Chapter 10

Propositional Attitude
Ascription

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In the last quarter century, debate over propositional attitude ascriptions has centered on how, if at all, “modes of presentation” or “ways of thinking” of an object enter into the ascriptions’ truth conditions. What follows critically surveys that debate.

1

Propositional attitude verbs – examples are ‘believes,’ ‘says,’ ‘wonders,’ and ‘wants’ – are certain verbs which take clausal complements (e.g., ‘that it’s sunny,’ ‘whether it’s snowing’) as arguments. Propositional attitude ascriptions – sentences such as ‘Margaret believes that Tom is in Australia’ – are ones whose main verb is a verb of propositional attitude. Common to such sentences is that they ascribe psychological states (such as belief and desire) or speech acts (assertions, suggestings, and so forth).\textsuperscript{1}

Propositional attitude ascriptions (PAs) are paradigms of non-extensionality: replacing one sentence, predicate, or term following a propositional attitude verb with another with the same extension may change the ascription’s truth value.\textsuperscript{2} Someone may, for example, wish that the British Prime Minister would come without wishing that Mrs. Blair’s husband come. Truth value may apparently change even on replacement of an expression by one with the same (possible worlds) intension. One might, it seems, guess that Twain wrote a book without guessing that Clemens did; ‘Twain’ and ‘Clemens,’ conventional wisdom tells us, have the same intension, being rigid designators of one individual.

Whence this non-extensionality? The standard answer flows from the syntax of PAs. To say that a PAs complement clause is an argument is to make a syntactic claim, mandated by syntactic facts. Verbs of propositional attitude (VPAs) require complementation: ‘I believe’ and ‘I guess’ are acceptable only if elliptical for
VPAs accept a range of phrases as completions. You can doubt: that all men are created equal; the most famous claim in the Declaration of independence; Jefferson’s Doctrine; everything Syd said.

The syntactic claim suggests a semantic claim, that VPAs pick out relations. And PAs are so called, of course, because they are taken to ascribe relations to what (declarative) sentence uses say, to propositions. To say that Mary believes that snow is white is apparently to say that Mary is related by belief to the proposition that snow is white. On this view, the clausal complement *that S in x believes that S* picks out a proposition – presumably the one expressed by S when it’s not embedded under *believes.* But sentences which differ only in co-extensive expressions can say different things. So substitutions of co-extensive expressions in the complement of a VPA can change the truth value of a PA. Thus the non-extensionality of PAs.

If clausal complements name propositions, this comes to be the case compositionally: the expressions in the clausal complement are associated with things – *contents,* let’s call them – which determine (along with syntax) what proposition is named. If *that S in x says that S* names what’s expressed by S unembedded, these contents are naturally taken to be what determines what is said by utterance of S. And there is presumably a rather intimate relation between what determines what a sentence’s use says and the meaning of the sentence. The upshot is that there appears to be a close connection between propositional attitude ascription semantics and the specification of sentence meaning. No wonder there is so much interest in the semantics of verbs such as ‘says’ and ‘believes.’

What are propositions and contents? The two classical answers to this question come from Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell.

Frege 1892 answers the question with another: What accounts for the difference in epistemic properties of pairs of sentences, such as

\[
\text{Hesperus is Hesperus} \\
\text{Hesperus is Phosphorus},
\]

which differ only by terms which pick out the same thing? Frege’s answer is that associated with any significant expression is a “way of thinking” of what it picks out. (“mode of presentation” and “sense” are alternate names for ways of thinking.) Frege’s examples of ways of thinking are given using definite descriptions: The point of intersection of lines a, b, and c can be thought of as the point of intersection of lines a and b, or as the point of intersection of lines b and c. Given that the epistemic significance of a sentence is determined systematically by the senses of its parts and its syntax, and that for any object there are many different
ways of thinking of it, we have the bare bones of an account of why, for example, ‘Hesperus is Hesperus’ is trivial, while ‘Hesperus is Phosphorus’ is not.

What does this have to do with propositional attitude ascription? According to Frege:

In reported speech one talks about the sense, e.g., of another person’s remarks. It is quite clear that in this way of speaking words do not have their customary reference, but designate what is usually their sense. (Frege 1892, 59)

Likewise for reports of other attitudes: in

(M) Margaret believes that Tom is in Australia,

the clausal complement refers to what Frege called the thought that Tom is in Australia, the result of amalgamating the senses associated with ‘Tom’ and ‘is in Australia.’

To think that Tom is in Australia is to think about Tom and Australia. But according to Frege, in using (M) we do not refer Tom or Australia, but to ways of thinking of them. The relation one has to Tom in virtue of thinking that he is in Australia is mediated. One is “directly related” only to a way of thinking. The most dramatic differences between Russell’s and Frege’s accounts of propositions and contents are here.

For Russell, propositional attitudes are individuated in terms of the objects, properties, and relations they are about. Russell holds that there are beliefs “directly involving” Tom, whose ascription requires reference to Tom, not a way of thinking of him. Early on (Russell 1903), Russell holds that in principle any one can think such thoughts. By Russell 1911, however, Russell holds that only someone “acquainted” with Tom can think such thoughts. Since one is acquainted only with sense data, universals, one’s self and one’s mental activities, only Tom can think these thoughts. Thus, our apparent reference to Tom in (M) is to be explained away. Most uses of proper names (as well as demonstratives and indexicals), Russell claims, are “truncations” of definite descriptions. The thought Margaret expresses with ‘Tom is in Australia’ turns out to be something like that expressed with a sentence such as ‘My husband is in Australia,’ where the name is replaced with a description she would use to identify Tom, one involving reference only to objects of her acquaintance.⁵

As an upshot, the truth conditions of (M) needn’t differ at all on the accounts of Russell and Frege. For the sense of ‘Tom’ on Frege’s view might be given by the very description which, on Russell’s view, the name truncates.⁶ That this is so doesn’t undermine the rather dramatic difference between the views. In particular: If ‘Hesperus’ and ‘Phosphorus’ in

Ralph doubts that Hesperus is Phosphorus

function as ‘genuine names,’ and not truncations of descriptions, then for Russell the doubt ascribed to Ralph is the very doubt ascribed by
Ralph doubts that Hesperus is Hesperus.

Put otherwise: For Russell, there is a kind of term (“real” terms, not “disguised” definite descriptions) any two instances of which, when co-referential, are inter-substitutable within the clausal complement of a VPA. For Frege, since the reference of a term doesn’t determine its sense, the idea that there could be such terms is absurd.

3

In the 1970s, telling criticisms of Frege and Russell were made by Donnellan 1972, Kaplan 1989, Kripke 1980, and others. These criticisms seem to many to show that a Russellian account of content is preferable to a Fregean one.

Frege seemed to think that typical uses of proper names had the same sense as definite descriptions which the user would offer in identification of the name’s referent. Russell certainly thought that replacing a name with the description it ‘truncates’ didn’t affect propositional identity. Thus each is committed to something like the thesis that a speaker who identifies Aristotle as the teacher of Alexander says the same thing with each of

Aristotle taught Alexander
The teacher of Alexander taught Alexander.

As Kripke 1980 notes, this assigns the wrong (possible worlds) truth conditions to the first sentence: That Aristotle taught Alexander is something that would have been false if Aristotle had never taught anyone; that Alexander’s teacher taught Alexander is not something that would have then been false. Worse yet, the Frege/Russell view assigns the wrong truth values to a lot of sentences in which names are used, as many speakers will misdescribe the referents of their uses of proper names.

These problems disappear if we assume that (1) the truth conditional properties of (uses of) sentences are determined by what they say; (2) what is said by a sentence in which a proper name is used is to be individuated in terms of what the name refers to, not in terms of a way of thinking the user associates with the name. Many impressed with Kripke’s points about the modal properties of ordinary names and cognate points in David Kaplan 1989 about indexicals and demonstratives have assumed just this. One implementation of such assumptions adopts a broadly Russellian account of content, while jettisoning both Russell’s requirement of an intimate epistemic relation to the constituents of our thoughts and his view that proper names are “truncated descriptions.” According to such ‘direct reference’ (aka ‘Millian’ or ‘Russellian’) accounts of content, the content of a (use of a) name, indexical, or demonstrative is its bearer; of a verb, noun or adjective a property or relation.
On such views, sentences which differ only by co-referring singular terms – pairs such as

Mark Twain was a newspaperman
Sam Clemens was a newspaperman

– express the same proposition. These sentences clearly needn’t have the same epistemic properties for someone who understands them. Such views thus abandon Frege’s assumption, that what a sentence says determines its epistemic significance for the user.

These views are not without apparent problems. If the above sentences express the same proposition, and x assumes that S does nothing more than ascribe a relation between x and what S expresses when unembedded, then the ascriptions

(M) Jane assumes that Mark Twain was a newspaperman
(S) Jane assumes that Sam Clemens was a newspaperman

cannot diverge in truth value. But it seems obvious they could. Direct reference views require an enormous gap between the truth values of attitude ascriptions and speaker’s intuitions about these values.

A standard Millian response to this objection distinguishes between what a sentence use says as a matter of its semantics and what the use implies or conveys in virtue of extra-semantic factors (background assumptions, Gricean mechanisms, etc.). If a local answers my question, ‘Where’s a gas station?’ with ‘There’s a gas station down the road,’ what he says, simply in virtue of the meaning of his words, is that there is a gas station down the road. Of course, he conveys to me that there’s a gas station which hasn’t been closed for ten years. But this is presumably an “extra-semantic” matter, as witnessed by the fact that if said gas station has been closed for ten years, his utterance is still true.

Now, speakers don’t reliably distinguish the truth-conditional content of an utterance from “pragmatic accretions”: I would call the local in the example a liar, for having told me that I could get gas down the road. Perhaps our intuitions about the truth conditions of attitude ascriptions are the result of failing to distinguish what the ascriptions strictly speaking say from what they merely imply. Perhaps our intuitions about the truth values of pairs like (M) and (S) are to be explained in terms of our focus on the differing information such sentences may (non-semantically) convey. For example, when we know that Jane uses ‘Twain’ to name Twain, (M) conveys that Jane’s assumption is framed using ‘Twain’; this is not true of (S). Since it is thus obvious that normal uses of the two ascriptions can convey different things, we take them to (“strictly”) say different things. But this doesn’t mean that the
ascriptions *in fact* say different things, any more than my reaction to the local shows that his utterance was strictly speaking false.

This response has been discussed at length in the literature. (See, for example, Richard 1990 and Braun 1998) Among its problems is that speakers quickly pick up the distinction, between what’s strictly speaking said and what’s just pragmatically conveyed and can make what seem to be reliable judgments about whether something is semantic or pragmatic. But speakers don’t seem at all inclined to judge that, for example, (M) and (S) “strictly speaking” come to the same thing. A different response is given in Soames 2002. He holds that (ignoring context sensitivity) the meaning of a sentence is the claim its use always asserts. Thus, the meaning of

(T) Twain is wearing a red shirt

is the singular proposition the Russelian says it expresses. But this is not to say that uses of this sentence assert only this proposition. Background information and speaker intentions can bring it about that an utterance is an assertion, not only of what the sentence means, but of other claims as well. To adapt one of Soames’ examples: Suppose A asks ‘Where is Twain?’ and B utters (T), gesturing towards a crowd. We surely speak truly if we say

B said that the man A was looking for was wearing a red shirt,

for B *did* say that the man A was looking for was wearing a red shirt.

Now, suppose I have heard A and B. You know that B seeks Twain; you ask me ‘Did B tell A what the man he was looking for is wearing?’ I may correctly answer

(R) B said (to A) that Twain is wearing is red shirt.

I would not only thereby assert that B said that Twain was wearing a red shirt; according to Soames, I would thereby assert that B said that the man A was looking for was wearing a red shirt. I would also assert that B said that Twain, the man A was looking for, is wearing a red shirt. If the truth of an utterance requires the truth of what is asserted, this shows that the truth conditions of an attitude ascription needn’t be “simply Russelian.” My use of (R) ascribes an attitude involving a “descriptive conceptualization” of Twain. If this is right, then we can give a Russelian account of meaning and still allow that (M) and (S) can diverge in truth value.

There are problems. On Soames’ view, one always asserts the meaning of a sentence one assertively utters. Suppose that Smith is a competent user of ‘Twain’ and ‘Clemens,’ but only just now realized (as we would normally put it) that Twain is Clemens. If so, my utterance of ‘Smith just realized that Twain is Clemens’ is surely true. Smith did not just now realize, of Twain and Twain, that the first is the second. But the meaning of ‘Twain is Clemens,’ on Soames’ view, is the claim one realizes, iff one realizes, of Twain and Twain, that the first is the second. So either meaning is not compositionally determined (as the meanings of ‘Smith just realized that Twain is Clemens’ and ‘Smith just realized that Twain is
Twain’ differ, though the meanings of their components do not), or it is impossible, when Smith learns that Twain is Clemens, to (straightforwardly) say so without saying something false.

Soames (2005) acknowledges this problem and suggests that the meaning of a sentence is a “propositional matrix” – something like a proposition containing “gaps” waiting to filled by constituents. When a speaker assertively utters a sentence, her intentions and the context (typically) “enrich” the sentence’s meaning with propositional constituents; the result is asserted. For example, the meaning of ‘Twain is Clemens,’ is something like the singular proposition involving the identity relation, Twain, Clemens, and two ‘gaps’ which can be filled with descriptive material “presenting” Twain and Clemens. When it is mutual knowledge that Twain wrote *Huck Finn* and that Clemens was a newspaperman, an utterance of ‘Twain is Clemens’ might be enriched with the properties being *Huck Finn*’s author, being a newspaper man. If so, the utterance would express the proposition that the x such that x = Twain and wrote *Huck Finn* and the y such that y = Clemens and was a newspaperman are identical.10 The meaning of ‘Smith just realized that Twain is Clemens’ is straightforwardly composed from that of ‘Smith,’ ‘just realized’ and ‘Twain is Clemens.’ But a typical utterance of this sentence will be “enriched” with descriptive material presenting Twain and Clemens. Thus, a typical use of the sentence ascribes to Smith a “partially descriptive belief” about Twain, and not a belief in a simple Millian identity. So we can truly say that Smith just realized that Twain is Clemens.

This is vulnerable to the sorts of objections Kripke and others originally made to Frege and Russell. Kripke’s point was that whether what is said by ‘Aristotle was a philosopher’ is true at a world turns only on whether the person we in fact call ‘Aristotle’ is, at the world, a philosopher. But if I utter the sentence and “enrich” it with the property of being the *Metaphysics*’ author, what I say is false at worlds at which Aristotle was a philosopher but died before he got to the *Metaphysics*. Indeed, if I enrich the sentence’s meaning with the property of being the *Timeaus*’ author – which I might if the background assumptions in my context are erroneous – what I say might not even be true. Because of this, the amended account does not even solve the problem it is supposed to solve.11

I take the moral to be that while “modes of presentation” may be relevant to the truth conditions of attitude ascriptions, modes of presentation do not contribute to truth conditions of the objects of those attitudes. If this is right, then an approach such as Soames,’ which has these modes of presentation *truth conditionally* enriching what is said and ascriptions of its saying, cannot be correct.

A central use of attitude ascription is in the explanation, rationalization, and prediction of behavior. It is not clear that our explanatory practices make sense if these ascriptions have a Russelian semantics.
(J) Jane wants to avoid Sam Clemens; she thinks that Sam Clemens is in Room 12.

(J') Jane wants to avoid Mark Twain; she thinks that Sam Clemens is in Room 12

express the same Russellian claim. (J') in itself gives us no reason to think that Jane might avoid entering Room 12 and thus cannot explain why Jane avoids entering the room. So the Millian view seems committed to saying that (J) cannot explain Jane’s avoiding Room 12.

One response (Braun 2000) is that explanations are often elliptical, as when we explain Max’s illness by saying that he ate a wild mushroom. The explanation gives an aspect of an event which as a matter of contingent fact figured importantly in the causal etiology of the explanandum; simply to have eaten a wild mushroom is not in itself something which normally leads to illness. One might say the same of explanation by attitude ascription.

If explaining behavior via attitudes was by and large a one-off affair, this might be an adequate response. But our explanatory practice presupposes that quite generally, should someone want to avoid Twain and think that Twain is in Room 12, she will be inclined to avoid the room; analogously for instances of the schema one who wants p and thinks that if q then p will have some inclination to try to make it the case that q. This presupposition doesn’t seem to make any sense on the Russellian account.

Or does it? Many Russellians accept a psychological picture along the following lines.12 When an attitude ascription is true, this is because the subject is in a token mental state – a belief state – whose properties and environmental relations determine propositional content. Such states have aspects – call them representations – with a role reminiscent of Fregean modes of presentation. Representations “represent to the subject” what the attitude is about; they are shared by different states (so that a belief and desire may represent an individual “in the same way”). Believers are sensitive to their identity across states, so that when a belief and desire share a representation, it seems to the subject that they concern the same thing. A Russellian with this picture allows that something like a mode of presentation is involved in belief, but denies it a role in the semantics of ‘believes.’

A Russellian with this picture might say that all else being equal, when (J) is true, it’s made by states involving the same representation of Twain.13 Thus, ceteris paribus, when someone wants to avoid Clemens and thinks that Clemens is in Room 12, they will be inclined to avoid the room. Explanation of behavior via attitude ascription does make sense on a Russellian view.

Whether this is tenable depends upon how we understand the ceteris paribus claim (CPC) all else being equal, if A then B is to be understood. Braun 2000, whose proposal this is, says context provides “suitable conditions” for evaluating a use of a CPC; situations outside such conditions in which the claim fails are “tolerable exceptions” to it. (For example, a vacuum is not suitable for ‘struck matches light.’ So a struck and unlit match in space is a tolerable exception to it.)
A CPC is true in context c provided that the closest A-world in which (relative to c) conditions are suitable is a B-world. Braun claims that for a normal use of

(W)  Ceteris paribus, when someone wants to attract Twain’s attention and thinks they can do so by waving at Twain, they will be inclined to wave,

situations in which one’s desire involves one representation of Twain and one’s belief involves a disconnected one are not suitable situations; they are normally “tolerable exceptions.”

Braun gives three reasons to think this. (1) Given (W), ordinary speakers will first think of cases with a single representation of Twain. “So they tend to think of these cases (and only these cases) as “typical” or “normal.” But their judgments about typicality . . . partly determine the suitable conditions . . . So . . . the suitable conditions for the generalizations in [these] contexts include the [condition that the same representation be involved in belief and desire].” (Braun 2000: sec. 8) In response: that we first think of such cases makes them typical. It doesn’t follow that the other cases are atypical or exceptions. When Americans think about (W), cases involving Americans spring to mind; it doesn’t follow that (W) would be true if it failed to apply to Russians.

(2) Speakers recognize cases involving demonstrative beliefs and “mismatched” representations as ones in which the antecedents of the relevant generalizations are satisfied, but not as counter-examples. For example, told that Smith accepts ‘he [Twain is demonstrated] is sad’ and ‘if Twain is sad, then cheer him up!’, but isn’t inclined to cheer the demonstrated man, a speaker will think the case is “a “funny” case, one that does not really count against the [relevant] generalization.” In response: it’s not clear whether we think here that all is not equal or that Smith just doesn’t think that Twain is sad. Only if the latter is true is Braun’s view supported.

(3) If I tell you that Jo said ‘I want Twain’s attention. If I wave I’ll get Clemens’s attention,’ but she didn’t wave, you wouldn’t think that this falsified (W). We don’t find cases in which beliefs and desires involve unconnected (non-demonstrative) representations to be counter-examples to things like (W). In response: again, is this because we think all else is not equal, or that (W)’s antecedent is not satisfied? I would say the latter. In this regard, consider

(W’)  Ceteris paribus, if someone wants to attract Twain’s attention but isn’t inclined to wave, they don’t think they can attract Twain’s attention by waving.

A counter-example to (W’) is also one to (W). Now, suppose Jo wants to attract Twain’s attention, knows she can wave, but hasn’t any inclination to wave at Twain. We don’t think that all else is not equal, or that this is a “funny case”; we think Jo doesn’t believe that she can attract Twain’s attention by waving. Telling us that Jo accepts and understands ‘I could get Clemens’ attention with a wave’ isn’t going to dislodge this reaction; we think that if Jo believes she could get Twain’s attention by
waving, that’s a counter-example to \(W'\). We do take “mismatch cases” to be normal in the relevant sense. A Russelian account of attitude ascriptions is inconsistent with the explanatoriness of common sense psychological explanation.

Kripke raises three problems for traditional Fregeanism: (1) its account of the ‘modal profile’ of sentences containing names is wrong; (2) it mistakenly requires that speakers be able to identify the referents of names they understand; (3) it mispredicts the epistemic properties of certain sentences. Fregeans have given a variety of responses.

One might divorce sense and reference (Recanati 1993): Names have sense, which enters into what’s said, but sense doesn’t determine reference or truth conditions. This makes what is said a bit like a marriage of a Russelian proposition and a Fregean thought: the latter accounts for epistemic properties; the former determines truth conditions.

One might introduce a novel story about how sense determines reference (Evans 1982): it needn’t be in terms of “descriptive fit”; the relation between sense and reference might, for example, be broadly causal. As developed by Evans and McDowell 1984, this involves the claim that senses are “de re”: whatever they in fact present they must present.

One might “rigidify” sense (Plantinga 1978; Stanley 1997). If ‘actual’ is an indexical, then an actual use of ‘the actual teacher of Alexander’ rigidly picks out Alexander’s actual teacher, Aristotle. Perhaps the sense of a name for a speaker is that of the the actual \(F\), where the \(F\) identifies the referent for the speaker. This doesn’t deal with the problem about mistaken identification, but one might combine this idea with a novel account of name sense. Perhaps each person who understands ‘Aristotle’ has a body of information (a “dossier”) associated with the name; a user’s sense of ‘Aristotle’ is captured by the description ‘the actual source of this body of information.’ (See Forbes 1989.)

The proposals address Kripke’s complaints. Even if successful in this regard, there is a residual problem concerning attitude ascription. As the first Fregean observed, a name’s sense can be expected to vary across speakers. I think of Aristotle as Alexander’s (actual) teacher, or the source of information in my dossier; you think of him as the Metaphysics’ (actual) author, or the source of information in your dossier. We thus express different thoughts with

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\text{(H) Aristotle knew Herodotus.}
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So what exactly am I saying, when I utter

\[
\text{(Y) You think that Aristotle knew Herodotus}
\]
– that you think the thought I express or the one you express with (H)? The first answer conflicts with the obvious fact that I can correctly report the belief you express with (H) by using (Y). And the second creates logical problems, rendering the argument you think that S, she thinks that S, so there’s something you both think invalid; ditto for it’s necessary that S, you think that S, so you think something necessary.16

There is a response. (Isn’t there always?) One naturally thinks that if the verb ‘believes’ names a relation to a proposition, it is a fairly “direct” relation which involves having the proposition “in one’s epistemic ken.” Suppose this direct relation to be called Belief. Perhaps ‘believes’ actually doesn’t name Belief, but the relation one bears to p when one bears Belief to a proposition similar to p. If so, then my echo of your ‘Aristotle knew Herodotus’ in ‘You think that Aristotle knew Herodotus’ may be true even if my clausal complement names a claim different from the one you expressed: all that is required is that your claim and mine are similar in the relevant respect. If in addition the reference of a clausal complement is determined by the speaker, we have no untoward logical results.

Given that we can usually report what is said by non-context sensitive utterances by echoing them is, the similarity invoked here must vary with the context. One might well wonder how. But no matter what the answer, there is a fatal problem.

Let R be the similarity relation invoked in an utterance of

Lionel wants [it] to be [the case that he is] photographed with Michael

by Jody. Since R is a similarity relation, for any p, pRp. So on the present suggestion, if Lionel Wants what Jody expresses with ‘he [Lionel] is photographed with Michael,’ then Jody’s utterance is true. But now consider the following scenario. Room A is full of philosophers – Michael, Alex, Benjie, and so on. Room B is full of people – Lionel, Stephen, Kathrin, etc. – who want to have their pictures taken with a philosopher. Jody and I are orchestrating this: Jody takes a person from Room B, lets him look in Room A and point out who he’d like to be photographed with. I quiz Jody and decide on the basis of what I hear who gets photographed with whom. Jody shows Lionel Room B; Lionel (who has never seen any of these people) decides that he wants to be depicted with him (Alex) or him (Benji) but not with him (Michael). The following conversation ensues

Me: Who does Lionel want to be photographed with, Alex, Benjie, or Michael?
Jody: Alex or Benjie. He doesn’t want to be photographed with Michael.

Jody has surely spoken truly here. He has spoken truly even if (1) his sense for ‘Michael’ is the author of Consciousness and Cognition, and (2), Lionel has always wanted to be photographed with the author of that book. But (1) and (2) entail that Jody’s utterance is false, given the current account.17
Where does all this leave us?

When I see and recognize Marsha, my thought *Marsha is there* is integrated with the body of my beliefs and desires in a way in which it is not, when I see her without recognizing her and think *that woman is there*. It is natural to assume that something about the first thought, missing from the second, affects this integration. Call this something a *representation*. It is controversial but natural to assume that the mechanism underlying successful explanation of behavior via attitude ascription involves identity of representations across attitudes ascribed. Crudely put, beliefs and desires incline to action only if they share a representation. We are thus led to suppose that attitude ascription, explanatory of behavior as it is, invokes – via reference, quantification, or some more arcane method – the representations of those to whom attitudes are ascribed.

What are representations? Token mental states (‘dossiers of information,’ ‘vivid names,’ ‘lexical entries’)? Aspects of mental organization (functional roles of one sort or another)? Links between thinker and world? Something else? I duck this question, limping along with the functional characterization of section V: representations are aspects of attitudes which may be shared by different token mental states – so the states represent an individual “in the same way” – with believers sensitive to representational identity across states. I assume that representations contribute nothing to truth conditions beyond what is represented. For the unacceptable alternative is to allow the descriptive (mis-)information associated with a representation to contribute to truth conditions.

Thau 2002 denies that representations so conceived have much to do with the attitudes or their ascription. If one is going to invoke representations in an account of the attitudes, he says, they should help explain how sentences with the same Russellian content can have different epistemic properties; they must, that is, aid in a solution to “Frege’s Puzzle.” If they do, Thau suggests, it is because information is individuated not just in terms of truth conditions, but in terms of representations: To come to accept ‘Twain is dead’ must be to get information one did not already have in virtue of accepting ‘Clemens is dead.’

Thau is suspicious of such a view, for “whenever someone gets new information in virtue of accepting some sentence, he also gains a belief that differs from any of his old beliefs with respect to its” truth-conditional content. (Thau 2002: 127) Indeed, says Thau, “whatever the significance of the new information” one gets, one gets “information that is new with respect to its [truth conditional] content that is equally significant” (2002: 128). Why? Consider Nora, who accepts ‘Twain wrote *Huck Finn*’ and ‘Clemens was a newspaperman,’ but doesn’t know that *Huck Finn*’s author was a newspaperman. If she accepts ‘Twain was Clemens,’ she gains new information, that she might express with ‘Twain was a newspaper man.’ Now the truth-conditional content of this is that Clemens was a newspaperman, something she already knew. But
the significance of the new information for Nora is that of the truth-conditionally novel claim that Twain, who wrote *Huck Finn*, was a newspaper man.

Thau’s hunch is that if we don’t need to appeal to representations to individuate information, we don’t need to appeal to them to explain behavior. And if we don’t need to then we probably don’t. I agree with the two conditionals. But I think Thau is wrong about individuating information.

Nora could have another way to refer to Twain – ‘Bob,’ say – unconnected with ‘Twain’ and ‘Clemens.’ She might, under this name, *already* have beliefs with the truth conditional content of the beliefs she acquires when she comes to accept ‘Twain is Clemens.’ She might have acquired these beliefs in a way in which it is not at all obvious that they are beliefs about the men she knows as ‘Twain’ or ‘Clemens.’ For example, she might have learned that *this novel* (*Huck Finn* is demonstrated) was written by Bob, and that Bob was a newspaperman. If so, then it is *not* news to Nora, at least not in terms of truth conditions, that Twain, who wrote *Huck Finn*, was a newspaperman: she already knew of him that he had both properties. With sufficient stage setting, we can give Nora other beliefs about Bob (e.g., that he has a name that is spelled m-a-r-k-space-t-w-a-i-n) in such a way that she need not see that the beliefs are ones which concern Mark Twain or Sam Clemens. 19

It seems implausible to think that the new information Nora acquires in

Case I: Nora comes to accept ‘Twain is Clemens’ and *does not* have a store of disconnected information about Twain labeled ‘Bob’

is different from that she acquires in

Case II: Nora comes to accept ‘Twain is Clemens’ and *does* have a store of disconnected information about Twain labeled ‘Bob.’

But if the information in question is the same in both cases, then the new information acquired in Case I cannot be what Thau takes it to be. It cannot, for example, be identified with the Russellian claim that Twain, *Huck Finn’s* author, was a newspaperman – for this is something Nora already believes in Case II. We do, after all, have to appeal to representations in individuating information.

How are representations involved in the semantics of attitude ascription? We don’t overtly refer to or quantify over them. There is no evidence of syntactic but covert, unphonicized reference or quantification to them. Could there be such reference or quantification simply in virtue of the intentions, dispositions, or other mental states of attitude ascribers? So say John Perry and Mark Crimmins (Crimmins and Perry 1989; Crimmins 1992). They claim that unembedded, ‘Twain is younger
than Clemens’ expresses a Russellian proposition P whose constituents are Twain, the younger than relation, and Twain. But when one embeds the sentence in

\[(M) \text{ Marsha believes that Twain is younger than Clemens,}\]

one may “tacitly refer” to Marsha’s representations of Twain and the relation, somewhat in the way in which one tacitly refers to a location in uttering ‘it’s snowing,’ or to normal conditions when one says ‘struck matches light.’ \((M)\) then says that Marsha believes P via a state involving the representations referred to. In some cases, one does not refer to particular representations, but to representational kinds, saying that Marsha believes P by being a state involving the relevant kind of representation.\(^{20}\)

Stephen Schiffer 1992 objects: (1) One means p (or refers to x) only if one intends that one’s audience recognize that fact. Thus on the Perry/Crimmins account, (2) when one utters \((M)\) there must be representational kinds or particulars one means to say Marsha deploys in her belief. But (3) on any plausible story, there will be many representations involved in realizing a belief, and countless types of such. None will be consciously intended by the speaker to be recognized as meant or referred to, no one of them will be more salient than the others. So it’s implausible that speakers have the intentions referred to in (2).

In thinking about this objection, we do well to consider gradable adjectives, such as ‘red,’ ‘rich,’ and ‘round.’ Almost all think these contextually sensitive, in that their proper interpretation – what property they express – varies across contexts. But that doesn’t mean that whenever someone uses such a word there is a single property he intends the word to express, or expects the audience to recognize as meant. Our intentions, when we say ‘that’s red,’ just aren’t finely enough honed to determine one resolution of the vagueness of ‘red’ over another. Neither are our intentions determinate enough to fix a particular vague or fuzzy property. When a speaker calls something ‘red,’ her intentions determine a vague range of candidate interpretations for the adjective.\(^{21}\) \(There\) is no particular proposition which the speaker means, since there is no particular property which the speaker means to ascribe.

Should we conclude that adjectives meanings are not (aptly represented as) rules mapping speaker intentions to properties? No! We should conclude that we can communicate while only imperfectly exploiting the semantics of our expressions. The point holds of other context sensitive expressions. For example, it is the exception, not the rule, that uses of ‘here’ pick out a determinate location.

This holds of ‘believes’ if it involves (tacit) quantification over representations or types thereof. Sometimes a speaker won’t mean to restrict quantification over representations in any significant way; in that case something definite will be said. Sometimes the speaker will be focused on some aspect or aspects of the way the ascribee represents the world. Then there will be a range of candidates for the quantifier’s restriction. It will usually be clear enough what sort – i.e., what vaguely delineated range of sorts – of representations a speaker (presupposes her audience will think she) has in mind. The mere choice of words (‘Twain’ instead of ‘Clemens’) can signal this.
Why should anything more need to be true? Whoever thought that it was always
determinate, as to what is the restriction in a tacitly restricted quantification, anyway?

Of course, if ‘believes’ does involve quantification over representations, anyone
who understands it must know that in intending to ascribe belief, one is trying to
convey something about types of representations. To understand the term is to
know (something which makes manifest) that in saying that someone believes so
and such, one makes a claim whose explicit representation involves quantifying over
representations. A speaker uttering (M) would typically have to intend to make a
claim to the effect that there are certain types of representations T and T’ such that
(1) Marsha believes that Twain is older than Clemens, and (2) she uses instances of
these to represent Twain in framing her belief. But there isn’t evidence that speakers
have any such intentions that I am aware of. As I observed above, there certainly isn’t
syntactic evidence, evidence of the sort which makes it well nigh indisputable that
there is something in the logical form of ‘Mary wants to go home’ which plays the
role of the subject of the infinitive phrase ‘to go home.’ 22 For this reason alone, I am
inclined to think that Perry and Crimmins’ account is unacceptable. 23

9

If in attitude ascription we do not advert to representations by referring to or
have defended the view that ascribing an attitude is a sort of translation: what
makes my use of (M) true is that something which realizes one of Marsha’s belief is
well translated into my idiom with ‘Twain is older than Clemens.’ Representations
are what realize attitudes; thus, it is they which are translated. It is because we are
adequately translating such when we correctly ascribe attitudes that representa-
tions are involved in an account of the truth conditions of ascriptions. One can, of
course, translate from one idiom to another without referring to or quantifying
over the words or sentences of the idiom; if Mullet says to you ‘tu es dégelasse,’
and you ask me to translate, I do so by simply saying ‘he said you disgust him.’ In
doing so I refer to him and you, but not to his words.

I will sketch how I think this idea ought to be fleshed out. Then I turn to some
objections.24 Suppose I am utter (M) because I hear Marsha say ‘Twain is older than
Clemens.’ Focused on how she expresses what she thinks, my uses of names represent
her mental tokenings thereof. For the purposes of ascribing beliefs to Marsha, I have
adopted a partial “translation manual”, which we might display so:

(T1) Marsha: ‘Twain’ → ‘Twain’
    ‘Clemens’ → ‘Clemens’

Translation requiring reference to remain the same, the first line of our manual
abbreviates: In rendering Marsha’s representations, my ‘Twain’ used as a name of
Twain can translate only Marsha’s uses of ‘Twain’ as a name of Twain.25
I may use different manuals for different people. If I know the woman in
the corner sees Twain, I might use ‘he,’ referring to Twain, to render her perceptual
representations or tokenings of ‘that man over there.’ I might render her token-
ings of both ‘Clemens’ and ‘Twain’ indifferently with my uses of ‘Twain’ or
‘Clemens.’ (I might do so if, for example, I take her to accept ‘Twain is Clemens.’)
If my task is to speak of Marsha and this other woman, my translation manual
contains (T1) and

\[(T2) \quad \text{the woman in the corner:} \]
\[ \begin{align*}
  \text{‘he’} & \rightarrow \text{‘that man over there,’ the woman’s perceptions of Twain} \\
  \text{‘Clemens’} & \rightarrow \text{‘Twain,’ ‘Clemens’} \\
  \text{‘Twain’} & \rightarrow \text{‘Twain,’ ‘Clemens’}
\end{align*} \]

(T2) indicates that in speaking of the woman in the corner, my ‘he’ (as name of
Twain) may represent a representation r iff it is of one of the sorts indicated after
the arrow, and that my uses of ‘Clemens’ or ‘Twain’ translate (only) her uses of
(either of) those names.

My manual says nothing about translating Marsha’s ‘is older than,’ or her uses
of ‘is cleverer than,’ or the woman in the corner’s perceptual representations of my
nose, or . . . When no such rules are in effect, we can translate the idiom of another
in any way we please – so long as we preserve reference (i.e., Russellian content).

Pretend, for simplicity, that representations are mental tokens of English sen-
tences, so the representation that determines Marsha’s belief, that Twain is older
than Clemens, is the English sentence ‘Twain is older than Clemens.’ Its (relevant)
parts are ‘Twain,’ ‘is older than,’ and ‘Clemens.’ This sentence determines a
Russellian content which, let us assume, is the tuple \(< \text{the being older than relation}, <\text{Twain, Clemens}>> >. Focus on the fusion of this Russellian content
and the parts of ‘Twain is older than Clemens’ which contribute the parts of
the proposition – i.e., \(<< \text{‘being older than,’ the being older than relation}>,
<<\text{‘Twain,’ Twain}, <\text{‘Clemens,’ Clemens}>> >>. \) Call these sorts of things sen-
tential propositions, their representation/value pairs words.26

Both mental representations and English sentences determine sentential proposi-
tions. The translation rules introduced above are rules which restrict what words in a
believer’s sentential propositions the words in a belief ascrimer’s sentential proposi-
tions can translate. Let a translation function be a mapping \( f \) from English words (i.e.,
expression/value pairs) to the words which may occur in X’s sentential propositions.
When \( p \) is a sentential proposition determined by an English sentence and \( q \) the result
of replacing each word \( w \) in \( p \) with \( f(w) \), say that \( f(p) = q \). Say \( f \) is acceptable for \( X \) in
context \( c \) provided it preserves reference \( (f(<a,b>) = <a, ‘b’>) \) only when \( b \) is \( b’ \),
and it obeys all the translation rules in effect in \( c \) concerning \( X \). An English sentence
(properly: the sentential proposition \( p \) determined by \( S \)) \( S \) is an acceptable translation in
\( c \) of a representation \( R \) of \( X \)’s (properly: the sentential proposition \( q \) determined by \( R \))
provided \( f(p) = q \), for some translation function \( f \) acceptable for \( X \) in \( c \). And a belief
ascription \( X \ believes \ that \ S \) is true in a context provided (the sentential proposition
determined in \( c \) by) \( S \) is an acceptable translation for \( X \) in \( c \) of some belief making representation of \( X \)’s. Analogously, for other propositional attitude verbs.

An example. We are at Barnes and Noble, waiting for Clemens to show up for an autograph session. Everyone knows that Twain is Clemens, though not everyone knows what he looks like. Someone enters, and the person next to us whispers ‘That’s Clemens!.’ People fall silent as they realize the great man has arrived. The woman in the corner, though obviously aware of the man (Twain) who has entered keeps talking. I might turn to you and say

(W1) That woman doesn’t realize that he (I gesture at Twain) is Clemens.

What I say seems true, though it seems it wouldn’t be right, in this situation, to say that ‘that woman doesn’t realize that Twain is Clemens.’ We may suppose that the representations which the woman ‘realizes-true’ are

that man is that man
Twain is Twain
Twain is Clemens.

Given (T2), my use of ‘he is Clemens’ cannot translate any of these, since ‘he’ only translates the woman’s demonstrative references to Clemens, ‘Clemens’ only translates ‘Clemens’ and ‘Twain.’ Thus, ‘that woman realizes that he is Clemens’ is false, and thus what I say is true. But, of course, I would speak truly, if I were to say ‘that woman realizes that Twain is Clemens,’ since my use of ‘Twain is Clemens’ translates her use thereof.

Let us discuss some objections.

Soames (2001: 159–203) gives an extensive and helpful critical discussion of this view. According to Soames, the “most revealing … problem” with the view is that it “misidentifies the basis of our reluctance to substitute coreferential names … in belief ascriptions”; that basis, says, Soames, is that “the relevant ascriptions would naturally be taken to attribute descriptively different” beliefs. (171) The problem, as Soames sees it, is that the account explains our intuitions that (W1) and

(W2) That woman doesn’t realize that Twain is Clemens

differ in truth value in terms of a difference in how we are to “translate” the “words” of the woman. But the reason we feel that moving from (W1) to (W2) doesn’t preserve truth is, Soames thinks, that we take the two ascriptions to come to something like
That woman doesn’t realize that that man, the man over there, is Clemens, the author.
That woman doesn’t realize that Twain, the author, is Clemens, the author.

Soames is just wrong on one straightforward interpretation of what it is to “attribute descriptively different beliefs.” Suppose that my rules for rendering the woman’s idiom are as follows:

(T3) the woman:
   ‘he’ → representations which the woman associates with the property of being the man over there
   ‘Twain,’ ‘Clemens’ → representations which the woman associates with the property of being Huck Finn’s author.

Then to utter (W1) is to say something true only if the woman fails to represent Twain as a person over there who is an author. (W2) is true if and only if the woman fails to represent Twain (as author) as identical with Twain (as author). Surely the difference here is, inter alia, that descriptively different (collections of) beliefs are being ascribed to Smith.

Now, I have not been altogether fair to Soames. I have accurately conveyed Soames’ official description of his worry, but not conveyed his real worry. For he concedes that the response just made is possible. But he thinks the way in which the proposal captures the fact that pairs of ascriptions like (W1) and (W2) ascribe attitudes with different descriptive contents is indirect, complicated, and theoretically contentious. Do ordinary speakers really intend to commit themselves to claims about the languages or internal mental representations used by agents to which they typically ascribe beliefs? Are the descriptive contents of the beliefs that ordinary speakers attribute to agents when assertively uttering ascriptions like [‘Hammurabi believed that Phosphorus was not visible in the evening’] really mediated by complicated assumptions (sufficient to account for Pederweski-type cases) about the expressions or mental representations used by agents? (Soames 2001, 170)

The questions get their rhetorical force from their suggestion that on my view speakers commit themselves to claims about internal representations, that they make assumptions about such – that speakers have a heavy intentional commitment to a theory about representations.

Is it really that contentious that people discussing the ancient beliefs about the heavens mutually presuppose that the ancients had two ways of representing Venus, one associated with one celestial position and translated ‘Hesperus,’ the other associated with another position and translated ‘Phosphorus’? Surely not. Speakers who know enough to use ‘Hesperus’ and ‘Phosphorus’ know these things. They know that others know them. Does the idea – that our intuitions about the truth conditions of belief ascriptions track our beliefs about such
representations, so that the words in such ascriptions are proxies for the presupposed representations – make attitude ascription an “indirect and complicated” affair? Frankly, the “complexity” here seems about on the order of what is involved in getting from Pierre’s utterance of ‘you drank domestic wine yesterday’ to the content sentence of ‘Pierre said that I drank French wine Thursday.’ Humdrum interpretation of context sensitive speech obviously involves a “translation” of one idiom into another. Such translation is, of course, largely unconscious, but that doesn’t mean that it doesn’t occur.

It should be uncontroversial that we routinely make presuppositions about how others represent the world, keeping track of their representations by making our words proxies for them. It is, in my opinion, hardly more controversial that we routinely and correctly expect our audience to be cognizant of this, just as they are cognizant of presuppositions. We expect their recognition of this sort of thing to help them extract information about how the subjects of attitude ascriptions represent the world. These facts have considerable explanatory power for our intuitions about the truth conditions of attitude ascriptions, as well as for intuitions about explanation of behavior. Taking these facts as determining the truth conditions no more makes semantics baroque than, say, building facts about contextual common ground into the semantics of conditionals does.

Sider 1995 and Soames (1995, 2001) raise a more significant worry. A belief ascriber may be confused or ignorant about the identity of an ascribee. Suppose: I don’t realize that Superman is Clark Kent; I wish to convey that Superman believes Twain (under a ‘Twain’ representation) boring, and that Clark believes Twain (under a demonstrative representation) tired. My context might contain the translation rules

(R1) Superman: ‘Twain’ → ‘Twain’
(R2) Clark Kent: ‘Twain’ → ‘that man over there.’

For each of

(S) Superman believes that Twain is boring
(C) Clark believes that Twain is tired,

to be true, its complement must translate some sentential proposition realizing one of Superman’s (= Clark) beliefs. The translation cannot violate any of my context’s translation rules. But these rules can’t all be followed at once: (R1) mandates that ‘Twain’ translate Twain when we speak of Superman, the other that ‘Twain’ translate ‘that man over there’ when we speak of Superman – i.e., Clark Kent. So neither of (S) and (C) are true. This is so, even if what I am trying to convey – that Superman believes Twain boring, using a ‘Twain’ representation, and that Clark Kent believes Twain tired using a ‘that man over there’ representation – is completely accurate. If we are trying to capture the idea that the truth conditional point of attitude ascriptions is to convey just this sort of information, this is a genuine problem.
A translation manual is a contextual parameter determined (in good part) by speaker intentions and dispositions. So are many other contextual parameters, such as reference classes for adjectives such as ‘tall.’ When speakers are confused, the determination of such parameters may be defective. Suppose in uttering

\[(N) \text{ Nancy is tall}\]

I intend to compare Nancy Kerrigan’s height with that of, as I put it to myself, ‘that man’s, Grandpa Kerrigan, grandchildren’ Suppose the gentleman is her maternal, not her paternal, grandfather. Then there will be two candidates for the reference class for ‘tall,’ the maternal grandchildren and the paternal ones. There may be no non-arbitrary way to decide between these candidates. Thus, it seems that no reference class is associated with ‘tall,’ and thus – since the adjective needs such, if (N) has a truth value – my utterance will be without truth value, even if Nancy towers over all the grandchildren, maternal and paternal.

The right thing to say in this case, I think, is that when there are multiple “best candidates” for a required contextual parameter, truth value is determined by looking to see whether the choice among them makes any difference. If I utter (N) and context provides S1, S2, ..., and Sk as “best candidates” for the reference class of ‘tall,’ then my utterance is: true if true under any choice of S1, ..., Sk as reference class; false, if false under any such choice; truth valueless, otherwise.

The same holds for attitude ascriptions and translation manuals. I think Superman is not Clark. I try to use ‘Twain’ to represent Superman’s tokenings of ‘Twain,’ while trying to use ‘Twain’ to represent Clark’s tokenings of ‘that man.’ This can’t be done; the context’s translation manual is defective. What can be done is to correct the context’s translation manual in various ways, by removing one or more of the manual’s rules for translation until (and only until) we have a manual which can be used. Call such corrections resolutions of the manual. When a context’s translation manual is defective, an attitude ascription’s truth depends upon how it fares under resolutions of that manual: If it would be true under all resolutions, it is true; if false under all resolutions, it is false; otherwise, it is not determinately true or false.

As Soames 2002 observes, this response apparently makes (S) and (C) truth valueless if: I have no opinion whether Superman is Clark; my intentions put rules (R1) and (R2) into play; Superman has no opinion whether Twain is Clemens; he accepts both ‘Twain is boring’ and ‘that man [referring to Twain] is tired,’ but not ‘Twain is tired’ or ‘that man is boring.’ So it may seem that no headway has been made on the problem: after all, the relevant translation rule for (S) is (R1); (R2) is an unfortunate contextual hanger-on. (S)’s truth condition, if anything like a translational account is correct, should be that Superman believes that Twain is boring under a ‘Twain’ representation.

I think this objection is mistaken: a translational semantics does assign such truth conditions to (S) and (C). Here is why.
The contexts of semantics are abstractions from actual and possible “concrete speech situations.” In constructing an utterance’s context it is often possible to construct it in different ways; sometimes there won’t be any (interest independent) reason to prefer one account of “the” context of an utterance to another.

For example: suppose we agree with Lewis (1979), that standards of application (and thus extension) of adjectives shift (within reason) so as to accommodate utterances. If, for example, Tom utters

\[(F) \text{ France is not hexagonal} \]

and conversants let him get away with it, the standards for something’s being hexagonal shift so that his utterance is true.

Suppose Tom utters (F) but only several conversational moves later does Jerry take exception. Tom concedes to Jerry, saying ‘You’re right – France is hexagonal, and I shouldn’t have said it wasn’t.’ What is the context of Tom’s original utterance u of (F), or of his latter utterance, u’? It seems hard to say. Suppose u’s context c has standards introduced by u, and u’ occurs in context c’ with standards reflecting Jerry’s refusal to accommodate Tom. Then Tom should not say in c’ that he (should not have) said that France was not hexagonal: because of the shift in standards from c to c,’ ‘France is hexagonal’ in c’ does not contradict ‘France is not hexagonal’ as uttered in c. Since what Tom says seems perfectly appropriate, it seems wrong to contextualize his utterances so that his latter remark is obviously false. On the other hand, the idea that u and u’ occur in contexts such as c and c’ is well motivated, simply because Lewis’ account of vague adjectives in such terms is well motivated.

A natural – and I believe correct – conclusion to draw is that Tom’s original utterance occurs in at least two contexts, one “local” (determined by what happens in the situation “immediately surrounding” u), the other “global” (determined by the overall history of the conversation). Interpreted locally, as one would naturally interpret it as it is uttered, u is a true utterance; interpreted globally, as one would interpret it after Jerry has had his say, it is not. u’, interpreted globally, is perfectly appropriate and true.

Now, suppose that I utter (S) and latter (C) with focus and dispositions which would bring rules (R1) and (R2) into play. It is not unreasonable to think that, just as Tom’s utterance u occurs in two contexts, so these utterances occur in multiple contexts. Each utterance has its own “local” context – (S)’s contains only (R1), if my focus as I speak is “on Superman”, (C)’s contains only (R2), if my focus as I speak is “on Clark Kent.” And each utterance can be taken globally, taking into account all of the intentions and dispositions operative in my conversation. Interpreting each utterance locally – and such interpretation is natural – a translational semantics makes each utterance true. Thus, a translational semantics does validate our intuitions about (natural fleshings out of) the case under discussion: Interpreting (S) and (C) in natural ways assigns them truth values in accord with our intuitions.
Of course, a conjunctive utterance, of say

Superman thinks that Twain is boring and Clark thinks that that man is tired

or of

Superman, but not Clark, thinks that Twain is boring

will most naturally be interpreted against a background involving both (R1) and (R2). (Actually, the first sentence can be interpreted, not unnaturally, as involving a “context switch” somewhere around the ‘and.’) That a sentence such as the last will, given the facts we have been presupposing about my intentions and Superman’s beliefs, come out truth valueless does not seem counter-intuitive.

It will, perhaps, be said that I have jettisoned logical intuitions. Consider the argument

Superman thinks that Twain is boring.
Clark does not think that Twain is boring.
So, Superman, but not Clark, thinks that Twain is boring.

Haven’t I backed myself into the position of having to say that someone might utter the premises truly, the conclusion falsely? If so, then (absurdly) I must say that this argument is not valid.

The validity of the argument is a matter of the truth of its premises in a context guaranteeing the truth of its conclusion in that context. True utterances of all three of the argument’s parts must occur in different contexts (given that ‘Superman’ and ‘Clark’ co-refer), if contexts are individuated in part in terms of the translation manual they provide. It is hardly surprising that uttering an valid argument containing context sensitive expressions may not be the giving of a valid argument, for contextual parameters can shift as one speaks.

There is much more to say about translational accounts of attitude ascription, but there is not space here to say it.29 I close instead with a general comment.

It is beyond serious debate that information conveyed by attitude ascriptions is gleaned by using background assumptions about how the ascriber represents how the ascribee represents the world. What can be debated is whether this information is truth conditional or is “pragmatically conveyed” by implicature or some other (ill understood) communicative mechanism. But I sometimes feel that framing the debate in these terms (Is it a semantic or (“merely”) pragmatic matter, that we convey such information?) is the wrong way to proceed.

When we speak we impart a lot of information and misinformation. There is a good deal of systematicity to the ways in which we do. Even information which by common consensus does not effect truth conditions may be conveyed by means systematic enough to be the subject of a theory. When a problem is as difficult as that of saying what we are doing in ascribing attitudes, perhaps the right approach
is not to begin by worrying about which of our communicative strategies are best seen as semantic, which pragmatic. Let us see if we can understand “the total speech act in the total speech situation” performed in speaking of someone’s attitudes, and worry about its truth conditions only once we have reached consensus on that.\textsuperscript{30}

Notes

1 Some psychological verbs – ‘be angry,’ for example – take clausal complements as “adjuncts” which (unlike arguments) are syntactically optional. Some verbs which require a clausal complement – ‘be necessary,’ ‘make it the case’ – do not ascribe psychological relations or speech acts. Though such verbs have many of the properties of VPAs, they are not the focus of this chapter.

Other verbs – ‘seek,’ ‘worship,’ ‘portray’ are examples – ascribe intentional states and actions, but differ from VPAs in apparently not accepting clausal complements. (One worships Zeus/a Greek god/money; one doesn’t worship that so and such.) It is a matter of contemporary debate whether sentences such as ‘I seek the Golden Fleece’ involve “covert” clausal complementation. The interested reader can pursue this topic in Parsons 1997, Forbes 2000, Larson 2002, and Richard 2002.

2 The extension of a sentence is its truth value; of a predicate, the set of things it is true of; of a term, what it names or denotes.

3 This needs qualification because (for example) S may say different things in different contexts. For the most part I suppress such qualifications in this essay.

4 There is plenty of reason to be unhappy with the idea that the semantics of attitude ascriptions encapsulates that of natural language semantics. Cappelen and Lepore 1997, Richard 1998, and Cappelen and Lepore 1998 debate as to whether it is reasonable to think that they do.

5 Russell’s views about propositional attitudes undergo various changes from 1900 to 1918. Russell 1903 takes them to be relations to singular propositions – propositions, expressed by sentences containing ‘genuine names,’ which are individuated in terms of individuals and not conceptualizations thereof. Russell 1903 lacks: Russell 1905’s account of descriptions, the view of ordinary names as ‘truncated descriptions,’ and the view that entertaining a proposition requires (a restrictive form of) “acquaintance” with its constituents. By the time of Russell 1912, Russell has abandoned the view that propositional attitudes are relations to propositions (replacing it with the “multiple relation” account of the attitudes); the three elements missing from Russell 1903, however, are firmly in place.

The view described in the text is what one gets from Russell 1912 if one replaces the multiple relation account with the view that attitudes are relations to propositions.

6 Complicating matters here is the issue of the relation between the Fregean sense of a predicate and the universal which, on Russell’s view, is a predicate’s contribution to a proposition. Both are ‘Platonic’ objects, but it is far from clear that they can be identified. The sense of a predicate for Frege is, roughly speaking, a way of thinking of the set of objects to which the predicate applies; the Russellian universal is something which, inter alia, solves the “one over many” problem. I doubt they
should be identified; I am frankly puzzled as to whether identifying them for the purposes of comparing Russell and Frege’s semantics is harmless.

7 On these views, someone who “identifies” Einstein as the inventor of the atomic bomb apparently says that the inventor of the atomic bomb worked in Zurich in 1905, which is false, when they utter the true ‘Einstein worked in Zurich in 1905.’

Kripke also objects that Frege and Russell’s views mis-predict the epistemic properties of pairs of sentences like those displayed above, since even someone who thinks of Aristotle as Alexander’s teacher will not know a priori that Aristotle taught Alexander (if just one person did), though they will know a priori that Alexander’s teacher taught him (if just one person did).

8 Arguably, this problem is tied to the Millian’s individuating the objects of propositional attitudes so coarsely that appeal to them cannot solve Frege’s puzzle, as to how sentences differing only by co-referential terms can have differing epistemic properties. This issue is touched upon in sec. 7.


10 Here ‘Twain’ and ‘Clemens’ are to be interpreted in a “Millian” way.

11 This is argued for at greater length in Richard 2005.


13 Think of it this way: all else being equal, the states will be instantiated by mental tokenings of things like ‘I want to avoid Sam Clemens’ and ‘Sam Clemens is in Room 12.’

14 Fodor 1994 gives a somewhat similar response.

15 As Salmon 1981 observes, it is not clear that this gives names the correct modal properties. Names arguably pick out their referents at every world, even those at which the referent does not exist (this is needed, given standard treatments of necessity, for true identities to be necessary); standard treatments of descriptions (as quantifiers) would have the actual F pick out nothing at worlds at which its actual referent doesn’t exist.

Soames 2001 argues that, given that denizens of other worlds have no de re beliefs about the actual world, this view implies that (for example), if Aristotle had not written exactly what he actually wrote, I would not have believed that Aristotle existed.

16 The latter becomes invalid, because in the first premiss S will express my thought, which may differ in modal status from yours.

One could propose that propositional quantification is substitutional. I don’t think this is tenable. See Richard 1990, 1997, and the response in Azzouni 2001.

17 The reader may well find this puzzling. How can x wants it to be true that S be false, when x wants that very thought (i.e., that S)? The view developed in the last section of this essay is intended, among other things, to explain cases like this one.

18 David Lewis 1990 voices kindred complaints about kindred accounts of representation.

19 In saying this, I assume that Nora can, for example, acquire a belief, of a particular letter, to the effect that it has property P as follows: someone Nora trusts says to her, “Bob often goes by a name which is a four letter first name followed by a five letter surname. Call the letter which starts his first name (the speaker points at Marky Mark) ‘L1’; L1 is the first letter in the name of Bob of which I speak. Call the letter which starts her first name (the speaker points at Annie Sprinkle) ‘L2’; L2 is the second letter
in the name of Bob of which I speak . . . ” If someone goes through all this with Nora and she has a very good memory, she will believe, of Twain and the letters m,a,r,k,space,t,w,a,i,n that the former has a name which the latter, in that order spell.

Unless we are going to say that one can have beliefs, of people, letters, and the like, only under certain modes of presentation, I do not see how one can avoid granting the points necessary for this argument.

20 In particular, one often quantifies over what Crimmins calls “normal representations.” Crimmins 1992 develops these ideas in considerable detail, to which the interested reader is referred. I have simplified his view in various ways.

21 This idea informs a great deal of work on vagueness – an early development of it is in Lewis 1979.

22 For such evidence see, for example, Radford 1997, section 4.2.

23 There are other reasons to be nervous about the account. For example, the view makes invalid arguments such as Marsha believes whatever Patty does, Patty believes that Twain is dead, so Marsha believes that Twain is dead are valid. See Richard 1993, 1997.


25 Think of a word, used with a particular semantic value, as a pairing of a linguistic item and that semantic value: ‘Twain,’ used as a name of Twain, is thought of as 〈‘Twain,’ Twain〉. The form of the rules above is this: In speaking of X, translate 〈word, value〉 only via representations having property P. (In the first rule in (T1), P is something like: being associated by Marsha with 〈‘Twain,’ Twain〉.) The rules in a translation manual can then be represented as triples 〈X, 〈w,v〉, P〉, which tell us that in rendering X, the word w (with value v) translates only representations with P.

This way of putting things is an improvement on how I put them in Richard 1990, where instead of a property P of representations, the third element of a translation rule was a set of representations. (For one thing, this yields a better account of the modal profile of attitude ascriptions.) The improvement is due to Soames 2001, Chapter 7. Soames also suggests – correctly – that for a fully general account, we should replace the first member of such trios with a property, so that rules will look something like 〈being identical with Marsha, 〈‘Twain,’ Twain〉, being expressed by Marsha with 〈‘Twain,’ Twain〉〉, 〈being an ordinary citizen of Metropolis, 〈‘Clark Kent,’ Clark Kent〉, representing Clark Kent as a mild mannered reporter〉.

26 This is a terminological change from Richard 1990 (where these things were called Russellian annotated matrices, and what I am here calling words were called annotations) and Richard 1995 (where sentential propositions were called articulated propositions).

27 Indeed, the response is suggested by Soames, who notes that the way in which I originally formulated the view made it liable to such an objection, and offered the above response.

In a difficult passage, Soames worries (Soames 2001: 169) that the possibility of cases like that in Kripke 1979 of Peter (who mistakenly takes different tokens of ‘Pederewski’ to refer to different people) makes even Soames’ suggested emendation inadequate. So far as I understand the passage, Soames’ objection is that in such a
case, ascriptions of the forms X believes that Fa and X believes that Ga might both be true (in virtue of there being two representations r and r' that a can translate) while X believes that a is F and G is not true (since beliefs which r and r' realize are not integrated in the appropriate way). Soames claims that this would mean that the proposal does not capture descriptive belief content.

If I understand the worry – and I fear I do not completely understand it – the response is to observe, as is observed in 4.3 of Richard 1990, that in normal conversation we use one of our words to translate one and only one word of another person. (In the jargon of Richard 1990, we employ a single correlation, or translation, function in interpreting several attitude ascriptions.)

Surely Soames must agree. For Soames holds that ‘The ancients didn’t realize that Hesperus is Phosphorus’ typically conveys something like: the ancients didn’t realize that Hesperus, which appeared in such and such a position, wasn’t Phosphorus, which appeared in so and so a position. And the mechanism he takes to underlie this requires the sort of presuppositions just mentioned.

I have not responded here to all of the objections which Soames (and others) have lodged to translational accounts of attitude ascription; more is found in Richard, 2005.

The echo here is of Austin 1962: “The total speech act in the total speech situation is the only actual phenomenon which, in the last resort, we are engaged in elucidating” (148).

A brief essay cannot do justice to the rich and varied recent literature on propositional attitude ascription, and here I have been forced to ignore much more than I attended to. In particular, I have not discussed accounts which in one way or another seek to account for our intuitions about attitudes or their ascription without invoking modes or presentation or mental representations.

Two such accounts ought at least be mentioned. Robert Stalnaker has developed an interesting account of attitude ascription on which propositions are identified with sets of possible worlds. A well known problem for such accounts is that they seem to identify distinct propositions. (For example, if the proposition expressed by a sentence is the set of worlds in which it is true, then all necessarily true sentences express the same proposition.) Stalnaker suggests that in many cases, an ascription A believes that S ascribes belief, not in the proposition which “straightforward semantic rules” assign to (unembedded uses of S), but to what Stalnaker calls the diagonal proposition determined by S. Roughly, this is the set of those worlds w such that what S says as used in w is true in w. Stalnaker 1999 provides an introduction to this idea.

Recently, Mark Crimmins has suggested that attitude ascription involves a kind of pretense. Very roughly, in uttering A believes that S, one pretends that the world is as A thinks it is; one thereby conveys facts about the nature of A’s beliefs. (Compare utterances in games of pretend: If I say ‘the Indians are attacking’ while playing cowboys and Indians, I pretend that we are cowboys fighting Indians and thereby convey that certain of the players are running towards us.) This idea is developed in Crimmins 1998. Some critical discussion of it can be found in Richard 2000 and Stanley 2001.