two utterances sound and look the same and yet fail to be type-identical or have the same content. That they look and sound the same should not be reason enough to accept that content has been shared by the two utterances across contexts of utterances. In fact, we would be just plain

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[7] Cappelen and Lepore (2006) consider and reject five responses on the part of the Contextualist for securing shared content across contexts. The response that they accept they call *Pluralistic Minimalism*. This is the view that any given utterance can express multiple propositions. Any one of these propositions might be the relevant proposition in some given context; however, they argue that it still makes sense to say that the multiple iterations of the utterance across contexts share content if we isolate one possible proposition that is common to all iterations of the utterance—that is, the semantically minimal proposition.

wrong if we thought so. Given that, we need a further argument to show that u_1: 'Serena is really smart' and u_2: 'Serena is really smart' have the same content.

What would this argument be? It seems like it would start with something that would establish the type-identity of utterances. That is, it would be an argument that would show that utterances that appear identical by some measure (say, orthographically, phonetically, etc.) are also identical semantically. This argument would have to allow both for speech act pluralism while maintaining that for any two utterances which are type-identical, but which may not have identical propositional content, they each always have overlapping minimal content. Let's look at this more carefully: Cappelen and Lepore write that, 'You can repeat what Venus said, viz. say the same as Venus did: Serena is really smart'. This suggests that by *repeating* what Venus said, we say the same thing that Venus said. This looks obvious, but that is just as long as we know what repetition entails, and whether or not repetition necessarily entails content duplication and establishes type-identity. Let's look at some examples:

(u_1) Serena is really smart.
(u_2) Serena is really smart.
(u_3) That's my favorite.
(u_4) That's my favorite.

Cappelen and Lepore assume that if Venus says u_1 and I say u_2 then I have repeated what Venus said (and said the same thing as she has). They do not think that if Venus says u_3 and I say u_4 that I have repeated what Venus said (nor have I said the same thing as she has). What is the reason that I cannot do this with u_4 but I can do it with it u_2? It is because u_4 contains an indexical and a demonstrative—two context-sensitive terms.[8] And how do we know that the terms in u_4 are context-sensitive? It is because I cannot repeat what Venus said with u_3 and thereby say the same thing as she has said. Whether or not I can do that with u_2 depends on whether u_2 contains any context-sensitive expressions (e.g., whether 'smart' is a context-sensitive comparative adjective). At least according to Cappelen and Lepore's (2005) argument, the reason that we know u_1 and u_2 do not contain any context-sensitive expressions is, in part, because I can utter u_2, and in doing so repeat what Venus says in u_1 and thereby say the same thing as she has. Ignore the circularity of this argument for now. Cappelen and Lepore take it as foundational data that we have intuitions that we can do through repetition with u_2 what we cannot do with u_4.

We could say at this point that utterances that contain no context-sensitive expressions are at least contenders for type-identity. Further, we could say that type-identity is established at least in cases where repetition occurs. So, we would say that u_1 and u_2 are two tokens of the same utterance, but u_1 and u_5 are not:

(u_5) Serena is very smart.

Although in ordinary discourse we typically accept moderate paraphrase as an instance of repetition, let's set that aside and accept only strict standards for

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[8] Three, including tense. Set that aside as well as the tense in (u_1) and (u_2) for the sake of clarity of argument.

repetition. And 'repetition', we might say, is something like making the same sounds, or making the same marks in a sincere attempt to say what some other person said. Is there a better definition of 'repetition' than this? I am not sure there is.[9] There is not a better one offered by Cappelen and Lepore. Again, setting this problem aside, we would not want to limit tokens of the same utterance type to cases of repetition. For example, Minimalists would want to say that u_1 and u_6 are also two instances of the same utterance:

(u_6) Serena is really smart. [where this is uttered in complete ignorance of u_1 ever being uttered.]

That is, in defining type-identity, we want to include any case where an utterance seems to consist of the same sounds, or consist of the same marks, as some other utterance to an impartial observer. Remember, that we cannot yet appeal to content because the shared content of the two utterances is what we are in the process of establishing. Instead, we have to appeal to utterances stripped of content and yet bearing some other kind of similarity to one another. In this case, the best we can do is to assign an impartial observer the task of determining that u_1 and u_6 are both utterances and they appear to be instances of the same utterance in some superficial respect.

Once it has been established that any two utterances, say u_1 and u_2 or u_6 are two tokens of the same utterance type, it would need to be established that these two utterances are semantically identical. This is a rote process according to the Minimalist and requires following these steps (condensed and slightly modified from the original).

(1)   Specify the meaning of every expression in the utterance.
(2)   Specify all the relevant compositional meaning rules for English.
(3)   Disambiguate every ambiguous/polysemous expression in the utterance.
(4)   Precisify every vague expression in the utterance.

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[9] Above, I claimed that the Minimalist needs an argument to show that utterances that are identical on some measure (I list orthographic and phonetic, but obviously there needs to be something else here as well) are identical on some other measure, such as content. An anonymous referee asks why Cappelen and Lepore can't just assume that if words with the same form, reference, and meaning are repeated then the repetition says the same thing. Perhaps it can be assumed that u_1 and u_2 say the same thing (are repeated) if form, reference, and meaning are identical. But I don't think that appreciates the problem of context-sensitivity. The problem as I try and raise it in this paper is that we don't know *prima facie* whether or not u_1 and u_2 depend for their meaning on assignment in a domain of discourse. More simply, we don't know what belongs on the Basic List. Context-sensitive expressions don't mark themselves or make themselves obvious in the real world. In the (perhaps overly naive) perspective from which my paper is written there's no way to tell whether u_1 and u_2 have identical meaning, at least not *prima facie*. It might be the case that context-sensitivity is post-theoretical in some way. Regardless, the point of view of this paper is to assume that we can't tell whether meaning (even if we allow for fixed form and reference) is identical in cases of repetition without first knowing which expressions are context-sensitive. This is so even if we lock in certain aspects of meaning and reference (e.g., allow that the expression is not ambiguous as conventionally understood, allow that the same individual Serena is being picked out). There still remains a further question of whether 'is smart' has a minimal meaning that can be repeated across contexts in a way that is more informative than *is smart*. I would like to thank an anonymous referee for bringing attention to this possibility.

(5) Fix the semantic value of every context sensitive expression in the utterance. (Cappelen and Lepore 2005, pp. 144–145)

Presumably, we can ignore steps (3), (4), and (5) in the examples of u_1, u_2, and u_6.[10] Step (2) relies on the tenability of step (1). This is where we get to the heart of the difference between Minimalism and Contextualism. The Contextualist may just dig in her heels and deny that step (1) can be performed without contextual input. Or, she might claim that (1) and (5) amount to the same step. Step (1) asks the Minimalist to specify the meaning of 'smart' without taking a stand on any way of being smart, and in a way that implicitly allows for every way of being smart. The Minimalist has to specify the meaning of 'smart' without limiting the pluralistic possibilities of the use of that term. I do not know how this can be done.[11] But once it is done, there needs to be one further stage of argument. That is, there needs to be some reason to believe that any given u contains a potential plurality of propositions, one of which is the semantically minimal proposition. Strangely, it might turn out that there is less reason to believe that this is the case than that speakers can share enriched speech act content across diverse contexts.

Recall that the Minimalist suggestion is that they, and only they, can explain how content is shared across contexts because they maintain the existence of semantically minimal propositions whereas Contextualists do not.[12] The catch is that we need some reason for thinking that all utterances of a single type express the same single semantically minimal content. But what do we know about any given utterance? We know that *some such* content is expressed. This content, for many utterances, is content that is fully formed, such as *Serena is a really smart business negotiator*—Minimalists and Contextualists alike agree on this. What the Minimalist needs to assume is that a second proposition—the minimal proposition—is always also expressed. This is the case unless they argue along something like the following lines:

> In just those cases where I attempt to share content across impoverished contents I can stipulate that my utterance and the utterance I am repeating each express a minimal proposition. For example: If Venus utters u_1 and means by that p_1 and I utter u_2 and mean by that p_2, but I intend for my utterance to share the content of Venus' utterance (for example, I intend to report or repeat her utterance), then I can stipulate that a minimal proposition can be derived from her utterance and from my utterance on the basis of their type-identity.

This is a possible but unfortunate way to argue because the intuition that Cappelen and Lepore are working with is that the content shared by u_1 and u_2 is not stipulated content, but rather shared actual content: that is, content that is actually expressed with any given utterance act. I am not positive there is a difference between actual and stipulated content (or how that difference could be detected).

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[10] Again, set aside tense for ease of exposition.

[11] And neither do Cappelen and Lepore. They think this is a metaphysical problem and not a semantic problem.

[12] Theorists such as Kent Bach complicate matters given his analysis of propositional skeletons. I'm generalizing for the sake of clarity here.

The former seems to be a feature of the utterance as a real world act: as something present in the act of uttering. The latter seems to be a possible proposal on the part of the semanticist: something that can be formally derived *post facto*. The former also seems to have a significant advantage argumentatively.

This might strike the Minimalist as preposterous. When I repeat or report on what another speaker says I don't complete an additional step whereby I stipulate that the repetition or report has the same content as the original utterance. Instead, it appears to me that I am appealing to something quite independent of a stipulative act; it appears to me that I am appealing to something like a fact about English. 'Smart' means *smart* when Cappelen and Lepore uttered it in (2006) and 'smart' means *smart* when I utter it now. This should have nothing to do with me, with my semantic theory, or with my sincere attempts at repetition or reporting. The Minimalist needs to tread carefully here to be sure that he does not assume that we already know what goes on the Basic List. If 'she is smart' does not express the same proposition every time it is uttered because it contains a context-sensitive expression, then it might be the case that 'Serena is smart' likewise does not express the same proposition every time it is uttered, even if we fix the referent of 'Serena' and ignore tense. This is because we are not yet sure whether 'is smart' is context-sensitive. It does not advertise itself one way or the other; that being the case, we can not be quite sure whether it is a fact about English that the 'smart' of u_1 and the 'smart' of u_2 have the same *smart* in their content.[13]

Is stipulated content the best the Minimalist can do? There is reason to believe that there is actual content expressed by any given utterance, and that most of the time this content is non-minimal. But there might not be reason to believe that there is minimal content expressed by any utterance except for the stipulative reason that it allows the Minimalist a proprietary claim to explaining the possibility of shared content between contexts of utterances. It might not be fair to call this content 'stipulated' since, again, the speaker is only aware of an attempt at repeating or reporting and not of any act of stipulation. But the claim to the existence of the minimal proposition approximates this until there is some further reason for thinking *it* is what is reported or repeated in a case of shared content. The Contextualist, on the other hand, may have more difficulty explaining how content can be shared easily and readily across diverse contexts of utterance, but for any explanation of shared content they can provide they can do it by making use of real-world content. This is a clear advantage.

The only way around this for the Minimalist is to claim that the semantically minimal proposition is what generates the robust actual content that utterances appear to have. The claim would have to be that each individual expression in an utterance such as u_1 has the semantic potential for generating fully formed propositions. For example, it would have to be the case that it would be impossible for an utterance to express the proposition *Serena is really smart on the tennis court* without an expression of the prior proposition *Serena is really smart*. Although this

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[13] I would like to thank an anonymous referee for providing helpful comments that directed the revision of this portion of the paper.

does not look implausible for an utterance as simple as u_1, consider what happens to the problem of individuating minimal propositions in more complicated utterances:

(u_7) Serena is really smart and stylish.

In this case, is the proposition *Serena is really smart on the tennis court and stylish too* generated by some combination of the minimal propositions *Serena is really smart*, *Serena is really stylish*, and *Serena is really smart and stylish*? What about (u_8)?

(u_8) Serena is really smart yet stylish.

Here we might say that the proposition expressed is something like, *Serena is really smart on the tennis court despite being a stylish dresser*. If there is a combination of minimal propositions that generates this rather simple utterance, it is not clear what it is or what it has to be. Further, it is not clear why the best resolution to this problem is disquotationalism: namely, the minimal proposition that generates the fully-formed proposition expressed by u_8 is just *Serena is really smart yet stylish*. There is not any evidence there that *that* minimal proposition generates the fully-formed proposition in the requisite way as opposed to some other selection from the plurality of propositions expressed by any given utterance. This possibility is at least compatible with the Minimalists' own preferred position.

One might say that one needs the minimal proposition to arrive at a more robust proposition even though the minimal proposition itself is not what generates the robust proposition; instead, it is what hearers recover by pragmatically enriching the minimal proposition with information provided by context. The problem with this response is that we still lack a reason for thinking it is the minimal proposition that is needed for arriving at the more robust proposition. After all, what does it do if it does not generate the robust proposition? A possibility that the Contextualist could consider is that it is not the minimal proposition that is enriched with information provided by context. Perhaps something more minimal than the minimal proposition provides the raw material that hearers use to generate the robust proposition. Why not? The Minimalist's assumption is that hearers hear sounds that are organized with form and content. The content itself is minimal and is used, in concert with context, to generate robust propositions. That is the role of minimal content. But this is a hidden layer of activity—what I described 'stipulated' content; the Contextualist could just as easily assume that the hearer moves directly from form to robust content given contextual input. This might be made plausible just as long as 'context' itself is understood to include habits and patterns of association between form and content. This way of thinking about context might be richer than we tend to imagine, but that just might be the case: the context of an utterance could be described as including all those instances where we have heard similar sounds with a similar form before. This is an albatross of a context that might place undue processing burdens on interpreters. But, perhaps it should not be dismissed and assumed instead that hearers just somehow *hear* minimal content.[14]

The Minimalist is in a bit of an awkward position. She wants to make a proprietary claim to the possibility of utterances sharing content across contexts. Initially, this position seems patently needed by Contextualists and Minimalists alike. After all, the Minimalist is right to point out that we all have the robust intuition that we can share content, and can repeat what one another say, even when we do not know many or any of the contextual specifics. However, the details are quite murky. I have argued that are a series of barriers to explaining shared content for the Minimalist, only some of which the Contextualist also faces. In particular, it needs to be clearer how the type-identity of utterances is established, what counts as repetition of type-identical utterances, and how, in a superficial instance of such repetition, it can be determined whether semantically minimal content has been repeated—and just what this content is. Where possible, I have clarified and answered these questions to the extent that it makes sense. The looming problem is whether the Minimalist program relies on an unarticulated and incoherent notion of the minimal proposition.

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