Getting a grip on context as a determinant of meaning

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The significance of context to the proper interpretation of texts has been known for millennia; it is implicit in some of Aristotle's recommendations in *Rhetoric* and Quintilian's in *Institutes* that rhetoric should ideally be appropriate to what was, post Augustine, called its context. Malinowski wrote that a stick may be used for different purposes in different contexts, e.g. digging, punting, walking, fighting. Exactly the same is true of language expressions, e.g. a word which is an insult in one context may be an expression of camaraderie or endearment in another (and vice versa). Stalnaker's claim 'context [is] a body of available information: the common ground'(Stalnaker 2014: 24, an idea that goes back to Stalnaker 1978) is nearly, but not quite, right. I define common ground as in Allan 2013b. The speaker/writer/signer makes presumptions about common ground which may properly be called presuppositions, but I argue that utterances carry pragmatic entailments rather than presuppositions, such that where A pragmatically entails B, B cannot – given A – be denied without creating a paradox, absurdity, or contradiction. I distinguish three aspects of context: *C*1, *C*2, and *C*3. *C*1 is the world (and time) spoken of, which is largely identified from co-text; to oversimplify, it captures what is said about what at some world (and time). *C*2 is the world (and time) spoken in, the situation of utterance; it captures who does the saying to whom, and where and when this takes place. *C*3 is the situation of interpretation, the circumstances under which the hearer/reader/viewer interprets what the speaker/writer/signer said, and these may be very different in space and time from *C*2, which may impact the interpretation.

Keywords: context, co-text, common ground, presupposition, pragmatic entailment

1. Common ground

Human language is characteristically a form of social interactive behaviour; it may occasionally have other functions, but social interaction was the motivation for its coming into existence (see Allan 2003, 2010: 233; Dunbar 1996, Johansson 2005: 213, 218). A majority of language has a competent speaker/writer/signer, S, addressing utterance υ to competent hearer/reader, H, for an unbounded number of perlocutionary and illocutionary purposes such as to establish or maintain a social relationship, to inform, question, demand, warn, apologize, and so forth. S and H are mutually aware that, normally, their interlocutor is

an intelligent being.[1] S does not need to spell out those things which are obvious to the sensory receptors of H, or such that H can very easily reason them out using the knowledge that each of us develops from birth as we experience and cognize the world around us on the basis of communicative competence (i.e. knowing the language and the conventions for its use). This constitutes common ground, CG. Our understanding of linguistic utterances rests on an assumption of CG: e.g. when S points to something visible in the situation of utterance and says *Isn't that nice?* there is an assumption that H understands English and can also see what 'that' refers to; saying or writing *Let's go to Cracow* assumes that 'Cracow' will be understood as referring to a certain Polish city (Kraków). Some CG is universal, e.g. knowledge of the sun as a heavenly body that is a source of light and warmth, rain as (among other things) a source of fresh water replenishing the earth, the physiological and socio-cultural differences between the sexes. Some CG is very restricted, e.g. between a heterosexual couple who use *the Hobgoblin* to refer to the man's first wife. Usually, S can readily assess the probable CG with H, and chooses his or her words accordingly. This requires S to make assumptions about H's capacity to understand υ well enough that S's (expressed intention in the) message is, in S's opinion, more or less correctly interpreted by H (Allan 1986; Colston 2008: 173).

> The speaker designs his utterance in such a way that he has good reason to believe that the addressees can readily and uniquely compute what he meant on the basis of the utterance along with the rest of their common ground. (Clark, Schreuder & Butterick 1983: 246)

S's assumptions here are S's estimates of the relevant CG between S and H with respect to υ; this is not something S is normally conscious of except, perhaps, when communicating with a stranger – and not often then. Assumed CG is based on an assessment of H's competence to understand S's utterance, υ,[2] and it motivates such things as choice of language and language variety, style and level of presentation – because, for instance, addressing a neophyte or a child must be differently handled from addressing a group of experts. CG allows meaning to

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1 I prefer to use the traditional S and H rather than something more neutral such as *originator* and *addressee*. When I refer to them as 'intelligent' I mean "capable of rational behaviour" and not "of above average IQ".

2 Assumptions about common ground are made in any social encounter and not restricted to language, though linguistic environments are all that concern me here.

be underspecified by S, so that language understanding is a constructive process in which a lot of inferencing[3] is expected from H.

Normally, each interlocutor believes of her-/himself and fellow interlocutors that they are intelligent and aware beings and also believes of fellow interlocutors that they believe themselves and their fellow interlocutors to be intelligent and aware beings. There is a concomitant assumption of communicative competence: the knowledge and application of how and when to use utterances appropriately that combines with grammatical knowledge (of semantics, syntax, morphology, phonology) in the production of utterances in order to create a coherent text comprehensible to its intended audience. Normal use of language goes unremarked, but abnormal use may indicate a person living with autism, schizophrenia, or the like. Age, social status, educational level, cultural background, etc. of both ego and others will affect the assessment of an interlocutor's use of language and probable range of comprehension.

S's assessment of CG includes assumptions about what H may know of the world, which can affect the choice of utterance topic, and even whether or not S should address H at all. H also makes assumptions about the CG with S, basing it on H's assessment of utterance υ in the context of its utterance and of S as a person. S's assessment of CG with H and H's assessment of CG with S are unlikely to be identical, and all that is required for effective communication is that the overlap in S's and H's assessments of mutual CG enables S to be satisfied that H understands υ well enough for S's communicative purpose to, in S's judgment, succeed. This will apply to each utterance in a discourse such that the relevant CG is dynamic and typically accretes. As conversation proceeds the CG develops (Stalnaker 2002: 701): if, where X, Y, and Z are interlocutors, X says φ and Y says χ then, normally all of X, Y, and Z (keeping score in terms of Lewis 1979) will know that X either subscribes to or purports to subscribe to φ and Y to χ, whether or not the other interlocutors also subscribe to φ and χ. Furthermore, in a talk exchange, the roles of S and H will alternate among interlocutors. The situation is again complicated by the fact that, when uttering υ, S will often address more than one person and so is required to assess CG with an audience of any number of people.

Allan 2013b defined common ground as in (1):

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[3] Inferencing, which may arise from spreading activation within an associative network, includes enrichment of implicitures and implicatures, disambiguation, and the like.

(1) Common ground for any community K of two or more people (that include S and H) is that:

(a) every member, or almost every member, of K knows or believes some fact or set of facts F; and

(b) a member is presumed to know or believe F by (almost) every other member of K; and

(c) a member of K knows that both (a) and (b) are true.

When a member of K applies knowledge of F in order to interpret P, a state of affairs or something said, s/he can presume that others in the community will also apply (or be able to apply) knowledge of F in order to interpret P. The existence of F, P, and the application of knowledge of F to interpreting P is common ground for members of the community K. Once attended to, P becomes part of F, incrementing the common ground.

The 'community K' referred to in (1) may consist merely of people who chance to be interlocutors on a given occasion having in common an intention to communicate with each other using a language of which none of them have to be fluent speakers but which entails some cultural and historical heritage to which they have access; most often, K satisfies the usual conditions for *community* in that its members share a common language of which they are native or native-like speakers, they share a common cultural and historical heritage, and are located in a specific locality or set of localities.

'Consensus is fundamental to defining cultural communities' (Clark 1996: 105) and (1)(c) owes something to Lewis's definition of convention (Lewis 1969: 78). Each of (1)(a) and (1)(b) is common knowledge in K, and therefore so is (1)(c).[4] F includes not only behaviours but also manifest facts such as what can be seen, heard, smelt, etc. by the interlocutors in the world spoken in. Included among F are 'schemata' (Bartlett 1932, Mazzone 2011), 'frames' (Minsky 1977; Fillmore 1982), 'scripts' (Schank & Abelson 1977; Schank 1984), 'scenarios' (Sanford & Garrod 1981), and 'Assumed Familiarity' (Prince 1981) – all of which capture the fact that our minds (?brains) look for, detect, and store structured patterns of information that constitute part of 'common knowledge' in the sense of Lewis 1969 and Schiffer's 'mutual knowledge'. On most if not all occasions P is effable: it can be expressed in a

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[4] (1) does not invoke the notion of 'collective belief' as described by Gilbert 1987, 1989. I am referring to what a member of K assumes about the beliefs of other members of K – and, most particularly, H. In my view, to convert this to what a member of K assumes to be a (collective) belief in K would be inaccurate.

proposition or set of propositions φ. I have less confidence that F is always effable, but mostly it is. Note that (1)(a) and (1)(b) allow for a member M_i of K to not know or not believe F, permitting miscommunication to arise. For instance, if X says *I've just been talking to Harry* and Y responds *Harry who?* then X is expected to explain who Harry is. Conversely, sometimes S assumes something is not in CG with H, when in fact it is.

2. Context

(2) Context *C* of a language expression ε comprises *C*1, *C*2 and *C*3.

*C*1 is the world (and time) spoken of, constituted by the topic of discourse revealed by expression ε's co-text (what has been said and what is said, including text that follows ε).

*C*2: if ε is a constituent of utterance υ, such that $\varepsilon \subseteq \upsilon$[5], *C*2 is the situation in which υ is expressed; *C*2 includes what is known to H (and also by-standers and overhearers) about S and the perlocutionary effect of this and similar uses of ε – we might call *C*2 'the world spoken in'.

*C*3: there is a corresponding situation of interpretation in which H seeks to understand $\varepsilon \subseteq \upsilon$, i.e. the meaning of ε in the context (*C*1 + *C*2) of the utterance υ in which it occurs.

In face to face conversation *C*3 is effectively identical with *C*2, but *C*3 may also be distant in time and space from *C*2 (as when we read Aristotle, Augustine, or Shakespeare today). ε may be subpropostional, propositional (like the previously mentioned φ and χ), or multi-propositional. Each 'world' is in fact part of a world-time pair, such that the word *world* invokes a paired time. Because worlds spoken of are revealed through language, they all have some association with the world S inhabits, the world spoken in.[6] Put another way, the world spoken of, *C*1, is a mental model of an actual or recalled or imagined world; it is a possible world accessible from the world spoken in (see Allan 2001 for more on this).[7] A model of the world (and time) spoken of is the content of a mental space which can be readily associated in a variety of ways with other worlds (and times) occupying other mental spaces.

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5 Note that ε may be a part of υ or the whole of υ.

6 You see the effect of this if you compare, e.g., the science fiction of H.G. Wells with one of today's SF writers.

7 Although some of the worlds described in Douglas Adams *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (Adams 1992) are subject to different natural laws than the world of its readers, they are 'accessible' worlds in my use of the term because we can understand them in the sense that we can follow the action much as the author seems to have intended.

A competent S supplies sufficient context for the anticipated audience that a competent H can recreate the world and time being spoken of. Essentially, the former ability was described by Aristotle as appropriateness: ‘Your language will be appropriate if it expresses emotion and character, and if it corresponds to its subject’ (*Rhet.* 1408^a10, Aristotle 1984: 2245).[8] Aristotle is talking about S’s style and manner of presentation, which a competent S knows will normally be evaluated by a competent H; typically this is part of the CG. In a similar vein, Quintilian approved language ‘adapted to the matter and the persons concerned’ (Quintilian 1920-22, XI.i.2).[9] And three centuries later Augustine used the word *contextio*, e.g ‘caetera contextio sermonis’ “the general drift of the passage” and ‘contextio Scripturae’ “the purport of Scripture”[10]. *Contextio* derives from the verb *contextare* denoting the weaving together of words, which is not quite equivalent to English *context* – for which Augustine used ‘circumstantiae’ “what stands around, context, circumstances”. Until modern times, when context was discussed it was usually referred to as *circumstantiae* or *circumstances*. Indeed, my description of context C of expression ε in (2) could alternatively be described as the circumstances in which ε occurs.

The previous paragraph began by saying that a competent S supplies sufficient context that the anticipated audience can recreate the world and time being spoken of. This places more focus on the establishment of common ground than was usual before the late 20th century. Stalnaker 2014 treats context as common ground (p.3 and passim): ‘context [is] a body of available information: the common ground’(Stalnaker 2014: 24, an idea that goes back to Stalnaker 1978). Stalnaker also believes that common ground is something that speakers typically presuppose (Stalnaker 2014: 25). It certainly seems to be the case that (1) is prior to (2), and they can be combined into (3).

(3) (a) Common ground for any community K of two or more people is that every member, or almost every member, of K knows or believes some fact or set of facts F.

(b) A member of K is presumed to know or believe F by (almost) every other member of K.

(c) A member of K knows that both (a) and (b) are true.

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8 τὸ δὲ πρέπον ἕξει ἡ λέξις, ἐὰν ᾖ παθητική τε καὶ ἠθικὴ καὶ τοῖς ὑποκειμένοις πράγμασιν ἀνάλογον.

9 accommodatus rebus atque personis.

10 All quotes from Augustine are found in *De genesi ad litteram* I.xix.38 (Augustine 1836); Taylor SJ 1982: 66.

(d) Both S and H are members of K.

(e) S utters υ to H in context C_{υ}

(f) When a member of K applies knowledge of F in order to interpret υ, s/he can presume that others in the community will also apply (or be able to apply) knowledge of F in order to interpret υ.

(g) The existence of F, υ, and the application of knowledge of F to interpreting υ is common ground for members of the community K. Once attended to, υ becomes part of F, incrementing the common ground.

(i) If language expression ε is a constituent of utterance υ, such that $\varepsilon \subseteq \upsilon$, then part of the context C_{ε} of ε, namely $C_{\varepsilon}1$, is the world (and time) spoken of, constituted by the topic of discourse revealed by expression ε's co-text (what has been said and what is said, including text that follows ε);

(j) Part of C_{ε}, $C_{\varepsilon}2$, is the situation in which υ is uttered, which includes what is known about S and the perlocutionary effect of this and similar uses of ε – we might call this situation of utterance 'the world spoken in'.

(k) Finally, part of C_{ε}, $C_{\varepsilon}3$, is the situation of interpretation in which H seeks to understand $\varepsilon \subseteq \upsilon$, i.e. the meaning of ε in the context of the utterance υ in which it occurs.

In Allan 2013b I offered extensive argumentation and analysed a number of texts that led me to propose the following (p.308):

(4) i. 'X says φ to Y' pragmatically entails (a) X believes that φ and (b) Y has some reason to believe that X believes that φ. (Where A pragmatically entails B, B cannot – given A – be denied without creating a paradox, absurdity, or contradiction.[11])

ii. If in saying φ to Y, X refers to α, this act of referring to α pragmatically entails that (a) X believes Y can identify α (knows who or what α is) and (b) Y recognizes that

[11] Pragmatic entailment gives rise to Moore's paradox: *I went to the pictures last Tuesday, but I don't believe that I did* (Moore 1952: 543); more generally, *p and I don't believe that p* and *p and I believe that not-p*. There is similarity between 'pragmatic entailment' and 'explicature' in Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson 1995, Carston 2002, Capone 2013) but the definitions are not the same. An explicature is a proposition communicated by an utterance if and only if it is a development of a logical form encoded by the utterance (Sperber & Wilson 1995: 182). Nonetheless, it is possible that my 'pragmatic entailment' may be what in RT is an 'explicature'.

X believes Y can identify α. Typically, when Y cannot identify α, Y asks X for further information.[12]

iii. 'X asks Y to do φ' pragmatically entails (a) X believes Y may be able to do φ and expects Y to accede or refuse and (b) Y recognizes that X believes Y may be able to do φ and Y needs to decide whether to accede or refuse.

The definitions in (4) invoke presuppositions that are the preconditions (preparatory conditions) on illocutions, subject to the maxim of quality (see Allan 2001: 204ff for discussion). Here we see that although presuppositions constitute a part of CG, there is more to CG than them alone. Other illocutionary types must give rise to additional patterns corresponding to the preconditions of those illocutions, but I will leave that aside here.

It behoves me to say a little more about my use of the term *presupposition* and how it relates to what I call 'pragmatic entailment'. The way I use *presupposition* is similar to Scott Soames' 'utterance presupposition', which he defines as follows:

> An utterance U presupposes P (at t) iff one can reasonably infer from U that the speaker S accepts P and regards it as uncontroversial, either because
> a. S thinks that it is already part of the conversational context at t, or because
> b. S thinks that the audience is prepared to add it, without objection, to the context against which U is evaluated. (Soames 1982: 486, (13))

My notion of pragmatic entailment corresponds to Soames' notion of what H, and a bystander, or an overhearer can reasonably infer from the utterance; and I prefer to say that S does the presupposing which sanctions S's utterance, υ, which in turn induces the pragmatic entailment. Consequently, rewriting Soames' definition in my terms gives (5).

(5) S's utterance υ pragmatically entails that S presupposes that φ is already part of the conversational context at t (i.e. it is in the CG), or that the audience (primarily H) is prepared to add φ, without objection, to the context against which υ is evaluated (thus extending the CG).

Beyond earliest childhood, very little we encounter is totally new in all its aspects. Most of what we hear and read can be interpreted wholly or partially in relation to structured knowledge arranged into modules of information. My assumptions about the process of

[12] The absurdity of *The present King of France is bald* uttered in 1905 (see Russell 1905) arises because the utterance pragmatically entails reference to a currently existing King of France when there was none.

understanding utterance υ is fundamentally similar to that proposed in Searle 1975, Bach & Harnish 1979, and Allan 1986. To present it stepwise:

1. H recognises the act of S uttering υ at time t in context C_i. C_i is in CG.
2. H recognises the locution.
3. H recognises what S is referring to by means of the locution.
4. H recognises the primary illocutionary intention (cf. (4)).
5. H recognises any secondary and subsequent illocutionary intentions to bring about certain perlocutionary effects.
6. H recognises the illocutionary point of υ as uttered at time t in context C_i which is introduced into CG such that it expands C_i to C_j, i.e. $C_i \subset C_j$.

Step 1 is based on brute perception, and notice how recognition of the relevant context is prior to interpretation of what is said; step 2 is based on knowledge of the language used; 3 relates the locution to things in the world spoken of (see Allan 2013a); 4 relies on knowledge of the definitions of primary illocutions (see Allan 1986, 2006a, 2006b); 5 relies on the cooperative principle and definitions of illocutionary acts; 6 recognises what H takes to be S's message in υ, the bases for 6 are the previous steps and encyclopaedic knowledge which is within the CG. Steps 2-6 will be attempted from the onset of utterance; that is, no step is necessarily completed before the next step is begun and H will make predictions about the most probable outcome. For instance, in step 2 H makes recourse to the semantic frames of ε which will identify the characteristic features, attributes, and functions of a denotatum together with its characteristic interactions with things necessarily or typically associated with it (cf. Fillmore 1982, Fillmore & Atkins 1992, Lehrer & Kittay (eds) 1992, Allan 2001). A frame is built from encyclopaedic knowledge: for example, the frame for *people* registers the fact that, being living creatures, people have the attributes of age and sex; the attribute sex has the values male and female. Thus frames identify the structural relations of ε and the concepts they name – which must be matched with co-text to identify any scripts in which ε participates. Scripts handle stylized everyday situations; they are structured representations of event sequences, consisting of slots and requirements about what can fill those slots. The structure is an interconnected whole, and what is in one slot affects what can be in another (cf. Schank & Abelson 1977, Schank 1982, 1984, 1986). Typically, scripts form a part of CG, such that regular components of a script are predictable and deviations from a script are potentially newsworthy.[13]

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[13] See Allan 2017 for scripts relevant to a death.

Because this essay focuses on context, the steps 2-5 are barely relevant and a reader who finds them implausible can substitute their own account of the correlation between S's uttering υ and H's recognition of what S intends to bring about by making the utterance.

3. Looking at some data

Allan 1981, 2011 drew attention to the significance of context to make the different interpretations of the animal nouns in sentences (6)–(11)[14] relevant to identifying *C*1, the world spoken of.

(6) It's because Nellie likes rabbits that she won't eat rabbit.
(7) The girl holding the plate was wearing rabbit.
(8) The girl who wore mink was eating rabbit.
(9) Because she decided she preferred the lamb, Hetty put back the pigskin coat.
(10) The butcher has some impala right now.
(11) The tannery has loads of impala right now.

(6) refers to live rabbits and rabbit-meat, (7) to rabbit pelt, (8) to mink pelt and rabbit meat, (9) to lamb pelt, (10) to impala meat, and (11) to impala pelts. In (6)–(11) the different interpretations are derived from the semantics and pragmatics of the co-text (utterance internal CG) rather than knowledge of human behaviour that is a part of utterance external CG, but the oddity of (13) in contrast to (12) is custom/situation-based and more obviously derives from that aspect of CG.

(12) A. Have some more oysters.
B. Have some more lamb [with those potatoes].
(13) ?* Have some more lambs [with those potatoes].

The CG is that where one or more ingesta are normally eaten at a sitting, in English a countable NP is used; where only a part is normally eaten at one sitting, the uncountable (bare) form is used except in generics like *Hindus don't eat cows, and Muslims don't eat pigs*. From this follows the difference between *Have a coffee* [cup of coffee] and *Have some coffee* [from this pot]. I would speculate that a non-native speaker of English who uttered (13) might be offering more pieces of lamb rather than more whole lambs.

A rather similar kind of contextual influence, based on CG, affects the differing interpretations of 'old' in (14)–(15).

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[14] See also Copestake & Briscoe 1992.

(14) Queen Elizabeth II is old [uttered in 2015].
(15) Little Moreton Hall is old [uttered in 2015].

Both utterances of (14)–(15) are true as uttered in 2015: Her Majesty was born in 1926, so in 2015 she was 89 years old, which counts as old for a human; Little Moreton Hall was built very early in the 16th century, so it is approximately 500 years old, which counts as old for a building. Our knowledge of the differing life-spans of things is called upon when evaluating the particular meaning of *old* and the truth of such utterances.[15] The time of utterance is relevant: in 1520 (14) would have been nonsense and (15) false ('truth-or-falsity [is characteristic] of *a use* of a sentence' (Strawson 1950: 326)).

Next I adduce the much discussed (16).

(16) It's raining.

Typically this is true if it is in fact raining at the location of S in *C*2, though on some occasions it will be evaluated of a place known to be being spoken of, i.e. *C*1, as in (17):

(17) Harry's happy it's raining.

(17) is assumed true if it is raining wherever Harry is located (or perhaps interested in[16]) and that event makes him happy. Awareness of these conditions, variously called 'impliciture' by Bach 1994, 'expliciture' by Carston 2002, and 'pragmatic entailment' here, constitutes CG between S and H.

And, now consider (18), from Smith 2012: 5:

(18) Doorbell! She stumbles through the grass barefoot, sun-huddled, drowsy. The back door leads to a poky kitchen, tiled brightly in the taste of the previous tenant.

The H anticipated by S (Zadie Smith) is a reader of her novel *NW* which in itself arouses certain expectations. (18) evokes a world from the text in which 'she' was barefoot outside in the back yard drowsing in the sun. The very mention of 'her' being barefoot implicates that it is not her normal state – a conclusion surely confirmed from CG, given that the novel is about an area of early 21st century London centred on NW10. There is a CG based implicature that the doorbell rang and 'she' went through the cramped kitchen, with its tiles she probably doesn't like, to find out who is ringing the doorbell. As already said, the time is early 21st

[15] This parallels the different interpretations of *cut* given in Searle 1980.

[16] This would have to have been identifiable from co-text; e.g. *He's going to Lake Eyre in a couple of weeks, so Harry's happy it's raining because it'll bring out the flora and fauna just in time for his visit.*

century as determined by additional co-text, which will also most probably offer more information about the identity of ‘she’ and the location (to which the book’s title, *NW*, is already a clue[17]). These expectations arise from CG, namely, the reader’s experience of novels. Although ‘she’ could be a girl-child, the second sentence quoted evokes attitudes to her environment that are more typical of an adult than a child. The reference to a previous tenant makes it most likely that the property is rented not owned – which hints at her socioeconomic status. These are all things cued by the semantics of the language used but fleshed out by the pragmatic modulation of the context evoked in the CG that Zadie Smith shares with her readers.

In (6) to (15) and (17), different *C*1 circumstances led to different interpretations of the same term; different *C*2 circumstances can have the same effect, cf. (16). The social relationship between S and H is partly determined by S’s socio-psychological attitude towards H which is also responsive to the situation of utterance. For instance in French, where S is a shop assistant, it would be normal to use the second person plural *vous* to mark deferential address to a singular client, as in (19); the same S addressing his or her mother would normally use the colloquial second person singular form *tu*, as in (20).

(19) Vous êtes très gentille, madam.
2.PL are very kind madam
“You are very kind, madam.”

(20) T’es très gentille, maman.
2.SG-are very kind mummy
“You’re very kind, mummy.”

There are occasions when one addresses one’s mother more formally; for example the deferential Polish question in (21) uses a third person singular to an addressee, which contrasts with the familiar version using a second person singular in (22) that roughly corresponds to the colloquial style of the English translation.[18]

(21) Co mama robi?
what mother 3.SG.do
“What are you doing mother?”

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17 Try Googling ‘nw10’.

18 Kasia Jaszczolt tells me (p.c.) that the form in (21) dates from her mother’s generation and earlier, so today is somewhat outdated. Happily the point I am illustrating is not invalidated.

(22) Co robisz, mama?
what 2.SG.do mum
"Wotcha doin', mum?"

The contrasted address forms in (19) and (20) are mostly determined by the physical context in which the utterance is made; those in (21) and (22) by S's attitude, which is part of the psycho-social context. Both are aspects of *C*2. Deference to others is important in every language; my examples here oversimplify in order to illustrate a significant aspect of CG. Violations of norms are meaningful: the violation may be a deliberate ploy to cause offense, or be accidental and nonetheless cause offence. For instance, in Japanese a section manager is normally addressed, as in (23) by the title *kachoo* and not by the pronoun *anata* "you" (originally "(person) over there"); but during a staff protest s/he might be addressed as in (24) by *anata* or even the colloquial *anta*.

(23) Kachoo ga soo ossyaimasita
section.manager NOM so say.HONOR.POLITE.PAST
"You said so[, sir]."

(24) Anata ga soo iimasita
you NOM so say.POLITE.PAST
"You said so[, mate]."

Situationally inappropriate terms of address might succeed in attracting the target's attention but they will be regarded negatively because they cause offence. If that were S's intention, the goal has been achieved; but if S were not intending to offend then the utterance must be judged faulty in its execution. Psycho-social appropriateness is a significant aspect of communication and it is highly sensitive to context, in particular to *C*2 and *C*3.

The report of Police v Butler [2003] NSWLC 2 before Heilpern J, June 14, 2002 quotes a defendant accused of offensive behaviour saying to police officers 'Get fucked you cunts, I'm just trying to help my mates'. Generally speaking *cunt* is an offensive term but, like *silly ass, idiot, bastard,* and *fucker*, it can be used as an expression of bantering camaraderie or to show camaraderie and empathy as in 0 from *Trainspotting* (Welsh 2001: 99-100) – which is in the Leith dialect of Edinburgh (Scotland).

(25) — Granty … ye didnae hear? … Coke looked straight at Lenny.
— Naw. Wha …
— Deid. Potted heid.
— Yir jokin! Eh? Gies a fuckin brek ya cunt …
— Gen up. Last night, likes.
— Whit the fuck happened …

— Ticker. Boom. Coke snapped his fingers. — Dodgy hert, apparently. Nae cunt kent aboot it. Perr Granty wis workin wi Pete Gilleghan, oan the side likesay. It wis aboot five, n Granty wis helpin Pete tidy up, ready to shoot the craw n that likes, whin he jist hauds his chist n cowps ower. Gilly gits an ambulance, n they take the perr cunt tae the hospital, but he dies a couple of ooirs later. Perr Granty. Good cunt n aw. You play cairds wi the guy, eh?
— Eh … aye … one ay the nicest cunts ye could hope tae meet. That's gutted us, that hus.

A newspaper report of Phil Grant's fatal heart attack, even if equally sympathetic, would necessarily use very different language – as a matter of social appropriateness.

Today, use of the word *nigger* is very often castigated as slurring the referent, but this ignores the effect that the context of use should exert. A slur is not, as it is often taken to be, the lexical form (or forms) in a language expression ε, but instead the perlocutionary effect of ε as a constituent of υ: an effect which can only be determined from *C*, the context – i.e. ε's co-text and the situations of its utterance and of its reception. As with many slurs, in-group usage by people who might themselves have been slurred with the term by out-groupers, many African-Americans have adopted the term *nigger* (often respelled *nigga*, which is typically homophonous) to use to or about their fellows to express camaraderie (Allan 2015b, 2016, Allan & Burridge 1991, 2006, Asim 2007, Croom 2013, Folb 1980, Kennedy 2000, 2003, McWhorter 2002, 2010, Rahman 2012, inter alios).[19] This is a classic example of polysemy and so although one cannot say *Ordell is a nigger*$_1$ *and so is Beaumont* [*a nigger*$_2$] because it violates the Q-principle of both Horn 1984 and Levinson 2000, it is perfectly possible for one African-American to say to another *That honkey called me a nigger*$_2$*, nigger*$_1$*.*[20] The speaker identifies as a person who has attracted or might attract the slur *nigger*: in other words s/he trades on the hurtful, contemptuous connotation and subverts it (cf. Hornsby 2001: 134).

(26) So, Mr. President, if I'm going to keep it 100: Yo, Barry, you did it, my nigger. You did it. (Larry Wilmore to President Barack (= Barry) Obama at the 2016 White House

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[19] There is at least one example of this in President Obama's autobiography when, in an exchange of banter, his friend Ray addresses him as 'nigger', see Obama 2004: 73.

[20] Assuming *nigger*$_2$ is the slur and *nigger*$_1$ is not.

Correspondents' Dinner, cited by black journalist Jonathan Capehart in the *Washington Post*, May 2, 2016, 'Why Larry Wilmore is not 'my n – – – – –')[21]

Larry Wilmore's accolade was controversial. His use of 'nigger' was mostly referred to in the media as 'the N word' and otherwise written 'n—' or 'nigga'. Jonathan Capehart disapproved not because an African-American was addressed as *nigger* by another African-American, but because the addressee was the President of the United States whom Capehart believes should not be treated so familiarly on a public occasion. But it is clear that Wilmore was intending to be colloquial and familiar, witness 'keep it 100', 'Yo, Barry'. It certainly didn't appear that Obama was offended. All these comments are tempered by the context in which *nigger/nigga* occurs and is spoken or written of.

In (27) 'niggers' is apparently used dysphemistically by the reported speaker, the South Carolinian farmer Mr Anderson, but not by the author of the report, Joshua Slocum:

(27) These good people [of South Santee, SC in October 1888] could hardly understand how it was, as I explained, that the Brazilians had freed the slaves and had no war, Mr. Anderson often exclaiming, "Well, well, I d'clar. Freed the niggers, and had no wah. Mister," said he, turning to me after a long pause, "mister, d'ye know the South were foolish? They had a wah, and they had to free the niggers, too." (Slocum 1890: 148)

The 'wah' referred is, of course, the American Civil War (1861–65) and it seems this farmer from South Santee did not approve the freeing of slaves, whom he dysphemistically refers to as 'niggers'.

Or, it is possible he was simply of his time in which non-whites of all kinds were regarded as inferior to whites, even by enlightened people such as Charles Darwin:

> At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate, and replace, the savage races throughout the world. At the same time the anthropomorphous apes […] will no doubt be exterminated. The break between man and his nearest allies will then be wider, for it will intervene between man in a more civilised state, as we may hope, even than the Caucasian, and some ape as low as a baboon, instead of as now between the negro or Australian and the gorilla. (Darwin 1871: 201)

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[21] https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/wp/2016/05/02/why-larry-wilmore-is-not-my-n/. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1IDFt3BL7FA ('my nigger' occurs at 22:04 minutes). I am grateful to Howie Wettstein for drawing my attention to this.

In such a case what may be not have been intended as a slur by S at the time of utterance *C*2, can be perceived as a slur by a reader today (H at *C*3) because beliefs have changed over time. Today, the default reaction to *nigger* is that it is a slur, just as the default reaction to *shit* is that it is obscene, the default referent of *bird* flies, and the default referent of *bull* is bovine.[22] The reasons for these defaults have been examined and explained in Allan 2011, 2012, 2015a, 2015b, Allan & Burridge 1991, 2006. Although slurring must be defined on perlocutionary effect, we cannot ignore perlocutionary intention. Intentional uses of *nigger* that are non-slurs (e.g. when the expression is used to express camaraderie) should not be condemned although S is open to criticism by an audience member (H) deeply offended by any use of the word. Where it is not S's perlocutionary intention to be offensive but nevertheless the audience is insulted – i.e. when the perlocutionary effect of ε in υ is an accidental slur – the offense should be forgiven.

Asim 2007 criticizes dysphemistic uses of *nigger* by a number of white authors but forgives its use in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Twain 1884) because use of terms like *Injun* and *nigger* are unequivocally suited to the context of the book. In 1885 *Huckleberry Finn* was not deprecated for the use of racial slurs but because the humour and language used is 'of a very coarse type […] more suited to the slums than to intelligent, respectable people' (*Boston Evening Transcript* March 17, 1885, p.6). *Nigger, nigra* and *nigga* are colloquial counterparts to *Negro*: compare similar colloquial–formal correspondences such as *bubby–baby, bust–burst, crick–creek, critter–creature, cuss–curse, gal–girl, hoss–horse, sassy–saucy, tit–teat*. Colloquial language uses informal and intimate styles (cf. Joos 1961); it includes, but is not identical with, slang (see Allan & Burridge 2006). The term *African-American* did not exist in the 1880s and, given the deliberate use of colloquial language in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the term *nigger* was an appropriate alternative. By all accounts, Samuel Clemens had African-American friends and thought highly of them (Fishkin 1993); he was no racist (cf. Kennedy 2003: 109f, Asim 2007: 107; McWhorter 2011). Although some of the characters in the book are racist, so was much of white America, and for them (as for too many people today) *nigger* is an expression of disparagement that discredits, slights, smears, stains, and besmirches African-Americans. But whereas some of the characters created by author Mark Twain employed *nigger* as a slur, his alter ego Samuel Clemens deplored such practice. Today, the text of *Huckleberry Finn* has

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[22] Penguins and ostriches are birds that don't fly. Male elephants, male whales, male seals, and male alligators (among other creatures) are also bulls.

been censored, for instance, with *slave* substituted for *nigger* and *Injun* omitted (Twain 2011a) and with *nigger* replaced by *hipster* but *Injun* retained (Twain 2011b).[23] Enlightened people such as Asim, Kennedy and McWhorter condemn such bowdlerisation in *C*3, recognising that in the context in which Twain wrote (the world spoken in, *C*2) the terms he used – that in other contexts might be slurs – in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* are not. Their use in the book is socially appropriate, though perhaps their use by certain fictional characters may nonetheless be slurs within the world of the book, *C*1.

There is a similar case to be made for the use of *nigger* to refer to Aboriginal Australians in *We of the Never Never* (Gunn 1983), an autobiographical account of Jeannie Gunn's life between 1902 and 1903 at Elsey Station (out bush, 75 miles south of Katherine in the Northern Territory). Gunn uses *black/black boy/black fellow* 95 times, *nigger* 18 times, and *Kaffir* once; she normally refers to Aboriginal women as *lubras* (56 instances). Gunn's language reflects that of bushmen and other early 20th century Australians, but throughout the book, both when quoting her companions and writing on her own account, the usage is undoubtedly patronising, perhaps disrespectful, yet without malicious intent. Gunn notes that Aborigines had been dispossessed of their land, were mistreated, and sometimes left starving, so she was mildly sarcastic about white so-called 'justice' (Gunn 1983: 185-186). On the other hand, she barely hints at the Australian sport of shooting Aborigines, which only ended with the Coniston Massacre of 1928.[24] Today, Jeannie Gunn is sometimes condemned as racist (Ellinghaus 1997), but to be fair-minded she was a creature of her time (1870-1961) and her world view ought to be judged in the context of her place and time, i.e. in terms of *C*2 it was socially appropriate, whereas for the 21st century reader (in *C*3 today) it is not.

I now want to consider four occurrences of *nigger* in Quentin Tarantino's 1994 film 'Pulp Fiction'. To clarify what I mean by 'context' in discussing the film: it presents a fictional caricature of real life in Los Angeles sometime in the late 20th century. The cities, towns, and suburbs mentioned within the film are real locations. That's the world of 'Pulp Fiction', populated by characters who are intended to simulate real people. You and I, as members of the audience, know that in the film a character may overdose on heroin, be beaten up, or killed, but that the actor playing the part does not simultaneously suffer such a fate; in other words we are capable of distinguishing the world of 'Pulp Fiction' from the real world, even

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23 See McWhorter 2011.

24 The number of Aborigines slaughtered is disputed; it was between 30 and 170 (a huge discrepancy). Gunn's silence on such matters observed bush etiquette, see Reynolds 2013: 214.

though the world of 'Pulp Fiction' is accessible from the real (audience) world. Social attitudes and events within the film are based on and evaluated along the same lines as events in the real world. For example, the relative social situations of blacks and whites and the unlawful acts committed within the film are meant to be judged in a similar way to these exact things in real life. The same goes, of course, for the highly colloquial language used within the film, including the use of *nigger*.

The first instance I will discuss is when white hillbilly Maynard's shop was invaded by two men fighting: Butch (white) has pinned Marsellus (black) to the floor of the pawnshop and is pointing Marsellus' own .45 handgun in his face.[25]

(28) MAYNARD (brandishing a pump action shotgun pointed at Butch who stands above Marsellus): Hold it right there goddammit.

BUTCH: This ain't none of your business, mister.

MAYNARD: I'm making it my business. Toss the weapon.

BUTCH: You don't understand, man.

MAYNARD: Toss the weapon. (*After a brief delay Butch throws the gun to his left.*) Take your foot off the nigger [1:33:2]. Put your hands behind your head. Approach the counter, right now. (*Maynard slugs Butch with the butt of his shotgun*.)

Maynard's use of *nigger* is a definite racial slur in respect of Marsellus from the white hillbilly to the white boxer. Consider the context: Maynard's shop was invaded by two men fighting, so we cannot expect him to be courteous to either of them. He refers to the groggy Marsellus as 'nigger' and he slugs Butch with his gun. Under these circumstances the racial slur is not out of place from a dramatic point of view; whatever term was used to refer to Marsellus was going to be insulting and there are not a lot of realistic choices. I conclude that this occurrence of *nigger*, 93 minutes into the film, is a racial slur that, given the context, is dramatically justifiable and plausibly corresponds to what one could encounter in real life.

As I have said, *nigger* is used among African-Americans to express camaraderie (usually from a male to or about a male), as in (29); Jules is black and his fellow hitman Vincent is white.[26]

(29) JULES**:** You remember Antwan Rockamora? Half-black, half-Samoan, usta call him Tony Rocky Horror.

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[25] The actors are: 'Maynard' = Duane Whitaker, 'Butch' = Bruce Willis, 'Marsellus' = Ving Rhames.

[26] The actors are: 'Jules' = Samuel L. Jackson, 'Vincent' = John Travolta.

VINCENT: Yeah maybe, fat right?

JULES: I wouldn't go so far as to call the brother fat. He's got a weight problem. What's the nigger gonna do, he's Samoan. (Tarantino 1999: 18)

*C*1 and *C*2 determine that this use of *nigger* is clearly not a racial slur. For a start Jules is black and he's addressing a white guy while speaking of a shared acquaintance who is a half-black half-Samoan and who counts as one of Jules' in-group of black 'brothers'. Secondly, Jules thinks well enough of Antwan to be kindly euphemistic about his size. So when he says 'What's the nigger gonna do, he's Samoan' he is using *nigger* as a colloquial descriptive. So we have *nigger* used as an in-group marker, here referring to a man described as 'Samoan', although he is also described as 'half-black'. Jules clearly has no malice towards this black 'brother' of whom *nigger* is surely used in the sympathetic spirit of camaraderie. This explication relies on assumed CG between Jules and Vincent and also assumed CG between Tarantino and his audience.

The next example takes place in a topless bar near LAX owned by Marsellus Wallace (Jules and Vincent's gangster boss) and managed by English Dave of whom the stage direction reads: '*Dave isn't really English, he's a young black man from Baldwin Park*' (played by Paul Calderón). Why he's called 'English' Dave is an unresolved mystery. Vincent and Jules present themselves in outlandish clothing, namely 'UC Santa Cruz and "I'm with Stupid" tee-shirts, swim trunks, thongs and packing .45 automatics' (Tarantino 1999: 187):

(30) ENGLISH DAVE: Vincent Vega, our man in Amsterdam. Jules Winnfield, our man in Inglewood. Git your asses on in here. Goddam, nigger, what's up with them clothes?

JULES: You don't even want to know. (Tarantino 1999: 35–36)

*C*1 and *C*2 clearly indicate that this is an instance of banter in which an African-American is razzing a black colleague who is wearing unusual clothing (the explanation for which is not revealed to the audience until towards late in the film; at this stage we are left as ignorant as English Dave). The references to locations are not entirely insignificant: Vincent has just returned from Amsterdam; and Inglewood is a dominantly black neighbourhood where Jules resides (as we learn later). The banter in (30) certainly reveals Dave's disparaging view of the hit-men's outfits but the use of *nigger* is clearly in the spirit of camaraderie and not malevolence – as we can judge from both the circumstances in which it is uttered and in Jules' response to what Dave has said.

The next occurrence of *nigger* that I discuss does not appear in the published script. It is uttered by Marsellus, the black gangster millionaire, to white boxer Butch as he hands Butch the bribe to go down in the fifth round of his bout with Floyd Wilson (black).

(31) MARSELLUS: […] How many fights d'you think you got in you anyway? Mhm? Two? Boxers don't have an Old Timers Place. You came close but you never made it. And if you were gonna make it, you would've made it before now. (*Holds out the envelope of cash to Butch, but just out of his reach.*) You're my nigger. [0:22:45]

BUTCH: Certainly appears so.

Here *C*2, the situation of utterance, offers an exquisite psycho-social irony in that a powerful African-American is calling a less powerful white man 'my nigger'. Although *nigger* is overwhelmingly applied to blacks, to the extent that I would classify that as the core meaning of the word, in (31) this does not coerce the interpretation that Butch is black. So instead we assume, as Butch himself does, that Marsellus had some other meaning. This is not a racial slur as such, but it does play on the slur because it invokes the disparaging connotations of *nigger* as referring to an inferior, servile person[27] – a person who carries out his master's (or mistress's) bidding without overt opposition. It is well-documented that *nigger* is used among African-Americans to denigrate people as well as its being, in other contexts, a term of camaraderie and banter.

The language of 'Pulp Fiction' is colloquial throughout, which explains why the term *African-American* never occurs. There is a single occurrence of *Negro* in the text. It is used as a term of address from Jules to Marsellus when he is seeking help from Marsellus to dispose of a gory corpse in a blood-soaked car. The background is that while Jules is driving Vincent and Marvin back to Marsellus after the murdering some junkies, Vincent accidentally shoots Marvin whose brains spatter all over the inside of the car and its occupants. To clean up the mess they go to Jules' (white) friend Jimmie's house.

(32) MARSELLUS: You ain't got no problems, Jules. I'm on the motherfucker. Go back in there, chill them niggers out and wait for The Wolf, who should be comin' directly.

JULES: You sendin' The Wolf?

MARSELLUS: Feel better?

JULES: Shit Negro, that's all you had to say. (Tarantino 1999: 151)

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[27] As justification for this see Allan 2015b, Asim 2007, Croom 2013, Reddick 1944.

Marsellus' use of 'niggers' in (32) repeats what Jules has just said to him referring to Jimmie and Vincent, both of whom are white. Arguably Jules was including himself with them. This use is reminiscent of what Marsellus said to Butch in (31) and connotes someone in powerless and perilous circumstances. At the same time they are comrades. 'The Wolf' is a fixer who subsequently does get all three of them out of that particular grisly situation. The final line of the text quoted in (32) includes the only occurrence of *Negro* in the script. It's a mark of in-group respect for the boss Marsellus who is arranging and financing the rescue; presumably, addressing him as *nigger* would be too familiar in this circumstance. In 'Pulp Fiction' *nigger* is used of equals or inferiors and those disparaged, which reflects the norm in real life.[28]

The differences in the meaning and effect of the various uses of *nigger* derive entirely from the disparate contexts (*C*2 and *C*3) in which they occur. In each of (28)–(32) the audience understands that S, the character who utters the word, assesses common ground with the H character to achieve the desired meaning. Of course, this is manipulated by the author (or perhaps the actor playing the character) and this manipulation is modelled on real life – which is why it works so well for the audience.

I want now to consider an example of misattribution suggested by Donnellan 1966: 287:

(33) X: Who's that teetotaller with a glass of water?
Y: My brother-in-law, Jake, and he's drinking neat vodka.

In (33) the complex demonstrative in the question has successfully referred to a recognisable individual despite X's incorrect presupposition about what he's drinking. Jake must have been identified from the situation of utterance, *C*2: perhaps in part from S's direction of gaze and certainly by the fact that he is (or has been) seen drinking from a glass of clear liquid. (33)X pragmatically entails that X supposes that the person later identified as Jake is drinking water and is therefore a teetotaller; so, having identified Jake, Y chooses to correct X's misapprehension. On the basis of CG about the similarity in appearance between a glass of water and a glass of vodka, Y can do this without serious insult to X because it is a perceptual mistake that anyone might make. Indeed, it is possible that Y answered in good faith but is unaware that although Jake was earlier drinking neat vodka he has decided to sober up by switching to water, thus rendering Y's presupposition incorrect. It will not matter at all until

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[28] Recall the fifteen occurrences of 'Negro' used as a term of respect (though not of address) in Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech at the Lincoln Memorial, August 28, 1963.

what Jake is drinking becomes an issue in interaction with either X, Y, or some overhearer Z – which may never arise.

CG may be established by introducing someone or something in what is often, inappropriately, called a presupposition. Consider (34):

(34) I'm going to a wedding next week. My ex-wife's cousin is marrying a grandson of one of the Rolling Stones.

S does presuppose the existence (fact) of φ, the ex-wife's cousin marrying a grandson of one of the Rolling Stones; but S does not presuppose that H knows of this because, if S did, the second sentence would be something like *Remember my ex-wife's cousin …*. Instead H infers φ from what (34) pragmatically entails, cf. Grice 1981, Abbott 2008. Thus (34) contains a counterexample to Stalnaker's claim that S 'presupposes that φ if and only if [S] accepts (for the purposes of the conversation) that it is common ground that φ' (Stalnaker 2014: 25). S may presuppose that the utterance carries one or more pragmatic entailments that H will accept as an extension to the common ground. Lewis 1979: 340 spoke of H 'accommodating' to such introductions. In (34) it is a predictable part of a personal relations frame or schema (compare that waitpersons, tables, and food are part of a restaurant frame and script; see Allan 2001, Mazzone 2011, Schank & Abelson 1977). In (34), although the Rolling Stones can be assumed to be in the CG, the actual individuals to be married are unlikely to be known to H (such that they can be named and/or picked out in a crowd) any more than they are known to readers of this essay; it is conceivable that they are even unknown (except as hearsay) to S. The descriptions are adequate to the purpose of the communication because the principal focus is in the first sentence of (34); the second sentence is an elaboration of it and rhetorically subordinate (Mann, Matthiessen & Thompson 1992, Mann & Thompson 1987).

4. Conclusions: getting to grips with context

Sections 1 and 2 of this essay surveyed aspects of common ground and context in the course of which I covered all cells of Dell Hymes S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. grid (Hymes 1974) and a good deal more. For thousands of years it has been recognised that to fully access the meaning of what is said, written, or signed, H makes recourse to context (as do bystanders and overhearers). Conversely, so does S when choosing what to say, write, or sign. What I have shown in section 3 of this essay is that there are different aspects of context that need to be accessed. I have also suggested that Stalnaker's claim 'context [is] a body of available information: the common ground'(Stalnaker 2014: 24, an idea that goes back to Stalnaker

1978) is nearly right, but not quite right. I have distinguished three aspects of context: *C*1, *C*2, and *C*3. *C*1 is the world (and time) spoken of, which is largely identified from co-text; essentially, *C*1captures what is said about what at some world. This is achieved (i) via the semantic frames and scripts evoked by the various constituents ($\varepsilon_{1...n}$) of υ – identified through ε and its co-text; and (ii) S's attitude to what is spoken of or the persons addressed as this is revealed by the locution. (i) and (ii) contribute to identifying what S's purpose might be in making the utterance, which is the effective meaning of ε⊆υ. *C*2 is the world (and time) spoken in, the situation of utterance. *C*2 captures who does the saying to whom, and where and when this takes place. *C*2 normally determines the social relationships and conventions that S is expected to follow and, in consequence, sets the standard for the psycho-social appropriateness of what is said. *C*2 is what governs, for instance, whether such terms as *bitch, cunt,* or *nigger* are used as a slur or an expression of camaraderie and whether or not a particular form of words is polite. *C*3 is the situation of interpretation, the circumstances under which H interprets ε⊆υ, which in face-to-face interaction is effectively identical with *C*2. So far as possible, S predicts common ground with H in order to shape utterance υ for maximum comprehensibility. Where *C*3 is very different from *C*2 such that H does not share S's system of beliefs and assumptions, the context is disparate from S's presumed common ground. Although H may be well able to understand what S intended to mean, ε⊆υ can have reduced comprehensibility and its psycho-social appropriateness may be differently evaluated from the way S expected to be understood. This can, of course, happen where S and H are face-to-face and S has mistaken the common ground with H.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to friends who have offered helpful comments: Mike Balint, Alessandro Capone, Robyn Carston, Anita Fetzer, Petra Hanzak, Humphrey van Polanen Petel, Hossein Shokohoui, Belén Soria Clivillés, and Howard Wettstein. None of these good people is in any way responsible for any flaws you notice in the essay.

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