

**DE RE AND DE DICTO:
AGAINST THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM¹**

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1. Preliminaries

Conventional wisdom has it that there is a class of attitude ascriptions such that in making an ascription of that sort, the ascriber undertakes a commitment to specify the contents of the ascriber's head in what might be called a notionally sensitive, ascriber-centered way. In making such an ascription, the ascriber is supposed to undertake a commitment to specify the modes of presentation, concepts or notions under which the ascriber cognizes the objects (and properties) that her beliefs are about. Consequently, it is widely supposed that an ascription of the relevant sort will be true just in case it specifies either directly or indirectly both *what* the ascriber believes and *how* she believes it. The class of "notionally sensitive" ascriptions has been variously characterized. Quine (1956) calls the class I have in mind the class of notional ascriptions and distinguishes it from the class of relational ascriptions. Others call the relevant class the class of de dicto ascriptions and distinguish it from the class of de re ascriptions. More recently, it has been called the class of notionally loaded ascriptions (Crimmins 1992, 1995). So understood, the class can be contrasted with the class of notionally neutral ascriptions. Just as the class of notional/de dicto/notionally loaded ascriptions is supposed to put at semantic issue the ascriber's notions/conceptions/modes of presentation, so ascriptions in the relational/de re/notionally neutral class are supposed not to do so. Rather, such ascriptions are supposed to relate the believer to doxastically relevant objects without directly specifying, referring to or describing the believer's notions of those objects.²

Because of the wide currency of the de re/de dicto distinction, I will adopt that terminology here. I hasten to acknowledge that philosophers have proposed a wide variety of mechanisms—some syntactic, some lexical, some pragmatic and contextual—by which modes of presentation and their ilk manage to be put at semantic issue. Frege (1977) seemed to believe that mere embedding

did the trick by bringing about reference shifts. Russell (1905) distinguishes two classes of ascriptions by appeal to facts about relative scope of quantifiers and operators as exhibited at the level of “logical form” as the primary mechanism. Quine (1956) appears to believe that along with a logical/syntactic distinction, there is also a lexical distinction between a notional ‘believes’ and a relational ‘believes’. At least until the decade of the ‘90’s, logical-syntactic approaches and lexical semantic approaches dominated 20th century thinking about the *de re/de dicto* distinction. More recently, philosophers have increasingly tended to offer up more pragmatically oriented ways of distinguishing notionally sensitive and notionally neutral belief ascriptions. Unarticulated constituents (Crimmins 1992, Crimmins and Perry 1989), semantic pretense (Crimmins, 1998), hidden indexicality (Schiffer 1977, Crimmins and Perry 1989, Crimmins 1992), contextually variable restrictions on correlation functions between RAMS (Richard 1990), quasi-singularization (Recanati, 1993) are just some of the mechanisms which have been recently proposed to explain how notions and their ilk may be put at semantic issue in some, but not all belief ascriptions. On many, if not all of these more pragmatically-oriented approaches there need be nothing about the logical form of the sentence by which we make a notionally sensitive ascription that serves to put notions at semantic issue. Nor do these approaches posit a lexical ambiguity in ‘believes.’ On such approaches, belief ascriptions are taken to involve either explicit or tacit indexicality via which the supposed variable notional sensitivity/neutrality of belief ascriptions is assimilated to more garden-variety forms of contextual variability. Still, because advocates of such approaches hold that there is some mechanism or other, operative in some, but not all belief ascriptions, which serves to put notions and their ilk at semantic issue, I count them one and all as advocates still of at least the core of the conventional wisdom.

In this essay, I challenge the conventional wisdom by challenging one of its consequences. The conventional wisdom has it that the notions put at semantic issue in a *de dicto*/notional/notionally sensitive ascription are not the *ascriber’s*, but the *ascribee’s*. For the truth value of any such ascription is supposed to depend not on the ascriber’s but on the ascribee’s notions, conceptions, or modes.³ But if that is so, it follows that such ascriptions should permit a degree of what I call doxastic or notional distance between potential ascribers and potential ascribees by allowing an ascriber to attribute to an ascribee doxastic commitments that the ascriber neither shares nor endorses. However, it turns out that belief attributions permit far less notional or doxastic distance between ascriber and ascribee than conventional wisdom contemplates. Indeed, at least for beliefs about particulars, the preferred device for putting the ascribee’s notions and conceptions at semantic issue turns out not to be anything like the diverse machinery widely on offer as accounts of the workings of *de dicto*/notional/notionally sensitive ascriptions. When an ascriber intends to ascribe to another a belief about a particular in a notionally sensitive, ascribee-centered way, at least where the ascriber neither shares nor

endorses the ascriber's notions of the relevant particular or particulars, the ascriber must make what I call a fulsomely de re ascription. A fulsome de re ascription is one which specifies what objects are thought about, what is thought about those objects, and, at least indirectly, the notions or modes of presentation via which those objects are thought about. Such ascriptions specify the "how" of a belief content, not via an embedded clause, but via unembedded modifying clauses of a sort explained more fully below. The claim that it takes a de re ascription of a certain sort to make explicit the how of a belief also runs against the grain of the conventional wisdom.⁴ For it is integral to the conventional wisdom that de re ascriptions are precisely those which do not put the ascriber's notions and conceptions at semantic issue.⁵ There is a grain of truth to this thought, but it is only a small part of the larger truth about de re attributions. Though the conventional wisdom more or less correctly characterizes *truncated* de re ascriptions which lack modifying clauses of the sort I have in mind, it does not correctly characterize *fulsome* de re ascriptions.⁶

My argument is a burden shifting one. I argue via a series of examples that at least in circumstances of what I call notional disharmony between ascriber and ascribee embedded expressions do not in general enjoy any peculiar ascribee-centered notional semantic significance not enjoyed by their unembedded counterparts. I begin with the peculiar, but little notice behavior of embedded expressive evaluatives, turn next to embedded definite descriptions, and end with a consideration of embedded names. Neither severally nor collectively do these examples conclusively establish that mere embedding fails to put the ascriber's notions at semantic issue in circumstances of notional harmony. But they do serve to shift the burden of proof to those who would maintain that embedding manages to achieve a semantic effect in circumstances of notional harmony that it is evidently powerless to achieve in circumstances of notional disharmony.

2. On Embedded Expressive-Evaluatives

By way of softening recalcitrant intuitions, I begin by examining the quite peculiar, but little noticed behavior of what I call expressive-evaluatives in attitude contexts.⁷ Among the class of expressive-evaluatives, I include expressions like 'damn', 'bastard', 'bitch' and 'cotton-pickin' in so far as such expressions are used to express attitudes of derogation or approval. Though many expressive-evaluatives have more or less rich descriptive contents, my initial focus is entirely on their evaluative contents. Some expressive-evaluatives are what I call lexical expressive-evaluatives. Lexical expressive-evaluatives function as expressive-evaluatives at least partly in virtue of their lexical meanings. Some lexical expressive-evaluatives have rich descriptive contents; others have minimal descriptive contents. In at least one of its uses, 'damn' is almost entirely devoid of descriptive content. Prominent among the lexical expressive-evaluatives are derogatory terms like 'nigger', 'kike' or 'spic'. Even terms which

are not lexical expressive-evaluatives can be used on occasion with expressive-evaluative significance. Merely by uttering the expression ‘Jew’ with a sneering tone of disapproval, for example, one thereby expresses an attitude of derision toward Jews.

Now suppose that Jones is up for tenure. In addition, suppose that Smith overhears a conversation between the dean and the department chair that leads her to believe that Jones will be granted tenure. Smith is deeply disappointed at the very thought of it, since she regards Jones as an undeserving scoundrel. In utter disgust, she runs to share the depressing news with her friend Black. She utters the following:

- (1) That damned Jones is about to be granted tenure.

Unlike Smith, Black holds Jones in the highest regard. He believes that Jones richly deserves tenure and is overjoyed at the thought that she will receive it. Black takes Smith to be a reliable informant. He takes Smith’s assertion as good, but not conclusive evidence that well-deserved good things are about to come for Jones. He rushes to share this evidence with Brown. Excitedly, he utters:

- (2) Smith believes that Jones is about to be granted tenure.

There is no antecedent reason to deny that Black has made a true *de dicto* attribution of a belief to Smith. And if the conventional wisdom is correct, then in so doing Black undertakes a commitment to specify the contents of Smith’s belief in a notionally sensitive and ascriber centered way. His ascription will be true, conventional wisdom has it, just in case it specifies either directly or indirectly both what Smith believes and how she believes it. So, for example, if Black means to be ascribing in a *de dicto* manner, it is not permissible that he refer to Jones in ways that are not reflective of Smith’s own notions of Jones. Presumably, that is why he uses the name ‘Jones’—the name by which Smith herself refers to Jones—in the course of his attribution—rather than some name or description that Smith does not herself deploy in her thought and talk about Jones.

For all its apparent faithfulness to Smith’s notions of Jones, Black’s attribution has omitted something crucial about Smith’s attitude toward Jones and her tenure. It fails to capture the evaluative component of that attitude. For Black’s ascription does not capture that fact of Smith’s ill-regard for Jones. Now suppose that Black were to attempt a more faithful attribution that did capture the fact of Smith’s ill-regard for Jones. Suppose Black tries out the following:

- (3) Smith believes that that damned Jones is about to be granted tenure.

Strikingly, it appears that in uttering (3) Black expresses his own ill-regard for Jones rather than attributing such ill-regard for Jones to Smith. He does so despite the fact that “damned” occurs in what one might have antecedently thought of as an “opaque” position.

Consider the following alternative scenario. Suppose that it is Black who initially comes to believe that Jones is about to be granted tenure. Since Black holds Jones in high regard, he is pleased and excited by the news. He rushes to share this news with Smith. With evident approval and excitement, Black utters:

(4) Jones is about to be granted tenure!

Smith is disheartened. Smith resents Jones’s success and believes her to be an undeserving scoundrel. She sulks off to tell Brown the depressing news. She utters:

(5) Black says that that damned Jones is about to be granted tenure.

In uttering (5), Smith expresses her own ill-regard for Jones, without ascribing ill-regard for Jones to Smith. Yet, despite the added evaluative content, (5) is a permissible way for Smith to report to Brown what Black has said about Jones. Apparently, an indirect discourse report that is otherwise as notionally faithful as one could desire is permitted to contain whatever added evaluative content the reporter chooses to add.

Why is this so? A plausible initial hypothesis is that expressive-evaluatives resist embedding and, consequently, cannot be used in what I will call a wholly notional manner, merely to characterize how things are by the ascriber’s lights. Though unexpected, this hypothesis may not seem terribly startling. We already knew that indexicals, for example, resist embedding. Perhaps we did not expect to have to add expressive-evaluatives to the stock of embedding resisting expressions, but the mere fact that expressive-evaluatives resist embedding would not challenge the conventional wisdom. Still, that fact should make one wonder just why expressive-evaluatives resist embedding and whether there are any ascriber-centered constraints on what evaluative-expressive material an ascriber can add or subtract when she intends to be ascribing in a notionally faithful manner.

A further hypothesis immediately suggests itself. Attitude ascriptions and indirect discourse reports should be measured along two independent dimensions of faithfulness to the ascriber—a descriptive dimension and an evaluative dimension. Perhaps faithfulness along one dimension neither requires nor guarantees faithfulness along the other dimension. Call this the conservative hypothesis. The conservative hypothesis preserves the core of the conventional wisdom by restricting its scope. It restricts the conventional wisdom about so-called *de dicto* attributions to the purely descriptive dimension. In addition, it suggests the need for an independent account of the demands on evaluative faithfulness.

Cases in which the evaluative content is in a certain sense “extrinsic” can be plausibly construed as supporting the conservative hypothesis. By pronouncing someone’s name with a certain sneering intonation, for example, one can thereby express one’s ill-regard for that person. The sneering tone serves to add to a particular occurrence of the name an extrinsic evaluative content that is entirely separable from the name’s antecedent descriptive or referential content. For example, suppose that Smith utters the following, with sneering stress on the word ‘Jones.’

(6) *Jones* [sneeringly] is about to be granted tenure.

Now compare:

(7) Smith believes that *Jones* [sneeringly] is about to be granted tenure.

as uttered by Black to Brown, with:

(8) Smith believes that Jones [no sneer] is about to be granted tenure.

as uttered by Black to Brown. Both (7) and (8) are intuitively permissible ways of ascribing the belief expressed by Smith in her utterance of (6). By sneering in the utterance of (7), Black expresses her ill-regard for Jones. By withholding the sneer in (8), Black refrains from endorsing Smith’s ill-regard for Jones. But in refraining from endorsing, she also refrains from ascribing that ill-regard. The intuitive permissibility of (8) as a means of reporting the belief expressed by Smith in uttering (6) supports the claim that the ascriber is free to “subtract” evaluative content expressed by the ascribee without loss of notional faithfulness, as we might call it. Now consider (9), (10) and (11) below:

(9) Jones [no sneer] is about to be granted tenure.

(10) Smith believes that Jones [no sneer] is about to be granted tenure.

(11) Smith believes that *Jones* [sneering] is about to be granted tenure.

Again, both (10) and (11) are permissible ways of reporting the belief expressed by Smith in uttering (9). The permissibility of (11) supports the hypothesis that the ascriber is free to add expressive-evaluative content to her attribution. She does not thereby impute that relevant expressive-evaluative content to the ascribee. And she does not thereby diminish the notional faithfulness of her report.

The question naturally arises whether an ascriber can attribute an evaluative attitude to another without thereby committing herself to the relevant evaluation. There are at least three different ways to do so: (1) one can always mention, rather than use the relevant expressive-evaluative; (2) one can directly ascribe a distinctive sort of propositional attitude, what I call an evalua-

tive propositional attitude, toward a proposition about the relevant subject; or (3) one can make what I call a fulsome de re ascription. Let us consider each in turn.

2.1 Quotation and Expressive-Evaluatives

Suppose, for example, that Black directly quotes Smith's words as in:

(12) Smith said "that damned Jones is about to be granted tenure."

In uttering (12), Black manages to put Smith's evaluative attitude towards Jones on what might be called indirect display, but without thereby endorsing that attitude. Some speakers report a reading of sentence (3) above in which unvoiced scare quotations marks surround "damned." Speakers who report such a reading also report that on that reading the ascriber manages to convey the ascriber's evaluative attitude without thereby taking that evaluation onboard as her own. On such a reading, the expressive-evaluative is again mentioned rather than used. The *use* of an expressive-evaluative, even in an embedded position within a that clause, serves to express the ascriber's own evaluative attitude and not to assign to the ascriber an evaluative attitude, which the ascriber may or may not share or endorse. It would be an interesting exercise to develop a semantic/pragmatic theory of quotation marks which explained how the mere mention of Smith's words manages to put what Smith expresses by the use of those words on indirect display. But I shall not attempt that exercise here.

2.2 Evaluative Propositional Attitudes

An apparently more direct way for an ascriber to ascribe an evaluative attitude without taking the evaluation onboard as her own is for her to ascribe what I call an evaluative propositional attitude toward a proposition about the relevant subject. Consider the following propositional attitude ascriptions:

(13) Smith is disgusted [livid] [depressed] [overjoyed] that *p*.

Evaluative propositional attitudes are two component attitudes—involving a belief, or belief-like attitude, and an evaluation made in the holding of that attitude. To be disgusted that *p* is to be disgusted in thinking or believing that *p*. Just as there are two component attitudes, there are also two components assertions. We typically ascribe two component assertions adverbially as in:

(14) Smith reported with evident disdain [pleasure] [anger] that *p*.

Armed with the notion of an evaluative propositional attitude, one might claim that Smith expresses just such a propositional attitude via an utterance of (1).

And one might reasonably suppose that Black can ascribe such an attitude, without expressing evaluative commitments of her own toward Jones and her tenure, by an utterance of something like:

(1') Smith is disappointed that Jones is about to be granted tenure.

This approach yields a candidate explanation of the apparent separability of notional and evaluative faithfulness of putatively *de dicto* attitude reports. It implies that evaluative faithfulness is a matter of getting the evaluative mode of entertaining the relevant propositional/notional content right rather than a matter of getting right the propositional/notional content itself. Conversely, the current approach implies that notional faithfulness may be a matter of getting propositional/notional content right rather than a matter of getting the evaluative mode of entertaining the relevant propositional/notional content right. On this approach, the evaluative component of what is expressed by an utterance of a sentence like (1) should be construed not as a peculiar evaluative constituent of what is believed or said, nor as an ingredient of the modes of presentation, notions, or concepts via which the believer cognizes the objects and properties her beliefs are about, but as a constituent or ingredient of the manner or mode of entertaining or putting forth some propositional content.

There are, I think, many occasions on which a speaker who uses an expressive-evaluative does express an evaluative propositional attitude toward some propositional content. But not all uses of an expressive-evaluative can be analyzed in this manner. We must distinguish evaluative attitudes toward *an agent* (or other particular) from evaluative attitudes toward *a proposition*. To be sure, evaluative attitudes towards an agent typically have more or less direct consequences for evaluative attitudes towards propositions about that agent. If *a* thinks badly of *b* then *a* may be disposed to hold positive evaluative attitudes toward propositions to that effect that *b* is to suffer some ill and negative evaluative attitudes toward propositions to the effect that *b* is to enjoy some good. Suppose that Jack is a virulent racist who has a very negative and derogatory attitude towards black people. Suppose that his derogatory attitude leads him to use the term 'nigger' to refer to black people. It would not be surprising, if Jack's racism were virulent enough, if he were prone to make statements like the following:

(15) All niggers deserve to be rounded up and imprisoned

Through his use of 'nigger', Jack expresses a derogatory attitude toward black people. Via his utterance of (15), he expresses his belief that black people deserve to be rounded up and imprisoned. Belief is not yet an evaluative attitude in the sense here intended, but it would not be surprising if Jack turned out to be *disappointed that* black people are unlikely to be rounded up and imprisoned. Now it would be startling, to say the least, if someone held propositional

attitudes like Jack's without also holding negative evaluative attitudes toward black people. Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to conclude that an agent's evaluative attitudes toward a person straightforwardly determine her evaluative attitudes toward propositions about that person. It is entirely consistent with Jack's negative and derogatory evaluative attitude toward black people that he, nonetheless, does not believe that black people deserve to be indiscriminately rounded up and imprisoned and is not disappointed that black people are unlikely to be rounded up and imprisoned. Jack may, for example, be disposed to accept something like the following:

(16) Niggers do not deserve to be rounded up and imprisoned.

In accepting (16), Jack simultaneously expresses his negative evaluative attitude toward black people and his rejection of the proposition that blacks are deserving of ill treatment of a certain sort. One can acknowledge this fact even while granting that it would be at least surprising if Jack held no racist beliefs and evaluative attitudes towards propositions about the good or ill of black people. Indeed, I do not mean to deny that if a speaker manifestly held no negative evaluative attitudes towards propositions about the good or ill of black people and/or no beliefs about the lack of virtue, worth, or character of black people, but insisted, nonetheless, on using the derogatory term 'nigger' to refer to black people, we would be justified in doubting that he truly understood the meaning and/or pragmatic significance of that infamous term. My point is only that we cannot predict just from the fact of Jack's negative evaluative attitudes towards black people, what, if any, attitude, evaluative or non-evaluative, he will display toward any particular proposition about the good or ill and virtues and vices of black people. The point is a perfectly general one. An agent's evaluative attitudes toward a person do not straightforwardly entail or determine particular beliefs or evaluative attitudes toward propositions about that person. Consequently, an agent who expresses an evaluative attitude toward a person in expressing a proposition about that person need not thereby express any particular evaluative propositional attitude toward that very proposition. Because this is so, our current strategy yields no general recipe for the ascription to another of an evaluative attitude toward an individual not endorsed by the ascriber.

If we look more closely at the way expressive-evaluatives interact with evaluative propositional attitude verb phrases, we will see that there is a deep reason why this is so. Suppose, for example, that Smith utters (17) below with evident delight:

(17) That damned Jones is about to get her comeuppance

By her use of 'damn' Smith expresses a negative evaluative attitude toward Jones. By her general tone of voice, perhaps, she expresses a positive evalua-

tive attitude toward the proposition that Jones is about to get her comeuppance. Now suppose that we want to ascribe both an evaluative attitude toward Jones and an evaluative propositional attitude toward the proposition that Jones is about to get her comeuppance to Smith. We might try:

(18) Smith is delighted that that damned Jones is about to get her comeuppance.

(18) does not do the intended trick. The occurrence of ‘damn’ in an utterance of (18) would naturally be taken not as an ascription of an evaluative attitude toward Jones to Smith, but as an expression of the ascriber’s own evaluative attitude toward Jones. To be sure, competent speakers may be expected to have mutual knowledge of the fact that if *x* is delighted by the prospect of *y*’s comeuppance, then *x* is very likely to have some sort of ill-regard for *y*. Because of this connection, an utterance of (18) may generate a defeasible imputation that Smith too has ill-regard for Jones. But the presence of the embedded ‘damn’ plays no role whatsoever in generating such an imputation. Contrast (18) with (19):

(19) Smith is overjoyed that that damned Jones is about to be granted tenure.

Here there is a marked contrast between the positive evaluative attitude toward the proposition that Jones is about to be granted tenure ascribed to Smith and the negative attitude toward Jones expressed by the ascriber. That contrast extinguishes any temptation to assign the expressed ill-regard for Jones to Smith, despite the occurrence of the embedded ‘damn’.

The foregoing remarks support the conclusion that it is wrong to suppose that when a speaker uses an expressive-evaluative expression what she thereby expresses is typically best construed as an ingredient of a peculiar evaluative mode of entertaining a propositional content. By the use of an expressive-evaluative, a speaker typically expresses something rather more like an evaluative ingredient or constituent of a mode of presentation or notion of a particular individual or group of individuals. To deploy expressive-evaluatives like ‘damned’, ‘nigger’, ‘bitch’ or ‘bastard’ in one’s thought or talk is to think or speak of an individual or group of individuals in a certain way, not to entertain a proposition about the relevant individual or group of individual in a peculiar way. It would not be wrong to speak here of evaluative ingredients of notional contents.

It might be thought that one who uses an expressive-evaluative thereby expresses not a distinctive evaluative propositional attitude toward some (non-evaluative) proposition, but a perfectly ordinary propositional attitude toward a peculiar sort of proposition—an evaluative proposition. One might suppose, for example, that one who utters a sentence like (1) expresses garden variety belief in a proposition to the effect it is *bad*, *regrettable*, *wrong* or *disgusting*

that Jones is about to be granted tenure. There is surely something to this thought. It seems quite reasonable to suppose that one who damns Jones in the course of expressing the belief that Jones is about to get tenure—at least one who damns Jones because she believes that Jones does not deserve tenure—thereby commits herself to believing some such evaluative proposition about Jones. For acts of damnation and derogation would seem to *presuppose* belief in some negative evaluative proposition or other. It does not seem quite right to say that what is directly and literally asserted by an utterance of (1) is an evaluative proposition. Uttering (1) is not just another way of asserting that it is bad, unfortunate, or wrong that Jones is about to be granted tenure. Rather one who utters (1) might be said to perform two distinct and separable linguistic acts: (a) she asserts that Jones is about to be granted tenure and (b) she performs a non-assertoric act of damnation or derogation—an act which is felicitously performed only if the speaker believes some negative evaluative proposition about the derogated subject.

Despite the apparent separability of assertion and derogation, one might reasonably suppose, however, that we can, as it were, combine what is asserted with who is derogated to form a believed evaluative proposition as in:

(19') Smith believes that it is unfortunate [disgusting] [wrong] [damnable] that Jones is about to be granted tenure.

Clearly, one can ascribe a belief in an evaluative proposition to another, even if one does not oneself believe the relevant evaluative proposition. Notice, however, that an ascriber cannot herself *use* an embedded expressive evaluative merely to ascribe to another belief in an evaluative proposition which she does not herself believe. If the ascriber herself uses an embedded expressive-evaluative, even in the context of ascribing belief in an evaluative proposition, she again expresses her own evaluative attitude towards Jones. If, for example, Black utters:

(19'') Smith believes that it is unfortunate [disgusting] [wrong] [damnable] that that damned Jones is about to be granted tenure

he has again expressed his own negative attitude toward Jones. Notice too that it is not obvious what evaluative proposition Black thereby commits himself to believing. It is perfectly consistent with Black's believing (19'') that he actually approves of Jones's getting tenure, but has other reasons for derogating or damning Jones. That, I think, is because derogation and damnation are really attitudes toward particulars and at least not directly attitudes toward propositions. In fact, if we consider again Smith's utterance of (1) in light of our current example, it seems clear that Smith could utter (1), and thereby felicitously and non-defectively derogate or damn Jones, even if she believes that Jones fully deserved tenure, as long as she has other (mutually manifest) reasons for the

damnation or derogation of Jones. For example, we can imagine Smith uttering something like the following:

(19'') It's a good thing that that damned Jones is about to be granted tenure. Otherwise we'd be in for a lawsuit.

Hence, it seems wrong to suppose that in the general case one who uses an expressive-evaluative to express an attitude toward a person thereby expresses belief in some predictable evaluative proposition about the relevant person. Despite the fact that damnation and derogation seem to presuppose that the speaker accepts some negative evaluative proposition or other about the relevant person, we cannot simply read such a proposition off from the content of the proposition asserted in the course of the derogation. Consequently, the fact that some such proposition is presupposed yields no systematic strategy for ascribing evaluations to another which the ascriber does not herself endorse.

2.3 Expressive-Evaluatives and Fulsome De Re Ascriptions

We are back to square one. We need some explanation of just why what looks to be the machinery of garden variety *de dicto* attributions is apparently so ill-suited for allowing the ascriber to simultaneously represent and distance herself from the evaluative ingredients of the ascribee's notions. The surprising answer, I shall show, is that in the general case, at least where beliefs about particulars are concerned, the conversationally preferred way to ascribe notions across a notional or doxastic divide is to go fulsomely *de re*. Only fulsomely *de re* ascriptions give us a way of keeping explicit track of differences in doxastic or epistemic commitments.

It will help to recall our vicious racist Jack. Jack has notions of black people that more rational and fair-minded people are unlikely to share or endorse. Still, as a rational and fair minded person, one would like a way to report Jack's beliefs. And one would like to be able to put Jack's racist notions at semantic issue without oneself having thereby to represent oneself as endorsing those notions. It is common wisdom that beliefs, as thickly individuated, play a role in explaining intentional action. If we are to specify beliefs in a way that subserves the purposes of common sense psychological explanation, we need a way to specify beliefs in psychologically revealing ways. The trick for doing so, I suggest, is to go fulsomely *de re*. Consider the racist belief which Jack expresses by uttering (15) from above:

(15) All niggers deserve to be rounded up and imprisoned.

We might report Jack's belief by making a report that "subtracts out" the evaluative ingredients of Jack's notions of black people. Subtraction would yield something like the following:

(20) Jack believes that all black people deserve to be rounded up and imprisoned.

Since (20) leaves out the evaluative ingredients of Jack's notion of black people, it is not fully notionally faithful. Since an ascriber who uttered (20) as a way of reporting the belief expressed by Jack in uttering (15) would not thereby even purport to be reporting Jack's belief in a fully notionally faithful way, one might plausibly construe such an utterance of (20) as a *de re* rather than a *de dicto* attribution. In that case (20) might be more perspicuously phrased as:

(21) Jack believes of black people that they deserve to be rounded up and imprisoned.

(21) makes it explicit that the ascription does not purport to put Jack's notion of black people at semantic issue. (21) is explicitly silent on the character of Jack's notion of black people. The availability of (21) suggests the hypothesis that, in general, an ascriber can avoid taking on certain evaluative commitments expressed by the ascribee in her use of an expressive-evaluative by going *de re* and thereby going silent on the character of the ascribee's notions. Correlatively, an ascriber can make it explicit that an evaluative commitment is her own by simultaneously going silent on the ascribee's notions, while using an expressive-evaluative to express her own evaluative attitudes. Imagine that Jack wants to express his astonishment that Jones does not believe that black people, toward whom Jack, but not Jones holds derogatory and racist attitudes, do not deserve to be rounded up and imprisoned. He might do so via a suitably stressed utterance of the following:

(22) Jones does not believe that niggers deserve to be rounded up and imprisoned.

And if Jack wants to be fastidiously explicit about which evaluations are whose, he might utter the following instead:

(23) Jones does not believe of niggers that they deserve to be rounded up and imprisoned.

(23) makes it explicit that it is Jack and not Jones whose notion of black people includes negative and racist evaluations. (23) is, in fact, silent on the character of Jones's notion of black people.

So far, nothing I have said about *de re* ascriptions is inconsistent with the conventional wisdom about such ascriptions, but so far we have considered only *truncated* *de re* ascriptions. Precisely because they are truncated, such ascriptions are notionally neutral. Truncated *de re* ascriptions are not, however, the paradigm case. The paradigm of the *de re*, I claim, are *fulsome* *de re* ascrip-

tions. A fulsome de re ascription is one which specifies what objects are thought about, what is thought about those objects, and, at least indirectly, the notions or modes of presentation via which those objects are thought about.⁸ Fulsome de re ascriptions take many forms. The following is one such form:

(24) *a* believes of $n_1 \dots n_n$, of which/whom he thinks ϕ_1 'ly $\dots \phi_n$ 'ly that $\psi(x_1 \dots x_n)$.

where each n_j is a name and each ϕ_j (partially) characterizes, either directly or indirectly, some conception or notion of an object, and each x_j is anaphorically linked to n_j . We get fulsome de ascriptions from truncated de re ascriptions by adding certain modifying clauses. These modifying clauses are adjuncts rather than arguments, however. The claim is not that the sentences with which we make garden variety de re ascriptions are in any way syntactically or semantically incomplete or that such sentences are in some way syntactically or semantically ambiguous. The following are examples of fulsome de re ascriptions:

(25) Jack believes of black people of whom he thinks under the title 'nigger' that they all deserve to be rounded up and imprisoned.

(26) Jack believes of black people, of whom he thinks in derogatory terms, that they all deserve to be rounded up and imprisoned.

The availability of (25) and (26) shows that by making a fulsome de re ascription one can ascribe an evaluative content to another without thereby taking the relevant evaluations on as one's own. Because fulsome de re constructions are, by common measures, de re and not de dicto, it is not open to the ascriber who would distance himself from the commitments he wishes to ascribe simply to *use* the expressions which carry the relevant commitments. Rather, he must find some way of indirectly characterizing or specifying those commitments in his own words. Doing so allows him to *describe* the ascribed commitments, in his own words, without *adopting* those commitments, that is, without using expressions which carry those commitments.

3. The Case of the Inebriated Party-Goer

It may be objected that we have so far considered only a quite special case. It may true, one may want to say, that embedding an expressive-evaluative does nothing to put the ascriber's evaluations at semantic issue, but nothing follows from such cases about the embedding of non-evaluatives. In response to this worry, I offer in this section a softening agent of a different sort. Definite descriptions are the paradigm of expressions subject to embedding, but it turns out to be surprisingly difficult to use a description in a wholly notional manner. The difficulty of doing so is most vividly and directly illustrated by cases involving definite descriptions (mis)used referentially to refer to an object which

fails to satisfy the relevant description. But I shall eventually argue that these examples point to something quite general and systematic.

Suppose that Smith, Jones, and Black are working a party as bartenders. They are instructed not to serve anyone who seems to them to have had too much to drink. There is a man in the corner drinking martinis who has evidently had a great deal to drink. Jones mistakenly takes the man in the corner drinking martinis to be a woman drinking gimlets. With evident intent of alerting Smith to the man's state, Jones utters the following:

(27) The woman in the corner drinking gimlets has had too much to drink.

Smith recognizes who Jones has in mind. However, she does not realize that Jones has made a mistake about that person until she is about to report Jones's belief to Black. Because Jones thinks of the man in the corner drinking martinis under the description 'the woman in the corner drinking gimlets,' this description may be reasonably thought to partially characterize the notional content of Jones's belief about the person in the corner. Since the conventional wisdom would seem to suggest that embedding a description is a way of putting the ascriber's notions at semantic issue, it would seem to follow that if Smith wants to put Jones's notions of the man in the corner at semantic issue, she can do so by embedding the description 'the woman in the corner drinking gimlets.' But this prediction is not borne out by the facts.

Suppose that it is common ground between Smith and Black that there is no woman in the corner drinking gimlets. And consider:

(28) Jones believes that the woman in the corner drinking gimlets has had too much to drink.

as potentially uttered by Smith to Black. In uttering (28) in the imagined dialectical setting, it seems intuitively clear that Smith would naturally be taken not merely to ascribe to Jones a commitment to the existence of a gimlet drinking woman in the corner, but also thereby to impute that she herself accepts or endorses the ascribed commitment. Because the existential commitment which she would thereby impute to herself conflicts with what is already common ground between Smith and Black, (28) is not a dialectically or conversationally appropriate way for Smith to report Jones's belief to Black. So despite the widely acknowledged fact that descriptions are the paradigm of expressions which are amenable to embedding, it appears that embedding a description within a that clause does not render its use wholly notional. Embedding a description, that is, does not free the speaker from the existential commitments normally conveyed by the use of that description.⁹ But if embedding a description does not render the description wholly notional and so does not free the speaker from herself expressing the existential commitments normally carried by the use of that description, then the mechanism of embedding does not, after all, provide

an ascriber the wherewithal to use a description to ascribe to another an existential commitment that she herself does not accept.

Alternatively, suppose that there is a woman in the corner drinking a gimlet. And suppose this fact is common knowledge between Smith and Black. That is, suppose that Smith and Black both accept, and mutually know that they both accept the existential commitment normally expressed by the use of the description 'the woman in the corner drinking gimlets'. Moreover suppose, as above, that the person Jones intends to pick out by her use of 'the woman in the corner drinking gimlets' is not a gimlet drinking woman, but a martini drinking man. If Smith realizes that Jones intends to pick out the martini drinking man rather than the gimlet drinking woman by her use of 'the woman in the corner drinking gimlets,' (28) will again be a dialectically or conversationally inappropriate way of reporting what Jones believes about the relevant man. In the imagined dialectical setting, an utterance of (28) by Smith would invite the inference that it is the woman in the corner drinking gimlets who is believed by Jones to have had too much to drink. But Jones has no such belief in the imagined scenario and Smith intends to invite no such inference.

Again, it turns out that mere embedding does not enable Smith to put the description 'the woman in the corner drinking gimlets' on display as a representation or specification of Jones's way of thinking about the man in the corner drinking martinis. That description does capture an ingredient of Jones's notion of the man in the corner drinking martinis. The problem is that by Smith's light, Jones thinks of the man in the corner in an illegitimate manner. The manifest illegitimacy, from Smith's point of view, of thinking of the martini drinking man in the corner under the description 'the woman in the corner drinking gimlets' appears to render it dialectically impermissible to deploy that description in an embedded position as either referring, describing or tacitly specifying the notional contents of Jones's belief.

There are settings in which it would be conversationally permissible for Smith to report Jones's belief about the man in the corner via an utterance of (28). Suppose, for example, that Black and Smith are in doxastic agreement with Jones. Suppose that, like Jones, Black and Smith mistakenly take the man in the corner drinking martinis to be a woman drinking gimlets. If Smith and Black mutually know that they, like Jones, take the person in the corner to be a gimlet drinking woman, then an utterance of (28) would seem to be fully dialectical permissible. In such a conversational setting, an utterance of (28) by Smith would serve to convey to Black, partly as a consequence of the doxastic agreement between Smith and Black, information to the effect that Jones believes of the man in the corner, whom Jones, Smith and Black all take—they think rightly—to be a woman drinking gimlets, that he has had too much to drink.

But it would be a mistake to conclude that by uttering (28) in the dialectical setting just imagined, Smith both ascribes to Jones a commitment to the existence of a gimlet drinking woman and thereby expresses her own commit-

ment to the existence of such a woman. Indeed, there are reasons to deny that Smith has managed to ascribe any such commitment to Jones at all. Imagine a slightly different scenario in which the person Jones has in mind and to whom she intends to refer via the description ‘the woman in the corner drinking gimlets’ is, in fact, a woman drinking gimlets. Now suppose that although it is mutually manifest to Smith and Black who Jones has in mind, they, nonetheless, mistakenly take Jones to be mistaken. Though Smith and Black mutually recognize that Jones takes the person in the corner to be a gimlet drinking woman, they take that person to be a martini drinking man. Jones is right; they are wrong; but they are unaware of these facts. Now suppose that Jones utters (27) intending to alert Smith to the inebriated party-goer. From our better informed perspective, it seems evident that Smith would speak truly if she were to report Jones’s belief to Black via an utterance of (28). That, in fact, is just how *we*, who are in the know, would report Jones’s belief. However, (28) seems unavailable to Smith as way of reporting Jones’s belief. An utterance of (28) by Smith would impute to *Smith* an existential commitment that she manifestly does not have. Indeed, the apparently preferred way for Smith to report to Black what Jones believes in the imagined setting is the by our lights false (29) and not the by our lights true (28):

(29) Jones believes that the man in the corner drinking martinis has had too much to drink.

By Smith’s use of the description ‘the man in the corner drinking martinis’ in the utterance of (29), it appears that although Smith commits herself to the existence of a martini drinking man, she does not thereby ascribe such a commitment to Jones. Indeed, it is common ground between Smith and Black in the imagined setting that Jones mistakenly takes the relevant person not to be a martini drinking man but a gimlet drinking woman. We can even stipulate that it is part of the common ground that Jones takes there to be no martini drinking man in the room at all. Now Smith does, to be sure, ascribe to Jones what I will call a predicative commitment to the effect that a certain person—the person whom Smith and Black take to be a gimlet drinking woman—has had too much to drink. But in so ascribing, Smith appears neither to refer to nor to specify nor describe Jones’s notions of the relevant person.

By parity of reasoning, it follows that even where there is doxastic agreement between ascriber and ascribee, the ascribee’s notions of those objects are often simply not at semantic issue and cannot be put at semantic issue merely by the mechanism of embedding. When Smith utters (28) as a way of reporting Jones’s belief to Black in a context in which Smith, Black, and Jones one and all take the martini drinking man to be a gimlet drinking woman, Smith expresses her own commitment to the existence of a gimlet drinking woman, but she does not thereby succeed in ascribing such a commitment to Jones by that utterance. If the proposition that Jones is committed to the existence of a gim-

let drinking woman were not already part of the common ground in the imagined context of doxastic agreement, the mere utterance of (28) by Smith would not increment the common ground to include such a proposition. All that Smith ascribes to Jones by an utterance of (28) in the imagined dialectical setting, I want to suggest, is a proposition to the effect that Jones has a doxastic commitment to the effect that a certain person has had too much to drink. By using the embedded description, Smith presents *herself* to Black as cognizing the relevant object under the description ‘the woman in the corner drinking gimlets.’ Moreover, she offers up that description to Black as a vehicle for Black and Smith to achieve mutual recognition of the object that Jones’s belief is about. But she does not thereby use the embedded description to either represent, indirectly specify or refer to Jones’s notion of the relevant person. Jones’s notions are simply not at semantic issue in Black’s ascriptions.

The examples we have considered show that at least when definite descriptions are used referentially as a vehicles for talking and thinking about particular objects they behave in a quite similar fashion to expressive-evaluatives. Embedding an expressive-evaluative does not render its use by an ascriber wholly or even partially notional. Consequently, embedding does not serve to free the ascriber who uses the relevant expressive-evaluative from expressing evaluative commitments of her own. Just so, it appears, embedding a description does not render the occurrence of that description wholly or even partly notional. Consequently, mere embedding does nothing to distance the ascriber from the existential commitments normally conveyed by the use of that description. Just as a would be ascriber cannot use an embedded evaluative to ascribe evaluative commitments which are not her own, so an ascriber cannot use an embedded description to ascribe existential commitments which are not her own, at least not in the ascription of beliefs about particular objects. Our earlier discussion showed that there is reason to believe that the evaluative commitments expressed by an embedded expressive-evaluative cling tightly to the ascriber and never migrate to the ascribee at all. Our recent discussion suggests that there are reasons to believe that the existential commitments of an embedded description cling tightly to the ascriber without ever migrating to the ascribee. I want now to show that just as the machinery of fulsome de re ascriptions enables us to ascribe evaluative commitments across the notional divides that separate cognizers one from another so that same machinery enables us to ascribe existential commitments across such divides.

Consider again the case of the inebriated party-goer. Suppose, as above, that Smith intends to report Jones’s belief about the martini drinking man in the corner to Black. Suppose, in addition, that Smith intends via her report to, as it were, arm Black for interaction with Jones by making it explicit just how Jones thinks of the martini drinking man. Jones, recall, mistakenly takes the martini drinking man to be a gimlet drinking woman. Smith is aware that Jones is confused, but Black is not. If Smith were to report Jones belief by an utterance of (29), she would correctly and successfully ascribe to Jones a commit-

ment to the effect that a certain person has had too much to drink, but her utterance would convey no information about Jones's confused notions of the relevant person. She would not thereby arm Black for interacting with Jones. Smith needs a way both to ascribe the commitment just mentioned and to convey information about Jones's confused notion of Jones, without thereby committing herself to any of Jones's confusions. She can do no better, I suggest, than to go fulsomely *de re*. She might, for example, utter something like the following:

- (30) Jones believes of the martini drinking man in the corner, whom she mistakes for a gimlet drinking woman, that he has had too much to drink.

In uttering (30), Smith simultaneously: (1) undertakes, and manifestly so, a commitment of her own to the existence of a martini drinking man; (2) ascribes to Jones a commitment to the existence of a gimlet drinking woman, without herself thereby undertaking any such commitment; and (3) ascribes to Jones, also without herself undertaking, a predicative commitment to the effect that a certain person has had too much to drink. In so doing, Smith not only informs Black of Jones's doxastic commitments, but she does so in a manner that arms Black for interaction with Jones by explicitly conveying information about Jones's notions of doxastically relevant objects. All this is accomplished through Smith's exploitation of the machinery of fulsome *de re* ascriptions. And nothing like it, I claim, can be accomplished through the machinery variously on offer as explanations/replacements/analyses of so-called *de dicto* attributions.

4. On the Incredibility of Merely Notional Contents

So far, I have focussed entirely on the ascription of singular beliefs about actual existents. I have argued, in effect, that when the ascriber neither shares nor endorses the ascribee's notions of doxastically relevant existents, she may deploy the machinery of fulsome *de re* ascriptions to ascribe both predicative commitments and notional contents to the ascriber. She can do so by, as it were, offering those existents up for the cognizing to her interlocutors via descriptions such that it is mutually manifest that doxastically relevant existents satisfy the relevant descriptions. Once doxastically relevant existents are made salient in this way, the ascriber can then go on to specify, however indirectly, the ascribee's ways of cognizing those existents. And she can do so without thereby owning the ascribed predicative commitments and notional contents as her own.

One might reasonably conclude that the inoculating circumlocution of a fulsome *de re* ascription will be unavailable when no actual existents are doxastically implicated in the ascribed belief. Suppose, for example, that Jones utters the following to Smith:

- (31) The man in the doorway has a frightening look on his face.

Suppose, however, that there is no man with a frightening look and that there is no actual doorway implicated in Jones's belief. Suppose, moreover, that Smith realizes that there is no man x and no doorway y such that Jones takes x to be in y . Imagine that Smith intends to inform Black of the belief that Jones expressed in uttering (31) and that she intends to do so while explicitly distancing herself from Jones's bizarre existential commitments. Since no man and no doorway are implicated in Jones's belief, it is not open to Smith to offer up such a man and such a doorway to Black for the cognizing preparatory to mounting a fulsome *de re* ascription. Nor will a strict, literal utterance of (32) below achieve the intended communicative effect:

(32) Jones believes that the man in the doorway has a frightening look on his face.

A strict literal utterance of (32) would express a commitment on Smith's part to the existence of a man in a doorway, contrary to her own communicative intentions. But notice that if Smith uses indefinites rather than definites to characterize the belief expressed by Jones in uttering (32) she would not thereby express a commitment to the existence of a man containing doorway. Consider, for example:

(33) Jones believes that there is a man in a doorway who has a frightening look on his face.

Indefinites give rise to many puzzles of their own. For example, it is a well known fact that although an indefinite like 'a man' is not itself a referring expression, it can nonetheless serve to introduce novel subjects into a discourse. Moreover, in keeping with its subject introducing role, an indefinite can anchor an anaphoric chain all of whose links make reference to the newly introduced subject as in:

(34) A man just came into the room. He is tall and handsome. His name is John.

A speaker who produces a discourse like (34) would, if speaking in a "veridical" manner—that is, with the intention of conveying the strict, literal truth—thereby express a commitment to the existence of a tall, handsome man named John. By contrast, no such existential commitment is expressed by the ascriber who uses an embedded indefinite in the manner of (33) above. Moreover, it seems evident that an unembedded pronoun cannot have an embedded indefinite as its antecedent. This fact suggests that an embedded indefinite does not serve a subject introducing role.¹⁰ Consider, for example:

(35) Jones believes that a man in a blue hat is at her door. He has a frightening look on his face.

There is no reading of (35) in which the pronoun ‘he’ has the embedded indefinite ‘a man in a blue hat’ as its antecedent. Interpreted anaphorically rather than deictically, the unembedded ‘he’ must inherit its reference and/or existential import from elsewhere. But here the would be antecedent—the embedded indefinite—has neither reference nor existential import to pass on.

Admittedly, there does seem to be a charitable reading of (35) roughly equivalent to:

(36) Jones believes that a man in a blue hat is at her door and she believes that he has a frightening look on his face.¹¹

So construed, the indefinite ‘a man in a blue hat’ does appear to function as the antecedent of the embedded ‘he’. The ability of an indefinite in one that clause to function as the antecedent of a pronoun in a distinct that clause is a mystery worthy of serious theorizing. I suspect, but will not argue, that this ability is what might be called the notional correlate of the subject introducing role played by transparently occurring indefinites. An indefinite which anchors an anaphoric chain within or across that clauses serves, in effect, to introduce what might be called a purely notional discourse subject. Each link in such an anaphoric chain will itself have a merely notional significance—a notional significance which it shares with every other member of the relevant anaphoric chain. Thus in:

(37) Jones believes that a man in a blue hat is at her door. Smith thinks that he has a frightening look on his face.

the notional significance of the embedded ‘he’ is evidently determined by the notional significance of its antecedent ‘a man in a blue hat.’ Call a linguistic context within which indefinites serve to introduce merely notional subjects a notional frame. That clauses appear at least sometimes to function as notional frames. But they are not the only sorts of notional frames. Fictional narratives are another and paradigmatic sort. Consider:

(38) Once upon a time in a land far away, there lived a King. He was wise and benevolent. His name was Philo. King Philo had a beautiful daughter. Her name was Jasmine.

One who produces such a narrative characterizes a merely notional world in which a benevolent king named Philo has a beautiful daughter named Jasmine. In characterizing this merely notional world, one has not undertaken a commitment to the existence of a such a king and such a princess. It is tempting to talk here of *pretend* existential commitments and *pretend* reference to particulars. Such talk is unobjectionable, but it does not add anything deeply illuminating to our understanding of the peculiar linguistic character and function of no-

tional frames. Indeed, the direction of illumination is more likely to be the reverse. It is only by achieving an antecedent understanding of the peculiar linguistic character and function of notional frames that we are likely to achieve an understanding of what we are doing when we deploy the apparatus of singular reference in episodes of pretense.

Though the use of the apparatus of singular reference within notional frames to characterize merely notional worlds is a subject worthy of a great deal of further inquiry, it will suffice for current purposes to note that one who ascribes a belief to Jones using (36) does not thereby commit herself to the existence of a man in a blue hat with a frightening look. Both the embedded indefinite and its embedded anaphoric dependent function wholly notionally, solely to specify how things are in the notional world defined by Jones's beliefs. They do so without thereby expressing existential commitments of the ascriber's own. It is worth contrasting (36) with (39):

(39) Jones believes that the man in the blue hat is at her door. He has a frightening look on his face.

There is no reading of (39) in which either the definite description 'the man in the blue hat' or the pronoun anaphorically linked to it function wholly notionally. An ascriber who ascribed a belief to Jones via an utterance of (39) would thereby express only her own commitment to the existence of a man in a blue hat with a frightening look on her face.

These last examples show that even when an ascriber uses a definite description attributively with reference to no particular object, a would be ascriber cannot, via mere embedding of the relevant description, escape expressing as her own the existential commitments normally conveyed by the use of that description. To be sure, where no actual existent is doxastically implicated in the ascriber's belief, it would seem that the would be ascriber cannot resort to the circumlocution of a fulsome *de re* ascription to inoculate herself from the ascriber's commitments. But we have just seen that the ascriber can inoculate herself from the ascribed commitments in such cases by deploying indefinites, thereby going wholly notional in her ascriptions.

A caveat is in order. It is possible for an embedded definite to be anaphorically linked to an embedded indefinite where the embedded indefinite has wholly notional significance. When this happens the embedded definite may indeed have wholly notional significance. Consider, for example, (39'):

(39') Jones believes that a man in a blue hat is at her door and she believes that the man in the blue hat has a frightening look on her face.

With the definite anaphorically linked to the indefinite, (39') is clearly awkward, to be sure. The preferred way of expressing what (39') struggles to express is (36) above, in which the definite is replaced by a pronoun. But the awkwardness of (39') appears to be the result of a "nearness" effect. Consider

a discourse in which the indefinite that serves to introduce a notional subject is more distant from the anaphorically dependent definite as in:

- (39'') Smith: Jones believes that a man in a blue hat is at her door.
 Black: Is that why she looks so afraid?
 Smith: Yes. She believes that the man in the blue hat is about to beat her up.

Here the embedded definite is perfectly acceptable. Moreover, it seems intuitively plausible that Smith does not commit herself to the existence of a man in a blue by her use of the embedded definite. Rather, it would appear that her use of the embedded definite is indeed wholly notional in the present case.

Such examples suggest that when a definite occupies the right sort of place in a chunk of discourse it may enjoy what we might call *inherited*, as opposed to *original* notional significance. And it is tempting to conclude that a standard way to make a so-called de dicto ascription is by employing an embedded whose notional significance is wholly inherited from some embedded indefinite antecedent. If so, perhaps the de re/de dicto distinction should really be viewed not as a distinction at the level of individual sentences, but as a distinction at the level of ordered chunks of discourse. There is, I think, much to be said for this thought. I shall not, however, pursue it in greater detail here except to say that it too represents a substantial departure from the conventional wisdom. Moreover, I shall argue below that the fact that it is possible to use an anaphorically dominated embedded description with wholly notional significance should not obscure the fact that such use is called for only in quite peculiar conversational settings.

Now suppose we call the move of going wholly notional by deploying embedded indefinites, possibly together with anaphorically linked definites, within a (sequence of) belief ascription(s) indefinitization. At first blush, the availability of indefinitization may appear to undercut the centrality of fulsome de re ascriptions as bridges across doxastic divides. But the following considerations suggest that indefinitized ascriptions are conversationally permissible in only a narrow range of dialectical situations. Recall our earlier scenario in which Jones mistakes the martini drinking man for a gimlet drinking woman. Suppose, as before, that Smith intends to inform Black of Jones's beliefs. And consider the following indefinitized ascription as it occurs in the imagined setting:

- (40) Jones believes that a woman in the corner drinking gimlets has had too much to drink.

With the indefinite noun phrase read as having narrow, rather than wide scope, (40) is arguably true. An ascriber who ascribes a belief to Jones via an utterance of (40) would correctly partially specify the notional world defined by Jones's belief. Moreover, it seems clear that by indefinitizing Smith avoids expressing a commitment of her own to the existence of a gimlet drinking woman. Nonetheless, the very fact that Smith has indefinitized renders (40) less infor-

mative than it otherwise would be. For Smith leaves out the crucial information that Jones's episode of believing is *essentially* tied up with her taking the martini drinking man to be a gimlet drinking woman. It is precisely information of this latter sort that a fulsome de re attribution enables Smith to convey and to convey without expressing illegitimate existential commitments of her own.

The claim that Jones's belief involves a taking of the martini drinking man as a gimlet drinking woman *essentially* needs further argument. That argument begins with the intuitively acceptable premise that a belief is essentially individuated by its truth conditions. Consider again the belief Jones expresses in uttering (31). To the extent that Jones's belief can be evaluated as either true or false, some more or less determinate region of space must be implicated in her belief. Indeed, unless Jones has staked out a claim on how things are in some more or less determinate region of space in having the thought that some frightening looking man is in some doorway, it is hard to see what would make the having of that thought count as an episode of *believing* that a frightening man is in a doorway rather than merely an episode of *fantasizing* or *imagining* a frightening man in a doorway. It is part of the very nature of believing as opposed to imagining or fantasizing that in believing the believer undertakes a commitment to how things are "in the world." It is the very essence of believing, that is, that to believe is to take the world to be a certain way.

Now it is evident that not just any man and any doorway are relevant to the truth or falsity of Jones's belief. For suppose that there does exist a doorway containing a man with a frightening look in some region of space or other. Unless that very doorway and that very man are implicated in Jones's belief in the peculiar way that renders them doxastically relevant to Jones's belief, the presence of such a man in some such door is entirely irrelevant to the truth or falsity of Jones's belief. Similarly, unless there is some region or other of space which is doxastically implicated in Jones's belief, even the fact that no region of space contains a man in a doorway seems utterly powerless to render Jones's belief false. Jones's belief will be determinately true or false—and true or false of the world—just in case there is some region of space which she takes to contain a doorway with a frightening looking man in it. Her belief is true just in case that very region does contain such a doorway and such a man.

If we wish to display Jones's belief under, as it were, its truth-evaluable aspect, we cannot rest with the ascription of merely notional contents. We must ascribe referential content. By referential content, I mean content which is, as it were, bound down to doxastically implicated existents. We must, in effect, "de-indefinitize" our indefinitized ascription. This we can achieve by going fulsomely de re. In the present case, though there is no man and no doorway with respect to which Jones has a de re belief, there is, we have just been arguing, a region of space with respect to which Jones does have a de re belief. And the following ascription attributes the relevant belief in a fulsomely de re manner:

- (41) Jones believes of region R, which she takes to contain a doorway, that it contains a man with a frightening look on his face.

The foregoing examples suggests that when we characterize a genuine *belief* with singular purport in a wholly notional manner we have merely partially specified an object involving reality more fully and informatively specifiable by some fulsome de re ascription.¹² It is not hard to imagine dialectical settings in which such partial specifications are entirely dialectically permissible. But such settings will certainly be the exception rather than the rule.

Unfortunately, as soon as we state this last generalization, we are confronted with apparent counter-examples. Some apparent beliefs with singular purport seem not to be object involving at all. Consider, for example, the apparent belief that Pegasus can fly. Such apparent beliefs have a singular feel. One who apparently believes that Pegasus can fly undertakes an existential commitment, it may appear, not merely to the existence of some flying horse or other. In apparently believing that Pegasus can fly it is *as if* one has staked out a claim about a *particular* horse and *its* capacities. If Secretariat could fly that would not suffice to make it true that *Pegasus* can fly. There is, of course, no such horse as Pegasus. Arguably, there could be no such horse. So in apparently believing that Pegasus can fly, there is no actual horse and perhaps not even any possible horse about which the believer stakes out a claim. Indeed, one might suppose that *y* can believe that Pegasus can fly, even if there is no real existent *x* such that *y* mistakenly takes *x* to be Pegasus and *y* believes that *x* can fly. But just because no real existent need be doxastically implicated in apparent beliefs to the effect that Pegasus can fly, I shall argue that strictly literally speaking there really is no such belief. That Pegasus can fly is strictly speaking *incredible*.¹³

To deny the credibility of *that Pegasus can fly* is not to deny that the sentence ‘Pegasus can fly’ expresses a certain notional content. Nor is it to deny that such notional contents may be used either aptly or inaptly to characterize certain notional attitudes and notional worlds. We may even speak of a kind of “truth” here—what we might call notional truth.¹⁴ But we should not suppose that notional truth is a species of strict, literal truth. Notional truth governs play in what I have elsewhere called non-veridical language games. (Taylor, 2000) Fiction is a case in point. When we engage in the construction, consumption, and criticism of fiction, we play dialogic language games governed by a concern for getting things right, as things go in appropriate stories. But getting things right as things go in a story is not a matter of getting at a peculiar species of truth—truth in a fiction. Granted, we use such expressions as “It is true in the Holmes stories that...” or “It is true according to the Santa myth that...” But truth in a story and truth in a myth are species of merely notional truth, not species of literal truth. To be sure, such expressions may play a dialogic role similar to the dialogic role of genuine truth talk. The predicate ‘...is true’ functions in discourse as a device for claiming entitlement to make assertoric moves in dialogic games of inquiry, argument, and deliberation. One who asserts that *p* is true, for example, thereby claims an entitlement to put forth *p* as a candidate for mutual acceptance in a dialogic game of inquiry, argument or deliberation. Expressions like “true in the story” may also function as entitlement

claiming devices in dialogic games played among producers and consumers of fiction. But entitlements to make moves in non-veridical games arise from sources rather different from the sources from which arise entitlements to make moves in veridical games.

Someone who is disposed to defend the credibility of *that Pegasus can fly* while accepting my claim that beliefs are essentially truth evaluable may insist that there is, after all, at least one real existent about which one who apparently believes that Pegasus can fly stakes out a claim—the universe itself. One who apparently believes that Pegasus can fly stakes out a claim about *the universe at large* that it contains a horse of a certain description which can fly. It is false that Pegasus can fly, on this view, just because the universe at large contains no flying horse of the relevant description. But this leaves entirely unexplained the felt singularity of *that Pegasus can fly*. Any genuine belief, general or singular, stakes out a claim ultimately about the universe at large. A singular belief stakes out a claim about the universe at large by staking out a claim about a particular inhabitant of the universe. There is, however, no particular x such that one who apparently believes that Pegasus can fly thereby stakes out a claim about that very x . We might say that despite the singular purport of *that Pegasus can fly* it doesn't *succeed* in being singular. Still the singular purport of *that Pegasus can fly* does need explaining. To deny that *that Pegasus can fly* is genuinely singular is not to claim that it is existentially general. This is shown by the fact that even if some horse or other could fly, that would not suffice for the truth of *that Pegasus can fly*. Similarly, if more controversially, even though no horse can fly, that does not, I think, suffice for the falsity of *that Pegasus can fly*. It is more apt to say that *that Pegasus can fly* is neither strictly literally true nor strictly literally false. *that Pegasus can fly* is not, in short, the sort of thing for which the question of literal truth or falsity even arises. And that is why *that Pegasus can fly* is strictly speaking incredible. I hasten to add, however, that to deny the credibility of *that Pegasus can fly* is not to deny that there are attitudes which are aptly characterized as having the merely notional content *that Pegasus can fly*. Nor do I deny that there are notional worlds in which such merely notional contents are notionally true. But spelling such matters out is beyond the scope of the present essay.¹⁵

5. On the Notional Non-specificity of Embedded Names

I close by commenting on yet another phenomenon about names which has been widely but mistakenly thought to support the view that (non-empty) names have an at least partly notional semantic significance within the context of belief ascriptions. I have in mind the oft cited fact that co-referring names are not intersubstitutable in the context of propositional attitude statements. Consider the intuitively problematic inference from (42) and (43) below to (44) below:

(42) Smith believes that Hesperus is rising

- (43) Hesperus is Phosphorous
 (44) Smith believes that Phosphorous is rising.

Philosophers of language have been widely convinced, partly on the basis of the felt invalidity of such inferences, that the semantic contribution of an embedded name to the truth conditions of the containing belief ascription cannot be *just* its referent. Embedding is widely supposed somehow to endow a name with a degree of notional semantic significance in virtue of which an embedded name serves, by some means or other, to either directly or indirectly semantically specify, intimate, or designate the ascriber's notions of doxastically implicated objects.¹⁶ To be sure, philosophers have differed widely on just how the mechanism of embedding achieves this effect. Frege, for example, thought that embedded names undergo a reference shift and come thereby to denote the senses they customarily express. On this picture, the customary reference of a name drops out of the picture as not directly semantically implicated in the content of the ascribed belief. Many philosophers rightly find this aspect of Frege's approach highly counter-intuitive and agree with Davidson's charge that if we could but regain or pre-Fregean semantic innocence:

it would seem to us plainly incredible that the words 'The earth moves' uttered after the words 'Galileo said that' mean anything different, or refer to anything else, than is their wont when they come in other environment. (Davidson, 1969)

Still, the view that embedded names serve at least partly to semantically specify how things are by the ascriber's notions has proven very hard to shake, so much so that a fair number of philosophers have recently tried to have it both ways.¹⁷ They have labored mightily to preserve both Davidsonian semantic innocence and Fregean notional significance. Such efforts have produced several highly ingenious, but ultimately mistaken accounts of the semantics of belief ascriptions.

In my view, all such accounts begin with a misdiagnosis of the widely shared intuition that, to put it neutrally, the acceptability of statements like (42) and (43) need not guarantee the acceptability of a statement like (44). Our intuitions of the badness of such inferences have been widely taken to be intuitions about truth-value dependence and independence.¹⁸ I shall argue that such inferences really involve a kind of pragmatic infelicity rooted in facts about what I call dialectical dependence and independence. Facts about dialectical dependence or independence must be sharply distinguished from facts about truth value dependence and independence. To a first approximation, dialectical dependence and independence may be defined in terms of dialectical permissibility. *S* is dialectically permissible in the dialectical setting *D* at *t*, roughly, if given the "common ground" of *D* at *t*, the production of *S* in *D* at *t* would violate no norms of cooperativeness, perspicuousness, coherence, relevance, or the like which govern *D* at *t*. I will say that *S* and *S'* are **dialectically independent** just in case for all dialectical settings *D*, the dialectical permissibility

of S in D at t neither entails nor is entailed by the dialectical permissibility of S' . Even if S and S' are dialectically independent, they may be co-permissible in some dialectical setting D . I will say that S dialectically depends on S' just in case for all dialectical settings D , the dialectical permissibility of S in D at t entails the dialectical permissibility of S' in D at t . The dialectical permissibility of the conjunction of (42) and (43) neither entails nor is entailed by the dialectical permissibility of (44). So (44) is dialectically independent of (42) and of the conjunction of (42) and (43). To say this is decidedly *not* to deny that *truth* of (42) and (43) entails the *truth* of (44). Not every truth, and not every way of expressing a given truth, is dialectically permissible in any given dialectical setting at any given time. Indeed, I shall argue that it is possible that when (42) and (43) are both true and dialectically permissible, (44) may be true, but nonetheless, not dialectically permissible.

I begin by introducing the notion of what I call *the co-reference set* of a given name for a given agent at a given time. If a is an agent, and n is a name with which a is competent at t , the co-reference set of n for a at t is the set of names such that a accepts the sentence $m = n$. When m and n are such that a accepts $m = n$ at t , I will say that m and n are in-the-head-co-referential for a at t . In the head co-reference must be sharply distinguished from real world co-reference. Expressions may be real world co-referential, without being in the head co-referential. Moreover, expressions may be in-the-head-co-referential, without being real world co-referential. Finally, it is important to stress that co-reference sets are defined agent by agent and moment by moment. In particular, two referring expressions may be in the head co-referential for a given agent at a given time, but not in the head co-referential for either the same agent or some distinct agent at a distinct time.

In the head co-reference is defined in terms of *acceptance of identity sentences*. Though there is an intimate connection between acceptance and belief, acceptance, qua attitude toward a *sentence*, must be sharply distinguished from belief, qua attitude toward the *proposition expressed by that very sentence*. To believe the proposition expressed by a sentence is not ipso facto to accept that sentence. One who has no knowledge of English and its sentences can believe the proposition expressed by the English sentence 'The cat is on the mat' even though she fails to accept that very sentence. Conversely, to accept a sentence is not ipso facto to believe the proposition expressed by that sentence. One can accept a sentence even if one does not know which proposition the sentence expresses. Acceptance is itself a kind of belief. To accept S is to believe of S that it expresses some true proposition or other. But one can believe of a sentence that it expresses some true proposition or other, and thereby accept that sentence, without *knowing which* proposition that sentence expresses. Suppose, for example, that Brown does not know who Smith and Jones are. Suppose further that Black utters the sentence 'Smith loves Jones'. Assume that Brown takes Black at her word. She thereby comes to believe of the sentence 'Smith loves Jones' that it expresses a truth, but she does not come thereby to believe that Smith loves Jones.

To be sure, if Brown merely recognizes some further facts about the sentence ‘Smith loves Jones’ and its constituents, then even if she does not know who Smith and Jones are, there may be further, more articulated propositions, closely connected to, but still not expressed by, the accepted sentence, that Brown does come to believe in coming to accept ‘Smith loves Jones’. If she recognizes, for example, that ‘Smith’ and ‘Jones’ are names and knows the meaning of ‘loves’ then in coming to accept ‘Smith loves Jones’ she thereby comes to believe the further and more articulated proposition that the referent of ‘Smith’ loves the referent of ‘Jones’. But that is still not the proposition expressed by ‘Smith loves Jones’.¹⁹ If *S* expresses *P*, *A* accepts *S*, and *A* knows which proposition *S* expresses, then I will say *A* believes that *P* *via* acceptance of *S*.²⁰ I take it to be a plausible (initial) hypothesis about the contingent psychological connection between (explicit) belief and acceptance for creatures like us that if *P* is a proposition such that *A* believes that *P*, there is some sentence *S* such that *A* believes *P* via acceptance of *S*.

Armed with the notion of a co-reference set, we can give an initial statement of the following defeasible co-reference constraint on belief ascriptions:²¹

Defeasible Co-Reference Constraint: If a sentence of the form:

A believes that ...*n* ...

is dialectically permissible in a dialectical setting *D* at *t* and it is part of the common ground of *D* at *t* that *m* is in the co-reference set of *n* for *A* at *t*, then a sentence of the form:

A believes that ...*m*...

is dialectically permissible in *D* at *t*.

The co-reference constraint says, in effect, that belief ascriptions are defeasibly dialectically sensitive to facts about *ascribee* co-reference sets, rather than to facts about either what I call common ground co-reference sets or to facts about real world co-reference. The fact that it is *ascribee* co-reference sets to which belief ascriptions are defeasibly sensitive explains why it is not in general dialectically permissible to move from (42) and (43) above to (44) above. To be sure, when attitude ascriptions are sensitive to facts about ascribee co-reference sets, such ascriptions exhibit many of the hallmarks commonly associated with so-called de dicto ascriptions. But being sensitive to facts about ascribee co-reference sets is not the same as having notional semantic significance.

There are dialectical settings in which the defeasible sensitivity of ascriptions to facts about ascribee co-reference sets is overridden in favor of sensitivity to facts about what I call common ground co-reference sets. In such dialectical settings, belief ascriptions exhibit many of the hallmarks of de re ascriptions. In such dialectical settings, whenever:

m = *n*

is part of the common ground of *D* at *t* and

A believes that ...*m*

is dialectically permissible in *D* at *t*, then:

A believes that ... *n* ...

is dialectically permissible in *D* at *t*. For illustrative purposes, consider the following scenario. Daniel Taylor, formerly a practicing Christian, decides to convert to Islam. In the course of his conversion, he adopts 'Haazim Abdullah' as his legal name. Because he suspects that his devoutly Christian parents, Sam and Seretha, would be distressed by this turn of events, he informs them of neither his change of faith nor his change of name. He does, however, confide in his siblings, Robert and Diane, that he has changed his name, that he has converted to Islam and that Sam and Seretha are unaware of his conversion. As a consequence, it becomes mutually manifest to Robert and Diane that they, but not Sam and Seretha, accept the following identity:

(45) Haazim Abdullah = Daniel Taylor.

Suppose that some time goes by. And suppose that Diane wishes to inform Robert that Seretha has still not figured out that Daniel, that is, Haazim, is no longer a practicing Christian. Suppose that it is common ground between Diane and Robert that (a) (45) holds; (b) that Seretha does not accept (45); and (c) that she does not accept (45) because there is no name *N* such that Seretha is competent with respect to *N* and 'Haazim Abdullah' belongs to the co-reference set of *N* for Seretha. In the imagined dialectical setting, the inference from (46) below to (47) seems perfectly acceptable:

(46) Seretha believes that Daniel is still a Christian

(47) Seretha believes that Haazim is still a Christian.

Because it is part of the common ground that 'Haazim Abdullah' belongs to the co-reference set of no name with which Seretha is competent the inference from (46) to (47) generates, in the relevant dialectical setting, no imputation that Seretha accepts (45). Because of what is common ground between Robert and Diane an imputation which might *otherwise* be generated is simply forestalled. Similarly, because of the common ground of the relevant dialectical setting, the inference from (46) to (47) generates no imputation to the effect that (48) below is true:

(48) Seretha accepts 'Haazim is still a Christian'.

If I am right about the potential of facts about common ground co-reference relations to forestall imputations of acceptance that might otherwise be generated, then there is a quite natural sense in which an occurrence of (46) or (47)

in the sort of dialectical setting we have been imagining can be said to be dialectically governed by facts about common ground co-reference sets rather than by facts about ascriber co-reference sets.

It is easy to imagine dialectical settings in which the default sensitivity to ascriber co-reference sets is not overridden by any elements of the relevant common ground. Suppose, for example, that Seretha learns by listening to the news on the radio of the artistic achievements of one Haazim Abdullah, an Islamic poet of some renown. Suppose that she does so without also coming to accept (45). Indeed, suppose that Seretha would explicitly reject (45). And suppose that Robert and Diane mutually know that Seretha has learned of Haazim Abdullah's poetic achievements and that she has done so in a way that does not lead her to accept (45). Now consider the following ascriptions:

- (49) Seretha believes that Haazim is a very fine poet
- (49') Seretha believes that Haazim is not a very fine poet
- (50) Seretha believes that Daniel is not a very fine poet
- (50') Seretha believes that Daniel is a very fine poet.

as they occur in a dialectical setting with a common ground of the sort just described. In such a dialectical setting, (49) and (50) can be simultaneously dialectically permissible, while both (49') and (50') are dialectically impermissible, despite the fact that it is part of the common ground between Robert and Diane that Daniel Taylor is Haazim Abdullah. In such a dialectical setting, I claim, an occurrence of (49) would generate an imputation to the effect that Seretha accepts 'Haazim is a very fine poet' and an occurrence of (50) would generate an imputation that Seretha would accept 'Daniel is not a very fine poet'. Since Seretha does accept the relevant sentences, (49) and (50) are unproblematic. On the other hand, an occurrence of (49') would generate the unacceptable imputation that Seretha would accept 'Haazim is not a very fine poet'. And similarly for (50'). Hence neither (49') nor (50') is dialectically permissible. This is so, I claim, just because in the imagined dialectical setting, the relevant ascriptions are naturally interpreted as being dialectically governed by facts about ascriber co-reference sets rather than by facts about common ground co-reference sets.

Finally, consider a dialectical setting in which although it is common ground that *a* and *b* are not real-world-coreferential, nonetheless *a* and *b* are in-the-head-coreferential for the ascriber. Suppose, for example, Black recognizes that Jones accepts the identity statement 'Mars = Venus.' Suppose that Jones utters the following with evident intent to refer to Venus:

- (51) I see that Venus is visible tonight.

And suppose that Black intends to report to Brown the belief expressed by Jones. It seems clear that in the imagined dialectical setting, (52) is, but (53) is not a dialectically permissible way for Black to report Jones's belief to Brown, despite the in-the-head coreferentiality for Jones of 'Mars' and 'Venus':

- (52) Jones believes that Venus is visible tonight
- (53) Jones believes that Mars is visible tonight.

Indeed, suppose Jones utters (54) below rather than (51) above:

- (54) I see that Mars is visible tonight.

But suppose that it is mutually manifest to Black and Brown that Jones intends by her use of ‘Mars’ to refer to Venus rather than to Mars. It still seems dialectically impermissible to report the belief expressed by Jones via (53) rather than (52). Though Jones may mistakenly take ‘Mars’ to be a name for Venus, embedding is powerless to endow ‘Mars’ with the significance it has for Jones. But by now it will come as no surprise that there is a way to depict, within a belief ascription, the information that Jones uses ‘Mars’ as a name for Venus. One needs merely to go fulsomely *de re* as in:

- (55) Jones believes of Venus, which she takes to be called ‘Mars,’ that it is visible tonight

In the scenario just imagined, Jones’s confusion can plausibly be viewed as “linguistic” rather than “substantive.” But it also possible to imagine one who is substantively confused about the identity of the planet Mars. Suppose that Jones is an inept astronomer who fancies herself the first to realize that Mars and Venus are one and the same planet. Imagine that before her spurious “discovery” Jones is as linguistically competent as the rest of us. Like the rest of us, she uses ‘Venus’ to refer to Venus and ‘Mars’ to refer to Mars. Her spurious discovery no doubt rationally commits her to some serious reconfiguration of her notions of Mars and Venus. But it is not obvious that such reconfigurations would *ipso facto* cause her no longer to be numbered among the linguistically competent. Indeed, linguistically and cognitively speaking, Jones may, perhaps, be no worse off than someone who believes that Hesperus is distinct from Phosphorous. If not, then when Jones makes such bizarre post-discovery statements as:

- (56) Mars is Venus

she is certainly speaking falsely, but she is still speaking, and presumably intends to be speaking English.

Now suppose that Brown recognizes the nature of Jones’s confusion and wants to inform Black of Jones’s beliefs in a dialectical situation in which it is common ground between Black and Brown that Mars is not Venus. Imagine, for example, that Jones has uttered (51) above—with evident intent, again, to refer to the currently visible Venus rather than to the not yet visible Mars. It seems clear that Jones has expressed a belief to the effect that Venus is currently visible. After all, she sees Venus in the evening sky and correctly uses

the name 'Venus' to refer to the very object that she sees. On the other hand, since Jones also takes that very object to be Mars, it also seems right to say that she believes that Mars is visible in the evening sky. Jones would, after all, accept both the sentence 'Venus is visible tonight' and the sentence 'Mars is visible tonight'. Moreover, it seems arguably correct that Jones knows which proposition the relevant accepted sentence expresses. Consequently, it seems reasonable to conclude that both (52) and (53) are dialectically permissible, and even true, in the imagined dialectical setting. One might represent what Jones believes by (57):

(57) Jones believes that Venus is visible and that Mars is visible.

Notice, however, that (57) does not specify the character of Jones's confused notions of Mars and Venus. It does not depict, for example, the fact that by Jones's notional lights Mars and Venus are one and the same planet. It will again come as no surprise that the way to depict the character of Jones's confused notions of Mars and Venus, and to do so without owning the confusion as one's own, is to go fulsomely *de re* as in:

(58) Jones believes of Venus, which she takes to be identical with Mars, that it is visible tonight.

And there is, I submit, no mechanism by which a simple belief sentence can be made to say just what (58) says.

6. Conclusion

I have argued throughout this essay that embedded expressions do not in general enjoy any peculiar ascriber-centered notional semantic significance not enjoyed by their unembedded counterparts. The widely shared conventional wisdom to the contrary is, I suspect, the result of too sparse a diet of philosophical examples. If we feed ourselves a richer diet of examples, we see that embedding does nothing to either directly or indirectly put the ascriber's notions of doxastically relevant particulars at semantic issue. The way to put the ascriber's notions at semantic issue, at least in circumstances of notional disharmony, is to go fulsomely *de re*. Now I concede that that fact does not directly show that mere embedding fails to put the ascriber's notions at semantic issue in circumstances of notional harmony. But it does shift the burden of proof to those who would maintain that embedding manages to achieve a semantic effect in circumstances of notional harmony that it is evidently powerless to achieve in circumstances of notional disharmony.

To be sure, there is a widely endorsed class of positive arguments, with an ancient and distinguished pedigree, to the effect that an embedded referring expression *must* be playing some semantic role either different from or additional to its customary semantic role of standing for its reference. These vener-

able arguments one and all turn, I maintain, on a misdiagnosis of the felt invalidity of substitution inferences involving propositional attitude contexts. That misdiagnosis has led many philosophers of language to load explanatory burdens on semantic theory that are more properly discharged elsewhere. Contrary to much received wisdom, the burden of explaining the peculiar behavior of names and other referring expressions within proposition attitude contexts falls more heavily to pragmatics and less on semantics than many have imagined.

My arguments lend weight to the view that there is far less weight to the *de re/de dicto* distinction than many have supposed. At least where beliefs about particulars are concerned, many ascriptions commonly held to be *de dicto* ascriptions are really just a special case of the so-called *de re*. Many so-called *de dicto* ascriptions of singular beliefs are nothing but ascriptions made against a background of notional harmony. No doubt, there will be those who accept my arguments but who will want, nonetheless, to rescue or preserve some form of the *de re/de dicto* distinction. That may well be possible. Indeed, I have already allowed that it may be possible to reconstruct the distinction as a distinction at the level of ordered chunks of discourse. Still, I suspect that nothing but a kind of philosophical nostalgia motivates the attempt at reconstruction. And I suspect that even if the reconstruction can be carried out, the resulting class of *de dicto* ascriptions will be vastly smaller and less philosophically interesting than many have supposed. Moreover, I suspect that such ascriptions will typically not be the kind we make in real live conversational settings.

But however some imagined future reconstruction of the *de re/de dicto* distinction might go, the take away lesson of this essay remains that there is no deep or principled semantic difference between so-called *de re* and so-called *de dicto* ascriptions of beliefs about particulars. At least as applied to beliefs about particulars that distinction—or would be distinction—has no real basis in either the syntax or semantics of the sentences with which we ascribe such beliefs. Simple, unmodified belief sentences have no hidden or explicit argument place where a “notional specifier” might go. And contrary to the recently emerging consensus among many who have already taken important steps away from the wisdom of an earlier day, there is no pragmatic mechanism which can magically render the ascriber’s notions directly semantically relevant to the literal truth value of any such sentence. An adequate pragmatics cum semantics will no doubt draw many distinctions among belief ascriptions. Moreover, some of those distinctions will serve jointly and severally to capture various ingredients of what theorists have all along been trying, however inadequately, to get at via the *de re/de dicto* distinction. But it may well be that the *de re/de dicto* distinction *per se*, at least as more or less traditionally conceived, is best consigned to the dustbin of philosophical history.

Notes

1. I am grateful to Dagfinn Føllesdal and to the members of BAPHL—*the Bay Area Philosophy of Language Discussion Group*—for the extensive discussion of an ear-

lier version. Though their comments prompted a number of revisions, they should not be held responsible for the final product.

2. There are those who believe that although notionally neutral ascriptions do not “refer to” modes, notions, or the like, they do quantify over them. Kaplan (1969) is perhaps the locus classicus of this idea. For a relatively recent example, see Forbes (1990, 1996). No doubt, the various ways of segregating ascriptions into two classes crosscut one another in interesting ways worthy of philosophical exploration. But the ways in which they crosscut each other is not directly relevant to any argument in this essay. For a nice discussion see Bach (1994).
3. Along the way, there have been many widely discussed puzzles that have given rise to serious pause of one sort or another. Kripke’s Pierre (1979) is an intriguing primary example. Richard’s (1983) steamroller is another.
4. Brandom (1994) has endorsed something like the thesis I defend in this essay, but in the context of defending inferentialism in semantics. Defending Inferentialism is no part of my design. See also Burge (77). Burge suggests that de re belief “is in important ways more fundamental than the de dicto variety.” Though I do not think the distinction between de re and de dicto *beliefs* as contrasted with de re and de dicto *ascriptions* of beliefs makes any sense, I endorse the spirit of Burge’s remark if it is taken to be a remark about ascriptions rather than about beliefs. Indeed, I shall be arguing that at least as far as beliefs about particulars are concerned either there is almost nothing to be said for a de re/de dicto distinction or de dicto ascriptions should really be viewed as a quite special case of the de re.
5. Consider Crimmins (1995). There Crimmins claims that one way to understand the “muddled” concept of a de re belief report is as a report which is “notionally open” to use his phrase and he argues that such notionally open reports are rare indeed. In Crimmins (92), we find the following:

... We very rarely say merely what someone thinks or believes; almost always we add tacit provisos about *how* they think about the alleged objects of thought or belief. And the rules for adding and discerning these tacit provisos are driven by all the subtleties of conversational pragmatics.

Reimer (95), by contrast, argues that notionally neutral or open—and therefore de re—reports are prevalent. Crimmins and Reimer both talk as if the class of de re reports included only notionally neutral or open reports—though neither need be logically committed to this claim. Since my fulsome de re reports are both notionally sensitive and de re, I reject the identification of the de re and the notionally neutral. Brandom op. cit. seems explicitly to recognize that going fulsomely de re is, in fact, a way of being simultaneously de re and notionally sensitive.

6. I am not the first to reject some or all ingredients of what I am calling the conventional wisdom. Soames (1985, 1987a, 1987b), Salmon (1986) and Braun (1998) are clear cases. See also Bach (1997a, 1997b). Bach denies that that clauses (or their ingredients) semantically specify, refer to, or in any other way invoke notions, conceptions or modes of presentation. Unlike those thinkers, however, Bach holds that ascriptions which differ only by the occurrence of embedded co-referring expressions in what Quineans would call “opaque” position, may differ in truth value. Strikingly Bach thinks that there can be differences of truth value in such cases even where no syntactic/pragmatic/semantic mechanism serves to put notions at semantic issue. That itself represents a large departure from the conventional wisdom since those who endorse the conventional wisdom tend, by and large, to main-

tain that substitution failures are traceable to notional differences somehow due to the presence of the distinct, but co-referring embedded referring expressions.

It is important to acknowledge that many counted here as accepting the core commitments of the conventional wisdom have taken important steps away from the prevailing wisdom of an earlier day. Those like Crimmins (1992, 1998), Crimmins and Perry (1989), Recanati (1993), Richard (1990) who appeal to pragmatic mechanisms of one sort or another to explain how notions and their ilk are put at semantic issue in the ascription of beliefs generally agree that there is little, if anything, in either the logical syntax of the sentences with which we typically make belief ascriptions or in the lexical semantics of the verb 'believes' to distinguish the notionally sensitive from the notionally neutral. These thinkers might reasonably be interpreted not so much as offering alternative analyses of the *de re/de dicto* distinction but as replacing it with something else. For example, Richard (1990), who appeals to contextually variable correlation functions between RAMS to explain what we might call the notional variability of attitude ascriptions, is quite explicit in denying that there is anything about the *sentences* with which we make *de re/de dicto* ascription which supports the existence of either a logical-syntactic or lexical-semantic *de re/de dicto* distinction.

On the purely negative point that nothing in either logical syntax or lexical semantics distinguishes the *de re* from the *de dicto*, the notionally sensitive from the notionally neutral, these thinkers are, I think, entirely right. I advocate going one step further. Not only is there nothing in either logical syntax or lexical semantics on which to found a semantic distinction between notionally neutral and notionally sensitive belief ascriptions, there is also nothing in the pragmatics of communication to found such a distinction. So with Soames, Salmon, and Braun my rejection of the conventional wisdom is quite thoroughgoing. To be sure, Soames and Salmon believe that we do somehow pragmatically convey, without semantically specifying information about notions and their ilk. For a recent and intriguing account see Soames (2001). Braun (1998) has defended an error-theoretic account of our intuitions about notional sensitivity. These fellow travelers may for all I know wish to part company with my claim that by going fulsomely *de re* we can, after all, achieve semantically relevant notional sensitivity. It may also be that once the notion of a fulsomely *de re* ascription is on the table, the likes of Crimmins, Perry, and Recanati will find themselves in agreement with me. That would not be deeply troubling. Indeed, one can read my arguments as defending the claim that what Recanati (1993), following Schiffer (1977), would call a "complete thought content" is, in fact, ascribable, but not via the use of a simple belief sentence. If we want to ascribe a complete content explicitly, there is no alternative to the use of either a more fulsome sentence or an extended chunk of discourse that will, admittedly, have the feel of circumlocution.

7. I was first spurred to think about expressive-evaluatives by hearing David Kaplan (unpublished). But Kaplan, as far as I know, has had nothing to say about the behavior of embedded expressive-evaluatives in attitude contexts. The effect of embedding an expressive-evaluatives within the antecedents of conditionals has been fairly extensively discussed in the contexts of expressivist theories in various domains. For some examples see, Geach (1965), Sinnott-Armstrong (2000), Blackburn (1988), Gibbard (1990). It is no part of my aim to either attack or defend any form of expressivism here.

8. It is not quite right to say that the specified notions will in general be the notions “via” which the ascriber cognizes doxastically relevant objects. For it will often be the case that the relevant notions will be “illegitimate” in various ways and will not serve to connect the cognizer to the relevant objects. In such cases, we can view the ascribed notions as further cognitively relevant material somehow involved in the cognizing of the relevant objects, but not as the vehicles by which the relevant objects are cognized.
9. I suspect, but will not argue in detail here that the reason that an ascriber who uses an embedded description thereby expresses a certain existential commitment has partly to do with the semantics of ‘believes that’ and partly to do with the phenomenon of presupposition. Partly as a consequence of the semantics of ‘believes,’ the use of a description within belief contexts presupposes the existence of a unique satisfier of the relevant description. A number of writers have examined the presuppositional character of attitude contexts. Karttunen (1974), for example, claims that propositional attitude verbs exhibit the following projection profile for presuppositions:

x ATT that $_$ presupposes x believes the presupposition of $_$

from which it follows that

(a) x believes the king of France is bald

presupposes

(b) x believes there is a king of France.

Heim (92) and Chierchia (1995) offer discourse-theoretic accounts of the semantics of ‘believes’ which have this generalization as a consequence. Though this generalization may seem, at first glance, exactly correct for de dicto belief ascriptions, the examples considered in this section tend to undermine its correctness. For an account somewhat sensitive to the data like those on which my arguments turn, see Guerts (1998). Guerts distinguishes what he calls the e-principle from what he calls the I-principle:

(e-principle):

If V is a propositional attitude and $S\{\chi\}$ is a simple sentence n which the presupposition is triggered that χ , then (a speaker who utters) a V 's that $S\{\chi\}$ presupposes that χ .

(i-principle)

If V is a propositional attitude and $S\{\chi\}$ is a simple sentence n which the presupposition is triggered that χ , then (a speaker who utters) a V 's that $S\{\chi\}$ presupposes that a believes that χ .

Guerts argues, contra Heim, that the e-principle rather than the I-principle is correct. But in an attempt to explain what he calls the two-sided character of attitude contexts, Guerts defends an account which allows, in certain context, for the inference from a believes that $S\{\chi\}$ to a believes that χ , where $S\{\chi\}$ presupposes χ . See also Zeevat (1992) in which it is argued, in effect, the e-principle and the I-principle apply simultaneously. It is hard to see how we could ever make ascriptions across notional divides, however, if Zeevat's proposal was true.

10. See Chierchia, *op. cit.* for a discussion.
11. Compare this to so-called Hob-Nob cases first discussed in Geach (67). See also Chierchia *op. cit.*, Guerts, *op. cit.*
12. Bach (1997a, 1997b) argues that that clause describe rather than refer to belief contents. My view that certain ascriptions merely partially specify a reality which other ascriptions specify more fully is compatible with that element of Bach's view. With other elements of Bach's view I part company. Bach believes, for example, that belief sentences are "semantically incomplete." See note 15 for further discussion.
13. To say that *that Pegasus can fly* is incredible is not to deny that there are fully credible propositions in the neighborhood of *that Pegasus can fly*. See Taylor (2000) for further discussion.
14. In distinguishing between what he called real and "merely nominal" or "verbal" truth, Locke appears to be the first to have drawn something rather like my distinction between notional and genuine truth. Unfortunately Locke, like many who followed, seemed not to appreciate the centrality of notional truth to our play of non-veridical language games, nor how central a role such linguistic play occupies in our shared linguistic lives.
15. Consider the following remark by Burge, *op. cit.*:

If A gullibly believes that Pegasus was a (real) horse, the demonstrative implicit in the name occurs anaphorically, perhaps without A's realizing it, taking as antecedent some description, definite or not, in the repertoire of A or someone else. The name thus has the flavor of 'that Pegasus (whichever one they are talking about)'.

Though I reject Burge's claim that names are indexicals which can be anaphorically dominated by some antecedent, Burge has, I think, grasped part of the truth about names. A name which occurs within a purely notional frame will have a purely notional significance. It is tempting to say that such a name is used *as if* it refers to a particular object, without actually so doing. But again, I do not find saying this deeply linguistically illuminating.

16. An exception is Bach (1997a, 1997b.) Bach and I agree in rejecting what he calls the "specification assumption"—the assumption, roughly, that that clauses specify what I call notional contents. Strictly speaking, Bach's specification assumption is broader than my current target. Anyone who accepts that that clauses either semantically specify or pragmatically implicate notional contents accepts Bach's specification assumption. Hence, Salmon (1986) too counts as endorsing the specification assumption, since he holds that notional contents are pragmatically implicated rather than semantically specified. Despite rejecting the specification assumption, Bach maintains that ascriptions which differ only by the presence of co-referring names can differ in truth value. This is possible, he claims, because belief sentences are "semantically incomplete." As he puts it:

If substitution (of co-referring terms) makes no semantic difference, how can it affect the content of a belief report? How can substitution turn a true belief report into a false one? Part of the answer is that the sentences used to make the belief reports, though semantically equivalent, are also *semantically incomplete* (emphasis his). That is, they do not express complete propositions, and to that extent they are like such sentences as:

- (a) Fred is ready
- (b) Jerry has finished.

Though syntactically well-formed ... these sentences are semantically incomplete because of a missing argument However, lacking an argument is not the only way for a sentences to be semantically incomplete... . On the description view, belief sentences are semantically incomplete for different reasons. Like words, such as 'big' and 'short', a belief-predicate does not have a context-independent condition of satisfaction, so that a sentence containing it does not have a context-independent truth condition. A belief-predicate does not express, independently of context, a unique belief-property. (Bach 1997a. 228)

I reject this last claim. I have argued elsewhere (Taylor, 2001) that so-called semantic incompleteness is possible only where there are either suppressed or explicit parameters which demand, by their very nature, the contextual assignment of a value. I call the view there defended parametric minimalism. Bach and I agree, I think, that simple, unmodified belief sentences have no hidden or explicit argument place waiting to be filled by a contextually provided value. Here the two of us part company, I take it, with those who endorse the hidden indexical approach to belief sentences. Unlike Bach, however, I think it follows that therefore no pragmatic mechanism can make a belief sentence strictly literally say now one thing, now another, as a function of context. To reject this last inference is to reject the parametric minimalism defended in Taylor (2001). To accept this last inference is to accept parametric minimalism. This is not the place to settle the dispute between friend and foe of parametric minimalism. See Bach (1984) and Recanati (1993, 2001) for arguments against parametric minimalism. Recanati rejects minimalism altogether. Bach is a minimalist, but not a parametric minimalist.

17. Cases in point are Crimmins (1992), Crimmins and Perry (1989), Recanati 1993. Though Richard's (1990) does not really talk in terms of notions, his contextual restrictions on correlation functions between RAMS are, in effect, backdoor attempts to put notions and their ilk at semantic issue.
18. Soames (1985, 1987a, 1987b, 2001), Salmon (1986, 1989a, 1989b, 1995) and Braun (1998) are the most dogged exceptions. Soames and Salmon apparently believe that ordinary speakers themselves mistake what are really intuitions about pragmatic infelicity for intuitions about truth and falsity. Braun apparently holds that although speakers do have truth value intuitions those intuitions are mistaken. My aim here is to offer a re-diagnosis of our intuitions as intuitions about dialectical dependence/independence. To that extent, I agree with Soames and Salmon and disagree with Braun. On the other hand, although I do think that philosophers of language have by and large misdiagnosed our intuitions, I do not claim to know how "the folk" understand those intuitions. Nor do I think it matters. I am trying to understand the intuitions themselves, and what drives them. I am not trying to explain the folk theory of those intuitions and feel no compulsion to respect that folk theory, whatever it is. The bedrock data before us is that the folk find some ascriptions acceptable in certain contexts, while finding others unacceptable. I am after a theory that explains such patterns of acceptance, not a theory which explains the folk explanation of those patterns of acceptance. Explaining the folk explanations might indeed be a very good thing to do. But it's not the same thing as explaining the bedrock data themselves.

19. It is rather, one form of what John Perry (2001) class reflexive content.
20. I will not attempt to spell out in detail here just what it takes to know what proposition a sentence expresses. That is a job for a theory of understanding. No such theory is on offer here.
21. See Bach (1997a, 1997b) for defense of a similar constraint. He writes of a “presumption of identity.” And he claims that when the presumption of identity is “suspended” substitution of co-referring terms in attitude contexts will not preserve truth value. See also Fiengo and May (1998).

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