

Provided the suitors, including Biron, are duped, Cumming notes that the following reports seem true on their most natural interpretations.

(KR) Biron thinks Katherine is Rosaline.

(RM) Biron thinks Rosaline is Maria.

(MK) Biron thinks Maria is Katherine.

Whereas the following reports, interpreted in parallel fashion, are false.

(RK) Biron thinks Rosaline is Katherine.

(MR) Biron thinks Maria is Rosaline.

(KM) Biron thinks Katherine is Maria.

Biron doesn't seem to have illogical or incoherent beliefs, so the puzzle is to explain why the identities believed appear to violate symmetry and transitivity. Cumming draws a tempting parallel between these cases and belief ascriptions making use of definite descriptions. Suppose, for example, that the ladies have entered the room in this order

Katherine, Rosaline, Maria

when, in keeping with Biron's confusion, he believes them to have entered in this order

Rosaline, Maria, Katherine

Then (FL) can come out true while (LF) does not (again on natural, parallel readings).

(FL) Biron thinks the person who entered first is the person who entered last.

(LF) Biron thinks the person who entered last is the person who entered first.

A familiar treatment of these cases posits a scope ambiguity in the logical forms of (FL) and (LF).² The initial descriptions tend to be read *de re* (that is, outside the scope of "believes") and the second descriptions are read *de dicto* (inside the scope of "believes"). So the logical forms might look something like the following, if (for example) we treat definite descriptions as binary generalized quantifiers.

(FL*) $(\exists x : x \text{ entered first})(\text{Bel}_{\text{Biron}}((\forall y : y \text{ entered last})(x = y)))$

²This is a slight oversimplification since accounting for the 'scope paradoxes' of Fodor (1970) may require more flexibility in readings than allowed by position in logical form. This may perhaps be accomplished by introducing overt, bindable world variables to do the work instead. For the purposes of this paper, this technicality can provisionally be set aside.

(LF*) ($\eta y : y$ entered last)(Bel_{Biron}(($\eta x : x$ entered first)($x = y$)))

The scope distinction helps because the denotations of definite descriptions are sensitive to a shiftable parameter of the index: the world parameter. “believes” is associated with an intensional operator which shifts the world parameter of the index, so definite descriptions in its scope can change their denotations. “The person who entered first” picks out Kathryn in the world of the story. But in the worlds compatible with what Biron believes, that description picks out not Kathryn, but Rosaline. Instead, it is “the person who entered last” which picks out Kathryn in the worlds compatible with Biron’s beliefs. This is why (FL*) is true: it asserts an identity between Kathryn, picked out in one way in the actual world, and Kathryn, picked out in a different way in Biron’s belief-worlds. (LF*) on the other hand falsely asserts an identity between Maria and Rosaline, again each picked out in different worlds.

The moral Cumming draws from (KR)–(KM) is that names should share the feature of definite descriptions that allows for this ambiguity: we should allow the denotation of a name to be sensitive to some parameter which the belief operator can shift. Of course it needn’t, and perhaps shouldn’t, be the world parameter that plays this role for names. Cumming accepts, and ably supplements, Kripke’s classic arguments that the denotations of names are constant from world to world. Cumming instead defends the view that we take the denotation of a name to be sensitive to a separate shiftable parameter of the index: a variable assignment parameter.

The idea that the denotations of names can be shifted spells bad news for the Millian—the theorist who thinks that the semantic contribution of a name is its actual referent, and nothing but. The Millian leaves *no* room for sensitivity in the semantic value of a name to *any* parameter. So if Cumming is right about the strategy we need to solve his puzzle, we can safely rule out the Millian position—one of the most prevalent semantics for names—as inadequate.

Cumming’s ultimate proposal is detailed and subtle, and I don’t want to enter into its specific details here. The reason for this omission is because even with this simple sketch of the view, we know enough to see that Cumming’s strategy will fail to account for a generalization of his puzzle. The difficulty stems from the fact, which Cumming himself stresses, that his puzzle is importantly different from those in which sentences’ truth-values change through a substitution in coreferring terms like those famously raised by Frege. After all, the truth-value judgments in (KR)–(KM) actually tend to *persist* through substitution of coreferring terms. What is most striking, though, is that those judgments may persist through substitution of any such terms, including definite descriptions with descriptive content unfamiliar to Biron.

To see what I mean by this, suppose Biron continues to pursue Katharine, taking her to be Rosaline. Katharine has passed a note to Rosaline before Biron has the chance to see them do so. A knowing observer who has lost track of the ladies’ favors asks a nearby guest to remind him who Biron thinks is who. The guest replies:

(PR) Biron thinks the lady who just passed a note is the lady who just

received a note.

As with all the sentences we have examined at so far, (PR) has a number of readings that shift with context and intonation. What’s interesting here is that there is at least one reading of (PR) here which is *true*, and a parallel reading of (RP) is false.

(RP) Biron thinks the lady who just received a note is the lady who just passed a note.

The true reading of (PR) cannot be modeled by supposing its definite descriptions have alternating scope. This is because scoping either of the definite descriptions under the belief operator imputes beliefs about note passers to Biron who, by stipulation, has none. In the world as Biron sees it, there is no lady who just passed a note, nor a lady who received one. This means that we cannot read *either* of the descriptions in (PR) *de dicto* to get the true reading.

Problems accrue when we produce the corresponding intransitivities. Maria stands idly in the corner twirling a carnation which, again, is out of Biron’s sight. The earlier guest continues:

(RC) Biron thinks the lady who just received a note is the lady twirling a carnation.

(CP) Biron thinks the lady twirling a carnation is the lady who just passed a note.

Again the natural readings of (RC) and (CP) seem every bit as true as (RM) and (KM) (and for the same reasons). But again, there are no true readings on which any of the descriptive material in these sentences is scoped under the belief operator. What this means is that *all* the descriptive material in (PR), (RC), and (CP) must simultaneously be read *de re*. This in turn tells us that in the logical form of these attributions, no overt syntactic material lies in the scope of the belief operators except identity. Only trace variables and other covert elements of logical form (if we choose to posit any) have narrow scope.³

If this is right, we immediately learn two important lessons. First, Cumming’s case can’t be solved by appealing to special features of the semantics of names. After all, (RP)–(CP) are clearly instantiations of the same phenomenon Cumming notes, but there are no names in those statements. Second, and more importantly, any solution to the generalized puzzle won’t appeal to shiftable parameters in overt referring expressions. In the case involving descriptions, it

³A natural thought might be to gain insight into these cases by appealing to Donnellan’s referential/attribution distinction here, claiming that the descriptions in (PR)–(CP) are used referentially. But this won’t work. We can get the asymmetric and intransitive true readings even on clearly attributive uses. For example, in the appropriate context, a guest could truthfully say “Biron thinks the lady in the next room who just passed a note (whoever she is) is the lady who just received one (whoever *she* is)”, etc.

should be clear that the descriptive material itself must take wide scope, precluding its interpretation relative to shifted parameters.⁴ Cumming’s puzzle is obtained by simply substituting coreferring names for the widely scoped definite descriptions in an extensional context. Now, we might allow covert material to change scope in the puzzle with definite descriptions, but there is no reason the same covert material won’t be available in the case with names, making any appeal to a sensitivity in the denotations of the names *themselves* to the relevant shiftable parameter superfluous.

So Cumming’s case actually doesn’t speak against the Millian position. It should be clear that any solution to the puzzle involving definite descriptions is one that will be available to the Millian, as the semantics of descriptions seem irrelevant to the puzzle beyond the fact that they are used to pick out individuals in the actual world. Moreover, as I’ve just said, any solution to the puzzle promises to give the Millian tools or distinctions to reuse in Cumming’s original puzzle and many other kinds of belief ascription. So, without actually delving into the details of the puzzles, we can see that far from posing a special challenge to the Millian, they in fact hold the promise of greatly *strengthening* the Millian position.

Cumming gets off on the wrong foot by making the tempting assumption that his puzzle about belief is the product of a special kind of ambiguity in the scoping of names—what he terms a *de re**/*de dicto** ambiguity. But we’ve seen that not even pairs of ordinary *de re* and *de dicto* readings are operative in the parallel puzzles with definite descriptions. In these latter puzzles we have a series of special, and very perplexing, cases of *de re* belief ascription. If we can manage to understand these, we can understand Cumming’s version of the puzzle involving names in the same way, as the product of substitution of coreferring terms in an extensional context. So framed, the question that the puzzles actually raise for us is: what resources can we draw on in our theories of *de re* belief ascription to explain the unusual asymmetries?

⁴The only way to avoid this is by trying to explain the judgments concerning (RP)–(CP) by supposing that the denotations of the definite descriptions are sensitive to shifts in two (or more) parameters of the index: the world parameter and a separate parameter *p*. This is not a plausible explanation here. Consider that (RP) has a true reading even if Biron has *erroneous* beliefs about an entirely different set of ladies elsewhere at the party passing notes. If we pursue a double-index strategy, then “the lady who just passed a note” in a world *w* as Biron sees it, relative to a suitably shifted *p*, would have to pick out one of the two ladies Biron is approaching in the ballroom to resolve the puzzle. This would presumably mean that we could *in general* get *de dicto* readings of definite descriptions which picked out individuals that simply fail to satisfy the relevant descriptive material at the worlds where they are evaluated. It doesn’t seem like this ever actually occurs in any other belief attributions. This might seem less problematic if shifting *p* effectively just nullified the world-shifting effect of a belief operator. But this won’t do any special work in resolving the puzzle—it just ensures both descriptions are effectively read *de re*, which we could have achieved without the introduction of new parameters.

2 Inroads through Quine

There are two strategies that I'd like to set aside in this paper. The first strategy is to claim that, appearances notwithstanding, the phenomenon is not semantic, and to wheel in pragmatic tools to account for the relevant truth-value judgements. The second is to begin saturating the logical forms of the puzzling sentences with various hidden elements.

I'm setting these approaches aside in part because of suspicions about their viability, but also because I think there is much to be learned by trying to explain the puzzles as what they appear to be: manifestations of the way we ascribe beliefs about particular objects. Since generalizations of Cumming's puzzle involve definite descriptions read *de re*, we should build an account of this sort to harmonize with our account of more familiar puzzles about *de re* belief ascriptions.

My goal in the next three sections is to develop the outlines of such an approach. I'll do this by articulating three theses about *de re* belief ascription which form a kind of 'skeletal view' that can be fleshed out in alternative ways. A key virtue of the view is that it relies for the most part on distinctions and concepts that will be needed to deal with the behavior of intensional constructions generally—a point which I'll return to several times as the paper proceeds. Any view meeting my three theses can cope neatly with Cumming's puzzle and the variants I've presented. To help articulate the first of my three theses here, let me begin at the beginning, with Quine.

Though suspicious of intensional constructions, Quine felt compelled (at least early in his career) to give an account of systematic ambiguities that arise in belief attributions involving determiner phrases. This kind of ambiguity arises, for example, in (1).

(1) Ralph thinks someone is a spy.

(1) can communicate that Ralph has the humdrum belief that spies exist, or the more surprising belief that some particular individual is a spy. A tempting way to represent this distinction is by a scope ambiguity, with (2a) attributing the more common of the two beliefs to Ralph.

- (2) a. Ralph believes $[(\exists x)(x \text{ is a spy})]$
b. $(\exists x)(\text{Ralph believes}[x \text{ is a spy}])$

Quine refused this option, claiming that (2b) made no sense because it quantified into an intensional context. The problem is that to make sense of (2b) we need to make sense of the objectual satisfaction of "Ralph believes x is a spy". And to do that we need to make sense of how an object, independently of any way of specifying it, satisfies this open formula. But substituting different coreferring expressions for x —two different ways of picking out a same individual—results in a change of truth-value. Doesn't this interfere with our understanding of how an individual herself satisfies the open formula? Won't such an understanding arbitrarily privilege some ways Ralph thinks about her?

To help stress the problem, Quine raised the now famous case Ortcutt.

There is a certain man in a brown hat whom Ralph has glimpsed several times under questionable circumstances on which we need not enter here; suffice it to say that Ralph suspects he is a spy. Also there is a gray-haired man, vaguely known to Ralph as rather a pillar of the community, whom Ralph is not aware of having seen expect once at the beach. Now Ralph does not know it, but the men are one and the same. Can we say of this *man* (Bernard J. Ortcutt, to give him a name) that Ralph believes him to be a spy?⁵

Quine thought his rhetorical question had no answer. Ortcutt is both (say) the man in the brown hat at the bar and the gray-haired man at the beach. Ralph believes the man in the brown hat is a spy, but Ralph doesn't believe the gray-haired man at the beach is a spy. Quine worried because of this that we couldn't say of 'the man himself', Ortcutt, that Ralph had beliefs about whether he was a spy or not.

Our reluctance to pronounce on this case is interesting and important. But Quine's identification of intensionality as the culprit here is suspect. Parallel arguments to unintelligibility using other intensional constructions, like tense operators, are clearly fallacious. Suppose I report:

(3) A senator will greet you on the Capitol steps.

(3) exhibits a parallel ambiguity to (1). It can predict that a *future* (and perhaps not present) senator will greet you on the Capitol steps, or it can predict a greeting by a *present* senator (perhaps no longer a senator by the time of greeting). Again, a tempting way to represent the distinction is as one of scope, with **F** marking a tense operator shifting a time parameter of the index to quantify over future times.⁶

- (4) a. $\mathbf{F}[(\exists x)(x \text{ a senator} \wedge x \text{ greets you on the Capitol steps})]$
 b. $(\exists x)(x \text{ is a senator} \wedge \mathbf{F}[x \text{ greets you on the Capitol steps}])$

But we can raise analogous worries to those Quine raised for belief here. Can we allow for (4b) which quantifies into an intensional context? Suppose I wanted to communicate this reading because Menendez, presently the youngest senator from New Jersey, will greet you in six years on the steps of the Capitol. Couldn't understanding my utterance as (4b) be problematic, because it involves quantification into an intensional context?

Consider, for example, that (5) is now true, because both descriptions pick out Menendez.

(5) The youngest senator from New Jersey is the winner of the 2006 New Jersey senatorial election

⁵Quine (1956) p.179.

⁶Of course this may be an oversimplification of the semantics of tense, but the simplification won't interfere with any the points I want to make here.

Let's suppose there is a future time at which the embedded claim in (6) is true, because Menendez will meet you, but there is no future time at which the corresponding embedded claim in (7) is true—there is no time at which you are greeted by the youngest senator from New Jersey at that time.

(6) \mathbf{F} [the winner of the 2006 New Jersey senatorial election greets you on the Capitol steps]

(7) \mathbf{F} [the youngest senator from New Jersey greets you on the Capitol steps]

So substitution of coreferring terms in the open formula

(8) \mathbf{F} [x greets you on the capitol steps]

results in a change of truth-value—(6) is true and (7) is false. So how can we claim that some *individual*, Menendez, satisfies this open formula when substituting two different ways of picking him out results in a change of truth-values? Won't making this claim arbitrarily privilege some way of singling Menendez out?

Of course no one would be persuaded that objectual satisfaction of (8) was problematic on these grounds. Obviously there are good reasons for 'privileging' the description (9) over (10) in this case.

(9) the winner of the 2006 New Jersey senatorial election

(10) the youngest senator from New Jersey

Though (9) and (10) *presently* corefer (to Menendez), which accounts for the truth of (5), they do not corefer *in the future*. (9) continues to refer to Menendez in the future, but (10) clearly need not. In the intensional context created by (8), it would be odd to expect substitution of *presently* coreferring terms to preserve truth-value. Rather, we should expect only expressions that pick out the same object or individual in the *future* to preserve truth-values when substituted for one another.

Quine's worries, when transposed to the temporal case, are easily resolved. Moreover, this resolution helps make sense of the *de re* readings of determiner phrases occurring in tensed claims. This reading of (11), for example, is the one which would be true if Menendez were to meet you on the steps of the Capitol long past his final term.

(11) The youngest senator from New Jersey will greet you on the Capitol steps.

What helps us make sense of the *de re* reading of the description in (11), despite requiring quantification across a temporal operator, is that we seem to have a firm grip on relations of identity over time—over the parameter the operator is shifting. We have a good sense what it is for some future person on the

Capitol steps to be identical with Menendez, the man we presently identify as the youngest senator from New Jersey. This is so even though, of course, articulating the criteria which underlie those judgments of personal identity across time is philosophically quite challenging.

Arguably the same sort of resolution should be applied to cope with *de re* readings of determiner phrases occurring in sentences with modal operators.

(12) The president could have lost the presidential election.

There is a reading of (12) which is true because Barack Obama could have lost the presidential election. There is a trivially false reading of the same sentence on which it could have been the case that the winner of the presidential election lost that election. What helps us make sense of the *de re* reading of (12), though it involves quantification across a modal operator, again seems to be a grasp of a notion of identity across shifts in the relevant parameter—the world of evaluation. We know, somehow, what it would be like for the actual president, Barack Obama, to be identical with someone bested in the 2008 election in alternative circumstances. This is so even though articulating criteria for that identity (and, in fact, settling whether we even need to articulate such criteria) is a philosophically challenging problem.

A caveat before I continue. I've claimed that we seem to have a grip on relations of identity across time and across metaphysically possible worlds. But need the relation we are tracking be *identity*? Not obviously. In the modal case, Lewis has defended a form of counterpart theory in which claims about what is possible, or necessary, for an actual object are settled on the basis of facts about possibilia that are counterparts of, but not identical with, the actual object.⁷ Sider among others has explored the application of counterpart theory to the temporal case, where stages of objects bear counterpart relations that secure the intelligibility of *de re* temporal discourse.⁸ I don't want to presuppose that the relations facilitating modal and temporal discourse *de re* are simply the relation of identity, counterpart relations, or something else. The important point is that there are some kinds of relations—I'll call them temporal and modal *intensional relations*—that do the facilitating work. We have a fairly good grip on when these relations hold in the temporal case, and perhaps the modal case as well. And objects which bear these intensional relations to each other, whatever those relations turn out to be, may fail to satisfy the same descriptive material despite being so-related.

What we learn from the temporal case is that although Quine's Ortcutt raises some interesting worries, those worries are not on their own enough to cast suspicion on quantification across intensional operators. Intensionality on its own cannot be to blame, or we would find the same problems pervading the temporal case, which we don't. Quine's claims here could conceivably be pressed if supplemented with additional arguments targeting the intelligibility of belief itself, as Quine famously did supply for modal notions. But Quine's

⁷Lewis (1968), Lewis (1986) ch.4.

⁸Sider (1996), Sider (2001) ch.5, §8.

arguments against modal notions are themselves suspect, and anyway do not bear directly on belief.⁹

As such, despite the interest of Orcutt's case, Quine supplied no reason against taking the ambiguity in (1) to be a product of anything but the simple scope distinction that Quine rejected in (2).

- (1) Ralph thinks someone is a spy.
- (2) a. Ralph believes[($\exists x$)(x is a spy)]
b. ($\exists x$)(Ralph believes[x is a spy])

Moreover blocking Quine's worries by examining the case of tense and metaphysical modals invites a natural strategy for understanding the quantification in (2b). It does so by motivating a general principle undergirding the intelligibility of *de re* readings generally. This is the first thesis of my skeletal account of *de re* ascription.

Intensional Relations. For any parameter p of the index, to understand quantification across an intensional operator shifting p , we must only be able to understand and apply the relevant intensional relation connected with p .

Quantification across tense operators requires an understanding of temporal intensional relations—relations which we bear to our future and past selves. Quantification across metaphysical modal operators requires an understanding of modal intensional relations—those which relate us to the people we could have been.

If we take this simple idea to heart, then we should strive to make sense of Quine's original case of (1), and *de re* belief ascriptions generally, in the same spirit. The strategy should appear independently attractive, because it allows us to understand *de re* ascriptions in the simplest way possible: as a semantic phenomenon arising from a scope ambiguity, which doesn't require positing a raft of hidden elements in logical form. Moreover, the strategy promises to draw illuminating ties between *de re* belief and other forms of *de re* intensionality. If we adopt this strategy, we need a clearer understanding of two things: First, how are we to understand the parameter shifted by a belief operator? Second, what sorts of facts, if any, undergird intensional relations across shifts in that parameter? Our next task is to supply answers to these questions, and to see what they might teach us about *de re* ascriptions generally, and Orcutt's case in particular.

3 Belief Worlds

As I noted to at the outset, in continuing to develop my skeletal proposal for interpreting *de re* belief ascription, I'll be drawing selectively from an account

⁹See Fine (2005a,b) for a discussion.

proposed by Stalnaker.¹⁰ Some of the specifics of Stalnaker’s view—especially some of the more controversial elements of the framework in which he sets up his account—won’t be essential components of my proposal. Part of the work to be done in what follows is to separate out the elements in Stalnaker’s proposal that are essential to dealing with puzzles like Cumming’s, and to highlight how defensible and powerful those elements are when taken in isolation.

To begin, let’s return to the first of my two questions: what parameter is shifted by the belief operator, and what is the result of the shift? The most natural proposal here surfaced in our discussion of the *de re/de dicto* distinction. The belief operator seems to shift the world of evaluation away from the way the world actually is, and to something like the way (or ways) the world might be according to one or more believers.

For this idea to make sense, there must be something like ‘a way the world might be (according to a thinker)’, something approximating a world state, or a set of world states. Stalnaker believes that we have independent grounds to think that mental states are structured precisely to yield such states in the simplest way possible: belief states are exhaustively characterized by a single set of *metaphysically* possible worlds—those metaphysically possible worlds which aren’t ruled out as the actual world by the belief state considered as a whole.¹¹ If this is right then we can think of a belief operator as working very much like a metaphysical modal operator, shifting the world of evaluation from one metaphysically possible world to others.

Not all theorists are comfortable with this assumption. Many think that mental states should be characterized not only by metaphysical possibilities but by *merely* epistemically possible worlds. The latter worlds are ways that thinkers erroneously suppose to be genuine candidates for how the world might be that are not genuine possibilities at all. For example, theorists might posit merely epistemically possible worlds in which Mark Twain is not identical with Samuel Clemens, though these individuals are identical at all metaphysically possible worlds. Additionally, theorists might think that mental states have a special kind of structure that parallels that of a theory couched in a compositionally structured language. That is, belief states (for example) can be viewed as structured something like a set of natural language sentences. Or, as yet a further departure, mental states can also be supposed to have internal structure of a kind which is specially *non-linguistic*—irreducibly pictorial structure for example.

Since the view I’ll articulate builds on Stalnaker’s account, it harmonizes well with his ‘unstructured’ representations of mental states. But this conception is not necessary to understand the core elements of my proposal. All that is required is the following very weak assumption, which is my second thesis:

Belief Worlds. Logically coherent belief states are structured in a way that makes it possible to identify qualitatively coherent possibilities (metaphysical or otherwise) compatible with them, which

¹⁰Stalnaker (1988, 2009).

¹¹See Stalnaker (1984).

are populated by individuals bearing identifiable properties.

By ‘qualitatively coherent’, I mean the possibilities exhibit no form of internal incoherence, except perhaps owing to non-qualitative facts (e.g., that Mark Twain is not Samuel Clemens). As such we can coherently describe these possibilities on a qualitative level and say, for example, how many individuals are in them, where they are located relative to each other, and so on.

Belief Worlds is innocuous enough to be compatible with the view of very many theorists, and is a thesis I’ll be assuming from now on. I’ll call the possibilities it alludes to *doxastic alternatives*.¹²

Once we have this assumption we have the materials to ask the second of the questions I advanced at the end of §2: what sorts of facts, if any, undergird intensional relations bridging shifts between the actual world and various doxastic alternatives? Or, to give these relations a more convenient (if imperfect) name, on what basis are *doxastic relations* settled?

Note that this question is distinct from the question of what doxastic relations are. Are they simply the relation of identity? Are they counterpart relations? I won’t take a firm stand on these questions. Instead I want to ask: what, if anything, settles whether an object from the actual world is related in the appropriate way to an object in one of an agent’s doxastic alternatives.¹³ (Compare the corresponding question for trans-temporal relations: what settles whether a person (or time-slice of a person) is the one on the basis of which *de re* claims about my future are settled? We can answer this question by claiming that psychological and causal facts (say) settle who is related to my present self in the relevant ways, without immediately taking a stand on whether the relations that the psychological and causal facts undergird is identity, merely a counterpart relation, or something else.)

Stalnaker gives a simple answer to my question that I find a helpful point of departure for explaining *de re* ascriptions to non-abstract objects.¹⁴ On this view, what settles whether an object in a doxastic alternative is suitably related

¹²Though many theorists will be capable of accommodating the assumption, few of them will agree with what I am about to *use* these doxastic alternatives *for* since, of course, many of these theorists use those alternatives to understand *de re* ascriptions in incompatible ways. What is important, though, is to get a clear picture of what resources we need to adopt the approach to *de re* ascription I’m recommending. *Belief Worlds* articulates the second of the three commitments needed.

¹³If one takes doxastic relations to be identity relations, then one might think that this question could have no answer: maybe the identities are brute. It’s true such a *brute identity* view is coherent, and yields a coherent way of rejecting my question. But the view faces a question roughly analogous to the one I’m asking here, namely: “in virtue of what does a believer’s belief world contain such-and-such an actual person or thing?” This is no longer a question about what relates objects from the actual world to those in a doxastic alternatives, but about what makes a doxastic alternative, some of whose entities are brutally related to those in the actual world, compatible with the believer’s belief state. This question still needs an answer. And the answer I give to the question of what settles doxastic relations below can, for the brute identity view, simply be transposed to answer this analogous question it faces. The result is an equally informative extension of the brute identity view, which enables it to address puzzles about belief reports in the way I’m suggesting.

¹⁴Is it a count against this view that it can’t cope with abstract objects as well? I don’t see why. We don’t count an account of trans-temporal intensional relations for human beings

to an object from the actual world turns on whether facts about the former objects causally covary (perhaps under ‘normal’ circumstances) with facts about the latter.

Here’s a simple illustration of how causal relations allow an object to shape a thinker’s doxastic alternatives in the relevant way. A single blue rock—Marty—lies at Jones’ feet, in plain sight and broad daylight. As a result, in all of Jones’ doxastic alternatives there is a blue rock at Jones’ feet. If Marty were red then (other things equal) Jones’ belief state would doubtless be different: it would be compatible only with doxastic alternatives where a single red rock lies at Jones’ feet. This counterfactual truth is the product of simple causal relations mediating facts about the shape, size, and color of the rock and the character of an object in Jones’s doxastic alternatives. And this is what makes facts about the rock in Jones’ doxastic alternatives establish what Jones believes about Marty. This is obviously just a sketch, but for my purposes this will do. Even so briefly stated, the view provides enough of an answer to classify a large range of simple cases of *de re* ascription unambiguously.

A warning: this particular conception of doxastic relations isn’t an essential component of my proposal. I need some specific view of doxastic relations to show how the other elements of my view engage in particular cases. Any reasonably plausible account of doxastic relations will suffice for me to bring out two features of my view: the similarities it forges between all forms of *de re* intensionality, and the corresponding differences that would distinguish *de re* belief. The former similarities will come out in §4. Let me say something about the latter differences now.

We can see differences between forms of intensionality *de re* arise in a less dramatic way for temporal and metaphysical modal shifts. Some philosophers, as I have already noted, take strong psychological connections to help settle temporal *de re* facts for human beings. But few take the very same kinds of connections to settle modal intensional relations between humans in distinct metaphysically possible worlds. If this is right we may be able, simply on the basis of psychology, to rule out some future or past individual as a candidate to settle how Jane was or will be. But we may be unable to use the very same criteria to rule out some individual in counterfactual circumstances as settling how Jane *could* have been. In this way, the distinction between the facts grounding the intensional relations seems to allow for a kind of greater flexibility in *de re* modality than *de re* temporality: Jane could have been many more things than she was or will be.

If doxastic relations are settled in part by causal sensitivities, this would introduce a still greater permissiveness in belief *de re*—a special permissiveness in what we do, or could, believe that Jane is. And of course, familiarly, this is true to the data. Eli sits in his camping tent reading, and looks up to see a dark

that appeals to facts about psychology a bad view simply because it can’t be transposed to buildings or rocks. In general, the facts undergirding intensional relations for objects of different kinds may themselves differ, even though the intensional relations themselves are connected with the same parameter of the index. Absent arguments to the contrary, we should take the same to be true for belief.

shadow cast by what appears to be a tree on the tent surface. Unexpectedly, the shadow begins changing in size, growing and appearing to come closer until the tent opens, revealing Jane as the source of the shadow. Later, recounting the event, Eli reports with apparent truth:

(13) I initially thought Jane was a tree.

An account of doxastic relations as the product of causal sensitivities will contribute to a very simple account of (13)'s truth, with no hidden elements of logical form, and no constraints on the semantics of names that conflict with Millianism. At the time of Eli's confusion, he is located in a tent in his doxastic alternatives next to a looming tree. But features of that tree in Eli's doxastic alternatives, such as its physical location, are sensitive to the corresponding features of Jane. If Jane were initially standing a few feet to the left, then the tree in Eli's doxastic alternatives at that time would have been further to the left, for example. On the view I'm provisionally working with, this is sufficient to relate Jane to the tree in Eli's doxastic alternatives in ways that makes facts about that tree settle what Eli believes about Jane. There's no need for contortions in logical form, non-standard worlds, or sophisticated semantic values—all the work is accomplished by properly setting the conditions on having beliefs about objects.

I've aimed to remain agnostic about the nature of doxastic relations. But if we take the truth-values of sentences like (13) at face value, we've seen those relations can and should exhibit a great deal of permissiveness. Will this constrain which relations we opt for? Perhaps. It depends on other aspects of one's views of belief and modality. If one takes doxastic alternatives to be exhausted by metaphysical possibilities, this will apply pressure to construing doxastic relations as identity. But even taking doxastic relations to be identity relations across metaphysically possible worlds is possible with suitable 'give' in other parts of one's view. For example, we can accommodate the data by adopting a permissive ontology which takes an individuals-at-a-world as a kind of modal 'slices' which can be combined permissively to generate entities that span worlds (though this requires a bit of indeterminacy in which particular modally extended individual "Jane" may refer to). An alternative is to maintain doxastic relations as identities, but proliferate worlds beyond metaphysical possibilities. And still another option is to construe doxastic relations as counterpart relations, a position which may, with relative ease, be combined with almost any view on belief and modality. I suspect, for this reason, my skeletal view is best framed as a form of counterpart theory, but I won't explore how to do so here.

Instead, since the core framework of an account of *de re* belief ascription is already in place. There is just one more thesis needed to treat Cumming's puzzle. But first we need to return to Ortcutt.

4 Problematic Intensional Relations

On the view developed so far, as long as we can settle which objects in the doxastic alternatives of B are doxastically related to an object A from the actual world, ascriptions to B of *de re* beliefs about A should be readily intelligible. So what is going wrong in the case of Ortcutt? Why is it unobvious to some how to answer Quine’s rhetorical question about objectual satisfaction in Ortcutt’s case? We can address the case by noting that it is just one instance of a general phenomenon that arises for all intensional relations: sometimes settling the relations can be challenging, or unprincipled, and when this is the case it will adversely affect the interpretability of *de re* ascriptions. As always, it helps to revisit other forms of intensionality *de re* to see the point.

Consider, for example, tensed claims. Let’s grant for the moment a bit of science fiction required for a classic thought experiment of Wiggins: that all the information in our brain is stored twice—once in each hemisphere.¹⁵ Menendez, the present youngest senator from New Jersey, will soon be in an car accident. Doctors will harvest his brain, implant each of its two hemispheres in a different body, which will live on with the memories and personality of Menendez. One of these two persons dies in a few years. At that time the other (who will then be no senator) meets you on the steps of the Capitol. Is the *de re* reading of (11) true *now*?

- (11) The youngest senator from New Jersey will greet you on the Capitol steps.

Obviously it depends. It depends on whether the person who meets you on the steps of the Capitol with half of Menendez’s brain, and all his memories and personality, settles what will be true of Menendez. Does he? This is a controversial matter. It is so controversial that it is not implausible to maintain there is *no answer*—in unfamiliar enough cases our grip on persistence conditions for humans, and other objects more generally, can be strained to the point where it breaks down. If this is right then of course there is no fact of the matter about the truth or falsity of (11) either. Our grip on temporal intensional relations may falter, and the intelligibility of relevant quantifications across temporal operators will then fall with it.

We can raise the same troubles for metaphysical modal operators. Suppose that if Barack Obama’s parents had conceived a child one minute before they actually did, the same sperm and ovum which formed Barack Obama would have combined, but a second sperm would have fertilized a separate ovum at the same time. In the early stages of development the two zygotes would fuse, resulting in a rare form of ‘chimerism’—a fetus with two genetically distinct populations of cells. In the counterfactual circumstances we are considering, the chimera grows into a normal adult who runs for president in 2008 and loses to John McCain. Is (14) true?

¹⁵See Parfit (1971) for an discussion of the case.

- (14) If the president's parents had conceived one minute before they actually did, then he would have lost the presidential election.

Again it depends. It depends on whether the person who would grow out of the fused zygotes can settle what is possible for Obama. It seems plausible that if the resulting individual had all the same genetic material as Obama, he could. It seems plausible that if the resulting individual had *none* of the same genetic material as Obama he could not. Would one cell from the other zygote make a difference? Two? Is there some fixed cut off? If not, then we might have scenarios in which it is not merely difficult, but unprincipled, to say whether some possibility is a possibility *for* Obama or not. Again, when our grip on the modal intensional relations is sufficiently problematic, (14) becomes equally problematic in turn.

These are manifestations of what is simply a restatement, with the help of contraposition, of the principle of *Intensional Relations*, from §2.

Intensional Relations': For any parameter p of the index, if we can't understand and apply the relevant intensional relation connected with p , we can't understand quantification across an intensional operator shifting p .

When we transpose this principle to the case of belief attribution, we find that when doxastic relations are problematic, so are the *de re* belief ascriptions whose intelligibility relies on those relations. I've followed Stalnaker in taking these relations to be secured by something like causal covariation. But I want to stress that this isn't essential to point I'm making here. The point is that *whatever* criteria help settle the relevant doxastic relations *could* be problematic in particular cases in ways that would interfere with the interpretation of *de re* belief ascriptions.

It is this phenomenon, whose existence can be motivated purely by consideration of the class of intensional constructions generally, that Stalnaker also suggests we should use to understand Orcutt. We know more or less what Ralph's doxastic alternatives are like. In these worlds, there is one man in a brown hat at the bar at the time of Ralph's visit who is a spy. There is a man who Ralph sees on the beach who is not a spy. In Ralph's doxastic alternatives, these two men are not identical. Which of them settles what Ralph believes about Orcutt? We can't answer because, it seems, they are equally good candidates. Exactly why this is so might be controversial. Taking up Stalnaker's recommendation, we can see that both of these individuals in Ralph's doxastic alternatives carry information about Orcutt, as facts about them covary with facts about Orcutt. For example if Orcutt were actually taller or shorter, both men in Ralph's doxastic alternatives would correspondingly be taller or shorter. This seems like a plausible explanation, but we don't need it to be the right one. All we need is some criteria underlying the application of doxastic relations which relate Orcutt and the man on the beach in Ralph's doxastic alternatives, and Orcutt and the man at the bar in those same alternatives.

As long as this is the case both men will be equally good candidates to settle Ralph’s beliefs about Ortcutt. Perhaps this means that neither actually should settle what Ralph believes about Ortcutt. Perhaps it means that either, or both, should. Either way the case is non-standard enough to explain our mixed intuitions about the case. As I argued before, the culprit here is not intensionality which, as we’ve seen, doesn’t generally create insuperable difficulties in the temporal or modal cases. Problematic intensional relations are to blame. Though Quine misdiagnosed his case, the mistake is forgivable. The reason is that in cases of belief ascription, unlike with metaphysical modals and temporals, problematic intensional relations and failure of substitution of coreferring terms tend to come together, obfuscating the real source of our confusions.

Interestingly, obstacles to identifying Ortcutt may easily disappear, as Stalnaker notes, if we simply eradicate the basis for relating him to one of the men in Ralph’s doxastic alternatives.¹⁶ Suppose just as in Quine’s original case that Ralph has heard of Ortcutt as a pillar of the community and has seen him at the beach, but that he never sees Ortcutt in questionable circumstances. Does Ralph think of Ortcutt (the man himself) that he is a spy? It seems safe to say in this scenario that Ralph thinks Ortcutt is *not* a spy. Why can we say this? Because now it is once again easy to find the person in Ralph’s doxastic alternatives who settles what Ralph believes of Ortcutt, so the relevant *de re* ascriptions again regain their utility. This phenomenon again has an interesting potential parallel in the case of temporals (and perhaps metaphysical modals as well): Menendez gets into his earlier accident, which immediately causes him to lose one hemisphere of his brain before any chances of transplanting it. The other hemisphere, along with Menendez’s personality and memories, remains intact and is used in a successful transplant operation. When given this case some philosophers report more confidently that Menendez will survive the accident. Some problems for the temporal *de re* claim might only arise when there is, as it is sometimes put, a suitable ‘competitor’ to settle the facts about Menendez. What the Ortcutt case reveals is that a completely parallel phenomenon arises for belief.

5 Contextual Relocation

We’re now in a position to articulate the third and final thesis about *de re* belief ascription required to account for Cumming’s puzzle: a sensitivity in those ascriptions to context. This thesis has the potential to be the most controversial element of my skeletal account. Though some frameworks for other intensional notions, like Lewis’ counterpart theoretic treatment of modality *de re*, build a form of context sensitivity into them, this aspect of those frameworks is controversial. Even if no other form of intensionality *de re* exhibits a form of context sensitivity, though, I submit that we should accommodate such sensitivity in

¹⁶Stalnaker (1988) discusses these cases under the heading of “divide and conquer arguments”, citing Kripke (1979) as an early appreciator of their importance.

ascriptions of belief *de re*. Given our first two theses, the empirical data alone gives us ample motivations.

Stalnaker arrives at this conclusion after noting that in Quine's original case, even if Ralph's mental state doesn't seem to change, we may nonetheless be able to felicitously make *de re* belief ascriptions about Orcutt if the context of attribution is right.¹⁷ This seems right, but I think we can see the motivations more clearly in a different case, where we can see the operation of context is more transparent. Suppose there is a well-known horror writer from Maine named "Carl Filler" who, as it happens, has briefly taken up residence in a neighborhood of Toledo and frequents a local bar there. The bartender knows Carl as a regular named "Carl Filler" but does not know he is the author of the same name. If asked, the Bartender would report that he suspects the horror author lives in a log cabin in Maine. One day Carl comes into the bar at which point the bartender proceeds to pour him a complementary amount of a fine whiskey in the hopes of getting better tips out of him.

Over in a conversation among die-hard Filler fans, who know the bartender is ignorant of Filler's identity as author, we can overhear the following.

A: "Pah. Look at the bartender! I can't believe it. He still doesn't recognize Filler. He thinks Filler is off in some log cabin in New Hampshire. Carl's presence is wasted here."

B: "You're right that the bartender doesn't realize Filler is here, but you're wrong about where he thinks he is. He thinks Filler is off in Maine—that's the local misconception."

We can simultaneously hear a separate conversation, at which patrons, who are again privy to the bartender's ignorance, discuss the virtues of different kinds of whiskey.

C: "Look. Carl Filler, that dime-store hack, is back again and currying the bartender's favor. Amazingly the bartender thinks that Filler is the type of person to enjoy good quality whiskey. I'd rather suspect that Filler likes his drinks like he likes his fiction—cheap and trashy."

D: "You're mistaken there. The bartender thinks that though Filler will drink what he pours enthusiastically, he won't really enjoy the whiskey all—he just thinks Filler will tip better if he gives him some of the expensive stuff."

What we have here are two conversations where speakers attribute to the bartender apparently incompatible beliefs about the man, Carl Filler: that he is presently in Maine, or that he is presently at the bar and about to drink the whiskey being poured out, for example. What's interesting about these conversations is that some of these attributions which collectively attribute incompatible beliefs seem, *prima facie*, to be true—those made by B and D for

¹⁷Stalnaker (1988) p.166.

example. Moreover, some of the other attributions which collectively attribute incompatible beliefs about Filler seem *untrue*—the utterances of A and C, in their respective conversations for example.

If we take the corresponding truth value judgments at face value, what governs the truth and falsity of these ascriptions? As always, our first step is to get a clear grip on the bartender’s doxastic alternatives, qualitatively described. It is relatively transparent what these are like. In them, there is a famous horror author, writing in a log cabin in Maine, named “Carl Filler”. There is also a distinct individual likewise named “Carl Filler” who is no author, and a regular at the bar where the bartender works in Toledo. To understand which beliefs the bartender has about Carl Filler, the man himself, we must locate the individual in these doxastic alternatives who settles such matters. Who is he—the man at the bar, or the man in Maine? We have here a case very much like that of Orcutt, in which an actual individual’s influence is ‘split’ between two individuals in various doxastic alternatives. So why is conversation proceeding so smoothly?

What seems to occur is that each conversation has its own standards for who settles the bartender’s beliefs about Filler. In the conversation in which A and B participate, speakers are presently taking the relevant individual to be the author in the bartender’s doxastic alternatives. This is the person who lives in Maine, and not in New Hampshire, in those worlds. Further ascriptions of belief about Filler the same vein will be judged for truth or falsity according to how things stand with *that* individual in the bartender’s doxastic alternatives. The conversation in which C and D are engaged has different standards. Clearly, they are taking the man at the bar in the bartender’s doxastic alternatives to settle what the bartender believes of Filler. This is the person in those doxastic alternatives who will merely pretend to appreciate whiskey about to be poured, and will leave a big tip. Again, further ascriptions in this same vein will be judged for truth or falsity according to how things stand with *that* individual in the bartender’s doxastic alternatives.

These ways of resolving the indeterminacy in who settles the bartender’s beliefs about Filler are incompatible with each other. Consider what would happen if the Bartender thought that the horror author who lived in Maine by the name of “Carl Filler” did enjoy fine whiskey. Even if this were supposed, it seems quite safe to label C’s utterance of “. . . the bartender thinks that Filler is the type of person to enjoy good quality whiskey” as false. A corresponding utterance in the course of the conversation of A and B, however, could be interpreted as a truth with relative ease.

Stalnaker suggests that we should explain such shifting standards as the product of a process of Lewisian accommodation.¹⁸ So conceived, the problem of locating appropriate individuals via doxastic relations must be construed, at least to some modest extent, as a matter of convention among speakers who are using that individual to describe the character of a thinker’s belief state. When, say, facts about causal sensitivities don’t unambiguously fix who is doxastically

¹⁸See Lewis (1979).

related to whom, we sometimes use conversational cues to conventionally settle, at least for conversational purposes, which individuals do the work of settling the truth of *de re* ascriptions. This seems true to the facts. Aspects of context such as speaker intentions, salience, and relevance do seem to help settle what kinds of *de re* ascriptions are correct, or incorrect, in cases like those I've just given.

These empirical considerations, paired with our two earlier theses, motivate a final principle governing *de re* belief ascription.

Contextual Resolution. When there are multiple candidates at a belief world to be doxastically related with an object from the actual world (as per *Intensional Identity*'), features of the context (e.g. salience, relevance) may resolve the ambiguity in favor of one of these candidates.

The details of how the context of utterance affects interpretation here are complex, but no more so than any other kind of contextual accommodation. Cooperative speakers say things which are topical, interesting, and true, and sometimes it will be obvious to all participants in a conversation just which among multiple candidates should be doxastically related to an object in the actual world to make pertinent *de re* ascriptions satisfy these conditions—the Filler case is a paradigmatic example.

Contextual Resolution requires context to select among, disambiguate, or resolve doxastic relations. How context mediates this process may differ depending on how we chose to accommodate the flexibility which characteristically sets *de re* belief apart from other forms of *de re* intensionality. If, for example, we take doxastic relations to be identity and choose to accommodate that flexibility by allowing a flexible conception of individuals 'extended' across worlds, context will effectively settle which such individuals are salient to stand as the referent of a single name. If doxastic relations are counterpart relations, context will help select among, or disambiguate, the counterpart relations themselves. And there are alternatives besides. Importantly, on no view I've considered so far are doxastic relations part of logical form (though of course, the context which does the selecting, or disambiguating, may be). Doxastic relations form part of an account of what it takes to *have* beliefs about objects—what constitutes having such beliefs.

Though there are many ways of implementing *Contextual Resolution*, it is the more controversial of the three theses I've articulated. So it's important to stress just how powerful and explanatory an assumption it is. Let's witness this power now, by returning to Cumming's puzzle.

6 Applications

We've now seen that admitting the three principles of *Intensional Identity*, *Belief Worlds*, and *Contextual Resolution* can allow for systematic ambiguities in the

de re readings of (15), and accordingly in (16) as well even if we adopt a Millian semantics for names.

(15) Ralph thinks the *F* is *G*.

(16) Ralph thinks *n* is *G*.

Importantly, on the skeletal view I've been developing, (15) and (16) should be able to exhibit not just a two-way ambiguity, but as many readings as one likes provided the contexts of attribution afford them. This does seem to be the case. Consider the following example of a 'twice-over' confusion of identities.

Ralph is at the University of Podunk graduate conference with the famous political philosopher George Smith as keynote. Ralph knows of George's work, but is unaware that he is in attendance. When George introduces himself by name to Ralph before the first speaker, Ralph mistakenly takes him to be a technician and asks him to help set up the powerpoint. As George does this, a graduate student, Tom, comes up to assist. At first George is working with some cords on the left, and Tom is working with some cords on the right. Ralph turns his back for a moment to grab some cables for George, during which time George and Tom change places. Ralph turns around, clearly unaware of the switch. He heads to hand the cables to the person on the left, while glaring at what he takes to be inappropriate dress of the person to his right.

The following three dialogs are taking place around the room.

Dialog 1:

A: "Why does Ralph have that awful expression on his face?"

B: "He clearly thinks George Smith is not dressed appropriately for the conference."

Dialog 2:

C: "George Smith was the one who asked for cables. Why is Ralph heading to give cables to the guy on the left of the podium instead of the guy on the right?"

D: "He got confused when his back was turned. He now thinks George Smith is the person standing on his left."

Dialog 3:

E: "Why has Ralph been treating the keynote with such disdain?"

F: “He doesn’t realize who he is talking to. He thinks George Smith is in Princeton, and that he’s been talking with a technician all along.”

Our skeletal account gives the resources to see relatively clearly what’s happening here. Ralph’s doxastic alternatives are easy to characterize. In them, there are three individuals we need to keep track of. One is named “George Smith” and is a well-known philosopher working away in Princeton. Another individual with the same name is a technician come to fix the powerpoint. In Ralph’s doxastic alternatives the second individual is now working with cords to the left of the podium, while a third individual—a graduate student—works away to its right.

Which of these individuals settles what Ralph believes of George Smith? Now we have three candidates. Changes in facts about George Smith in the actual world can systematically lead to changes in *three* individuals in Ralph’s doxastic alternatives. If George Smith were to have specialized in mereology, then the philosopher in Princeton in Ralph’s current doxastic alternatives would have as well. If George Smith had worn different clothes, so would the graduate student in Ralph’s current doxastic alternatives. And if George Smith were to have sneered at Ralph when asking for cords, so would the technician presently working to the left of the podium in Ralph’s doxastic alternatives.

Dialogs 1–3 proceed as smoothly as they do because context allows speakers to easily resolve the ambiguities in whom to doxastically relate with George Smith in Ralph’s doxastic alternatives. In the first dialog, it’s with the graduate student; in the second, it’s with the technician; and in the third, it’s with the philosopher. Moreover the divergences in these relations have a very natural explanation: they are the only ways to relate George Smith to individuals in the doxastic alternatives so as to make the replies suitably pertinent to the questions being asked in the respective conversations.

I bring this case up because the same kinds of ambiguities are present in Cumming’s original case of mistaken identities. Maria, masquerading as Kathryn, continues to twirl her carnation now visible to Biron who misidentifies it as a rose. Rosaline, masquerading as Maria, holds no flower, again in Biron’s sight. It should be easy to see how to get *prima facie* true readings of each of the following sentences, set in a suitable context.

(17) Biron thinks Maria is holding a rose, not a carnation.

(18) Biron thinks Maria is not holding any flowers.

We can also get readings on which these can be false. Note, for example, that assertions of the conjunction of (17) and (18) tend to have a contradictory feel because, it seems, no single context easily accommodates them both.

Cumming has the tools to try to account for the true readings of (17) and (18) without giving Biron contradictory beliefs by appealing to alternating scope of “Maria” in their logical forms. But this strategy will not deal with the phenomenon in its full generality, as the George Smith case reveals: in general there can be more possible ambiguities than a simple scope distinction will allow.

(17) and (18) have both true and false readings because, in a now familiar manner, Maria is responsible for the features of two distinct women in Biron’s doxastic alternatives. Maria’s influence is accordingly split in those alternatives between two candidates to settle what Biron’s believes of her. The source of the ambiguities in (17) and (18) are clearly closely tied to the asymmetries in Cumming’s original statements (KR)–(MK). As such, our skeletal account gives us all the resources needed to account for the puzzle. To take one example, let’s revisit (KR).

(KR) Biron thinks Katherine is Rosaline.

There are two women in Biron’s doxastic alternatives who are responsive to facts about Katherine, the woman named “Katherine” now wearing Katherine’s favor, and the distinct woman at the ball wearing Rosaline’s favor. If Katherine were to have rolled her eyes when receiving her favor, so would the woman named “Katherine” in Biron’s doxastic alternatives. If Katherine were to refuse to dance at the ball, so would the distinct woman in Biron’s doxastic alternatives wearing Rosaline’s favor. Similarly, two women in Biron’s doxastic alternatives are responsive to facts about Rosaline: the woman named “Rosaline” and the distinct woman at the ball wearing Maria’s favor.

If we interpret an utterance of (KR) charitably in this context, we will try disambiguate the doxastic relations associated with Katherine and Rosaline so as to make the individuals to whom they are related in Biron’s doxastic alternatives identical. To do this we need to ‘alternate’ methods of interpretation—for example by taking Katherine to be related to the woman at the ball wearing Rosaline’s favor and Rosaline to be related to the woman in Biron’s doxastic alternatives called “Rosaline”. These two individuals *are* identical in Biron’s doxastic alternatives. The ‘alternating’ strategies for contextually locating Katherine and Rosaline in those doxastic alternatives is in part what accounts for the informativeness of (KR), even provided our assumption of Biron’s logical and conceptual prowess. This is the reading that Cumming makes his focus. We can get a different reading, typically associated with different intonations, which disambiguates the doxastic relations in the opposite way.

This account of the case maintains several very desirable features: it treats Cumming’s puzzle as a semantic phenomenon by taking stable truth-value intuitions at face value, it keeps Biron’s belief state logically and conceptually coherent, it keeps the logical form of belief attributions as close to their surface grammar as possible without positing controversial elements of logical form, and it manages to view Cumming’s puzzle as an instance of a much more general phenomenon dealt with by a single overarching account of *de re* belief ascription, which subsumes other cases like that of Orcutt.

Though the account draws heavily on Stalnaker’s work, it requires a sparse set of resources which can be developed in ways incompatible with many of Stalnaker’s more controversial views if desired. The view consists of three theses. Two of these—*Intensional Identity* and *Belief Worlds*—are motivated by consideration of the resources needed to cope with, and understand, intensional

operators generally, and belief ascriptions as one among many intensional constructions. Once these two theses are accepted, the final thesis—*Contextual Resolution*—can be motivated almost exclusively by empirical data. Taken together, the theses make no commitments on controversial questions about the fineness of grain of mental or linguistic content. A Russellian, or even a Fregean, about propositional content can adopt these theses, and the account if desired.¹⁹ The account makes no assumptions about the structure of a mental state beyond the claim that logically coherent mental states determine qualitatively coherent doxastic alternatives of *some* kind populated by objects with identifiable properties. Finally, it makes no assumptions about the nature of intentionality or accounts of relations of identity between the actual world and doxastic alternatives beyond those required, in conjunction with the three theses, to take intuitive truth-value judgments at face value.

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¹⁹Though of course the account may threaten to make some aspects of a Fregean view appear superfluous.

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