

Semantics and Pragmatics of Referentially Transparent and Referentially Opaque Belief Ascription Sentences

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Abstract This essay takes a critical look at Jonathan Berg's theory of direct belief. Berg's analysis of the concept of direct belief is considered insightful, but doubts are raised concerning his generalization of the purely extensional truth conditional semantics of direct belief ascription sentences to the truth conditional semantics of all belief ascription sentences. Difficulties are posed that Berg does not discuss, but that are implied by the proposal that the truth conditional semantics of belief ascription sentences generally are those of direct belief ascription sentences, and that once mentioned must enter into an evaluation of the proposition that by implication all beliefs are direct. Another line of objection concerns Berg's second main thesis that the pragmatics as distinct from the semantics of belief ascription sentences can explain away apparent substitution failure validity breakdowns in belief ascription sentences as inappropriate utterances according to rules of roughly Gricean conversational implicature, rather than correspondence or non-correspondence with the facts about such things as what it is that people actually believe. These two parts of Berg's argument, that the truth conditional semantics of all belief ascription sentences are those exclusively of direct belief ascription sentences, and that apparent substitution failure is effectively *salva propria* rather than *salva veritate*, are explored within the general framework of Berg's thought experiment, eventually arriving at diametrically opposed conclusions, reflecting on what we believe comic book character Lois Lane believes and does not believe about Superman, and what she believes and does not believe about Clark Kent.

Keywords Belief · Belief ascription sentence · Berg, Jonathan · Conversational implicature · *de dicto / de re* · Doxastic theory · Grice, H.P. · Pragmatics · Semantics · Substitution failure *salva veritate* v. *salva propria* · Truth condition · Utterance appropriateness condition

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Berg's Concept of Direct Belief

Jonathan Berg's analysis of direct belief in his compact (2012) study, *Direct Belief: An Essay on the Semantics, Pragmatics, and Metaphysics of Belief*, interprets beliefs generally as *de re* referentially transparent doxastic relations (Berg 2012). The guiding idea of Berg's proposal is to sharply distinguish the semantics of true or false belief ascription sentences from the pragmatics of their appropriate utterance. According to Berg, there are direct belief ascriptions that, despite their truth, would be inappropriate under dynamic circumstances of Gricean conversational implicature to express in language. It is this inappropriateness of utterance, rather than truth value, by which Berg explains away the presumed *de dicto* intensionality or referential opacity of belief ascriptions, as inferred from the apparent intersubstitution failure of coreferential terms or materially equivalent sentences in belief ascription sentences *salva veritate*.¹

The truth conditional semantics of direct belief ascription sentences in Berg's account is supposed to represent that of all pretheoretically presumed propositional belief ascriptions. They would hold unqualifiedly and paradigmatically for true belief ascriptions to an omniscient epistemic agent, for whom no identities are hidden or facts unknown. Berg explains and enhances our understanding of the category of direct belief, which is the book's substantial merit. However, Berg goes too far when he

¹ We already know that something is amiss in the substitution *salva veritate* test for extensionality, and in all other cases where substitution *salva veritate* fails, in its application as a semantic criterion of intensionality or referential opacity, in what is properly a semantic concept of intensionality. Consider the following application that looks superficially as respectable as any other use of substitution failure *salva veritate* to test for referential semantic opacity or intensionality of linguistic context:

1. $F = ma$ is a law of kinematics equating Force with the product of mass times acceleration. (TRUE)
2. $F = ma \leftrightarrow E = mc^2$ (TRUE)
3. $E = mc^2$ is a law of kinematics equating Force with the product of mass times acceleration. (FALSE)
4. '_____ is a law of kinematics equating Force with the product of mass times acceleration' is an intensional, not extensional linguistic context. (FALSE?)

It would be an unpopular solution to suggest, as in (4), that '_____ is a law of kinematics... etc.' is an intensional rather than purely extensional context. The problem is that material equivalence does not seem strong enough to sustain intersubstitutability of (in some sense) equivalent sentences *salva veritate* or, for that matter, *salva propria*, while anything else appears too strong. The equivalence in (2) above is nevertheless not merely material, although expressed as such, because it is causally necessary that the two laws are true, assuming they are true at all. We can make the same point even more solidly by speaking of two mathematical theorems that have nothing to do with one another, but are equally supposed to be true in all logically possible worlds, in a description of one as an axiom of Euclidean geometry and the other as Kurt Gödel's (first) incompleteness metatheorem of 1931. If the context is '_____ is an axiom of Euclidean geometry...etc.', then a modally strengthened version of the same problem arises, even for stronger than material equivalence intersubstitutions. If, however, we retrench and reconfigure by restricting intersubstitution of coreferential terms and *logically* rather than *materially* equivalent sentences *salva veritate* or *salve propria*, then we incapacitate too many intuitively legitimate truth preserving intersubstitutions of sentences. It is true that fish swim if and only if birds fly, so that if someone says, 'It is true that fish swim', they ought to be able to substitute the materially but not logically equivalent proposition 'birds fly' in order to complete the context, 'It is true [a fact of terrestrial biology, etc.] that _____' as 'It is true that birds fly', preserving propositional truth value, *salva veritate*. We must do justice to truth preserving intersubstitutions of equivalent sentence contexts, just as we must take note of truth preserving failures as signs of intensionality, referential opacity, and *de dicto* belief ascription sentences.

advances but does not cogently argue for the generalization by which the truth conditional semantics of belief ascription sentences are always those of direct belief ascription sentences. Belief ascription sentences express the relation between a doxastic agent and a proposition when the agent accepts or assents or would assent to the proposition's truth, or accepts the proposition as true. The proposition itself might be either true or false, since belief that a proposition is true obviously does not imply its truth. Berg's account, lacking intensionality in its purely semantic truth value meaning component, is additionally isolated from the proposal's narrowly constrained pragmatic component. The latter is restricted by Berg as governing, not meaning or truth, or in other ways contributing to sentential meaning in the limited sense of determining a sentence's truth value, but exclusively to the circumstantial appropriateness of utterance conditions for sentences whose truth value is assumed, independently of more comprehensive pragmatic considerations that Berg does not investigate.

Target of Critical Exposition

We show in what follows that Berg's theory implies that if a doxastic agent believes anything true or false, then the doxastic agent directly believes and finally unconditionally believes every true and every false proposition, regardless of the agent's psychological or phenomenological state, ability or inability, inclination or disinclination, to assent to the supposedly (directly) believed proposition's truth. The implication is interpreted as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the proposal that the truth conditional semantics of belief ascription sentences are those of direct belief ascription sentences. What is at stake is the philosophical question whether belief ascription sentences are purely extensional, referentially transparent, *de re*, as Berg concludes, or intensional, referentially opaque, *de dicto* expressions of occurrent and dispositional belief states of individual doxastic agents and their beliefs, the propositional contents of their belief states. Which we should expect to be subjectively variable, that not everyone believes the same thing, and not everyone believes both a proposition and its negation.

What saves us from the triviality of every doxastic agent believing every true and every false proposition is precisely the intensionality and referential opacity of (indirect or referentially mediated) beliefs that Berg rejects. It is only the intensional limitations of belief states, of what is believed by a particular doxastic agent as excluded from what the individual does not believe, and from what other doxastic agents believe, that makes it worthwhile to speak of beliefs at all. Otherwise, there is no justification in philosophical vocabulary for speaking of *beliefs*, as opposed to true propositions, or even more generally to propositions, true or false, provided that there exists at least one doxastic agent. Needless to say, also for Berg, this is not how we usually think of belief states and beliefs as the propositional contents of belief states. We are not prepared to use those words that way, and we do not abide any and every lexical modification of meaning in philosophical application, if there is to be any ground for the original symbol 'belief' instead of 'proposition' to be used as Berg's proposal requires.

We normally want to be able to say that you believe Fa , but you might not believe Fb , because you do not believe what is actually true, that $a = b$. If the truth conditional semantics of belief ascription sentences are as Berg maintains, then if you believe (truly or falsely) that Fa , then if $a = b$, then, whether you know (indirectly believe) it or not, you (directly) believe that Fb . Note that indirect or intensional referentially opaque

belief ascription sentences have not been entirely eliminated, even if parenthesized. For any property G , if it is also true that Ga , then, by virtue of believing that Fa , whether you (indirectly) believe it or not, you also (directly) believe that Ga , and you (directly) believe that Gb . Where properties are constructible, we can expect to find such predications as being such that it is true of any chosen object that π is the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter, that $F = ma$, that all men are mortal, that sugar is sweet. Instantly, Meno's slave (directly) believes all true propositions of geometry, including the length of line needed to double the area of a square, and indeed all truths about all things in every category, by virtue of having experienced any (possibly prenatal) beliefs. Socrates must only ask Meno's slave the right questions, as he scrawls a figure in the sand, to awaken this knowledge.

Worse, Berg's account implies that in the semantics of belief ascription sentences we cannot distinguish between what any doxastic agent (directly) believes and what any other doxastic agent (directly) believes. We speak in both instances of an extension of direct beliefs for all doxastic agents that comprehends not only all true propositions, but all propositions, true or false, regardless of whether a particular doxastic agent would assent to their truth. In that case, we are no longer speaking of beliefs, but of propositions that any doxastic agent could believe, only at the cost of directly believing everything that can be believed. Without the intensionality of belief ascription sentences blocking free-wheeling intersubstitutions of coreferential terms and materially equivalent sentences *salva veritate*, there is no way to distinguish what any two doxastic agents (indirectly) believe. Berg equates belief with direct belief, in equating the truth conditional semantics of belief ascription sentences with those of direct belief ascription sentences. He writes off the inconveniences of that reductive doctrine with no more than a gesture toward what he narrowly considers the pragmatics of utterance appropriateness in circumstances of conversational implicature. If from a semantic truth conditional standpoint, what doxastic agents actually believe is what they actually directly believe, then no two doxastic agents can ever differ in their (direct) beliefs. All the same (direct) belief ascription sentences (all true or false sentences) will hold true of any choice of doxastic agents, and we shall no longer be able to explain the individuality of rational decision making, action motivating and justifying reasoning and inference, with reference to an agent's beliefs. Belief-based explanations are trivialized when every doxastic agent not only believes all the same propositions as every other doxastic agent, but believes every true or false proposition. The argument will take some preparation, but is lightly formalized and discussed below in the penultimate section, on *Direct Belief and the Limits of Belief and Nonbelief*.

The concept of direct belief in Berg's proposal, the generalization by which the truth conditional semantics of all belief ascriptions are understood as those of direct belief ascription sentences in Berg's sense makes it pointless to speak of beliefs as opposed to true sentences, propositions more generally, true or false, rather than doxastic attitudes toward propositions *as* true or *as* false, or the logical implications of beliefs. Beliefs are supposed to be subjectively differential, or the word serves no purpose in the language, beyond the role already adequately served by speaking of objective truths and falsehoods. If Muslims believe all the same propositions as Christians or Taoists, and vice versa, then why do we try to distinguish these religions doctrinally? If Newton believed everything that Einstein believed, then why do we consider Einstein's beliefs more scientifically advanced than Newton's? If we can bring in facts from outside the

ostensible subjective boundaries of individual belief, then we open the floodgates to any and every true proposition as directly believed by any and every doxastic agent who ever truly or falsely believed any proposition, and finally to any and every true or false proposition.

Belief ascription sentences interpreted semantically in Berg's narrow sense as direct belief ascriptions are purely extensional. Berg maintains that as far as truth value preservation is concerned, belief ascription sentences support the intersubstitution of coreferential terms or materially equivalent sentences *salva veritate*. The appearance of semantic failure is not explained by Berg as the intensionality, the referential opacity of *de dicto* belief ascription contexts, as conventionally assumed, but in narrowly pragmatic terms as utterance inappropriateness. Berg semantically interprets all belief ascription sentences, first, as true direct belief ascriptions, and second, he paraphrastically dispels objections about the apparent falsehood of otherwise supposedly referentially opaque belief ascriptions, despite being semantically true and semantically truth value preserving through permitted syntax intersubstitutions, as either: (i) direct beliefs about unexpected objects connected or associated with the ostensible objects of intensional or referentially opaque belief ascriptions; or (ii) despite their semantic truth, the belief ascriptions in question give the misleading appearance of semantic falsehood only because of a failure, not of semantic truth conditions, but of Gricean conversational implicature circumstantial conditions for appropriateness of expression.

The following critical appraisal of Berg's discussion explains some of the theory's philosophical motivations, attractions, difficulties, and consequences, and arrives at the conclusion already mentioned, that Berg enhances philosophical understanding of the category of direct belief, but does not adequately or convincingly support his main thesis that the truth conditional semantics of belief ascription sentences generally are exclusively the truth conditional semantics of direct belief ascription sentences. The consequence is that there is no difference between the extension of Berg's trivialized concept of 'direct belief' and the extension of the concept of 'true or false proposition', and there is no difference between the beliefs of any two doxastic agents, or of any single doxastic agent over time.

Motivation and Commitment to Belief as Direct Belief

In the Preface to *Direct Belief*, Berg explains that his interest in the book's investigation was sparked years earlier during his graduate student days. Struggling to grasp the *de dicto* / *de re* distinction in conventional presentations, Berg made an early discovery. He concluded that there is an unnoticed ambiguity in the failure of intersubstitution of coreferential terms or materially equivalent sentences by which *de dicto* contexts in their intensionality or referential opacity are standardly supposed to be criteriologically distinguished from purely extensional *de re* referentially transparent contexts.

Intensional contexts make several appearances in colloquial expression. They block syntax intersubstitutions in exact quotation contexts, in mentioning versus using terms, also conventionally distinguished by means of quotation marks, the numbering of alphabetical letters in distinct coreferential terms, and other contexts. The ones of interest to philosophers for independent reasons are usually those involving propositional attitude sentences, and especially belief ascription. The question of whether or

not terms or sentences in true belief ascription sentences are intersubstitutable, according to Berg, can be determined alternatively by the truth of the resulting sentence, or the appropriateness of its utterance. Berg explains this formative episode in his philosophical biography in these terms:

This project goes back to when I was a graduate student trying to get a better understanding of the *de re/de dicto* distinction. After poring over Tyler Burge's 'Belief *De Re*' and the related literature, I eventually came to the conclusion that talk of the interchangeability of coreferential names suffered from a kind of modal ambiguity: whether or not one *could* substitute one name for another depended on whether the substitution was to preserve the *truth* of the *sentence*, or the *appropriateness* of the *utterance*...²

A startling omission in Berg's exposition is the prior question whether it is possible for a sentence to have a truth value independently of the appropriateness of its utterance. If I say 'It's coming in 15 min', my statement might lack truth value altogether, unless something as adaptable as conversational implicature can determine what I mean by 'it' and the appropriate reference for the time index, 'in 15 min'. Without appeal to the pragmatics of sentence utterance, whether in Gricean or situation semantics, or by some other theory of meaning, analytic or holistic, the construction, 'It's coming in 15 min', is neither true nor false, and hence not a genuine proposition.

Whereas Berg wants to cleanly divide truth value semantics from utterance appropriate pragmatics, truth value assignment, often based on utterance appropriate pragmatics, would seem instead to be at least two among the fundamental mutually irreducible components of a complete theory of meaning. The question is whether the specific kinds of belief ascription sentences Berg considers support truth values independently of the pragmatics of appropriate utterance, among other pragmatic dimensions of term and sentence meaning that Berg does not invoke or explore. He continues:

The positive argument comes in the second chapter, where I show how the import of *de dicto* interpretations of belief ascriptions can be accounted for pragmatically, as conversationally implicated, rather than semantically, as belonging to what is actually said.³

If Berg acknowledges so much as the existence of *de dicto* interpretations of belief ascriptions, which semantic metatheory is then free to interpret à la pragmatic, conversational implicative, or realist, constructivist, intentionalist, phenomenological, cognitive or behaviorist, functionalist, computationalist models, or the like, including the two Berg singles out for mention, then he must explain why they are supposed to be universally and exclusively supplanted by *de re* interpretations. Berg further outlines the path of inquiry:

² Berg (2012), Preface, p. v.

³ Ibid.

After setting up the problem as a question of how to accommodate both *de re* and *de dicto* uses of belief ascriptions, I argue against treating belief ascriptions as ambiguous, indexical, or semantically indeterminate. As an alternative I introduce the theory of Direct Belief, which treats having a belief about an individual as an unmediated relation between the believer and the individual the belief is about.⁴

The point to emphasize is that Berg announces that his theory of direct belief will treat ‘having a belief’ (generally) ‘about an individual as an unmediated relation between the believer and the individual the belief is about’, which is the intended object of predication designated in a true belief ascription. When Berg speaks of belief and belief ascription, he speaks generally of what he means by the semantics rather than the pragmatics of direct belief. The conditions for appropriate utterance of a true belief ascription sentence are barely gestured toward, insufficiently developed to arrive at a cogent sense of how explanations of pragmatic substitution failures, although Berg does not use the term, *salva propria*, are supposed to work, even in the least complicated cases.

What Lois Lane Believes About Superman and Clark Kent

We follow Berg in considering a concrete albeit fictional case, concerning what Lois Lane believes about Superman and Clark Kent. The standard view that allows some belief ascriptions to be indirect, intensional, referentially opaque or *de dicto*, by virtue of failing the intersubstitution of coreferential terms or materially equivalent sentences *salva veritate* criterion, maintains that Lois Lane believes *de dicto* that Clark Kent is a reporter, but does not believe *de dicto* that Superman=Clark Kent. As these belief ascriptions have usually been understood, Lois Lane does not believe *de dicto* that Superman is a reporter.

Berg argues that, despite these discrepancies, Lois Lane directly (*de re*) believes that Superman is a reporter, because it is true, regardless of what anyone happens to believe, that Superman=Clark Kent, and Lois Lane believes some true and some false things about Clark Kent and about Superman. Ultimately, it is sufficient for Lois Lane to have any beliefs whatsoever in order to directly believe all these propositions and more. There is no substitution of terms or equivalent sentences failure in arriving at the conclusion that Lois Lane directly believes that Superman is a reporter from the true belief ascription that Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent is a reporter. Berg explains the application in these words. Referring to adherence to the proposition that Lois Lane does *not* believe that Superman is a reporter somewhat prejudicially as ‘the Fregean intuition’, Berg maintains:

I explain how the Fregean intuition that Lois does *not* believe that Superman is a reporter derives not from the falsity of the *sentence S*: Lois believes Superman is a reporter, but from the falsity of what can be *conveyed* by an *utterance* of *S* [such as the state of affairs which is such that Superman is a reporter? What else?]. In

⁴ Ibid.

particular, I show how in uttering *S* we can *conversationally implicate* the false proposition that Lois would accept *S* as true.⁵

As far as I know, also presumably for Berg, there is not much difference between accepting as and believing that a proposition is true, let it even be Berg's sentence *S*. What results is a situation Berg envisions in which (i) Lois Lane (directly) believes sentence *S*, although (ii) we can in uttering *S* conversationally 'implicate' (imply?) the false proposition that Lois Lane believes or accepts that sentence *S* is true.

To accept a proposition as true is to believe that the proposition is true, and conversely. If not, then we are owed a better explanation than that offered by Berg as to what it is to accept as opposed to what it is to believe that a proposition is true. The assumption in (i) on which Berg wants to build is that Lois Lane (directly) believes (that) sentence *S* (is true). How then can we utter *S* in order to conversationally implicate (imply) the *false* proposition that Lois Lane believes that *S* is true, precisely as condition (i) requires? If it is in some sense inappropriate to say something that will imply the *false* proposition that Lois Lane would accept as true the proposition that Superman is a reporter, then it is false that Lois Lane would accept as true the proposition that Superman is a reporter. If to accept a proposition as true is to believe the proposition, or believe that the proposition is true, then, contrary to his ascription of direct belief in sentence *S* to Lois Lane, Berg has just admitted that it is false that Lois Lane believes that Superman is a reporter. Did we miss something?

Berg is adamant that the semantics of belief ascriptions are those of direct beliefs, implying, although he mostly shuns the terminology, that they are purely *de re* and purely extensionalist:

...if Lois believes Clark Kent is a reporter, and Clark Kent is Superman, does it follow that she believes that Superman is a reporter? Focusing on this as a question about the truth of the sentence

S: Lois believes Superman is a reporter

(assuming the truth of the original Superman story) allows for a convenient exhaustive partitioning of theories of the semantics of belief ascriptions: (a) those on which *S* is true, (b) those on which *S* is false, (c) those on which *S* is either, depending on the context, and (d) those on which *S* is neither...Directly impressed by the overwhelming evidence for theories of direct reference (well enough known that I do not review it), I favor the first option — Lois does indeed think that Superman is a reporter!⁶

The difficulties are not lack of familiarity with the relevant literature, but Berg's heterodox interpretation, extension and application. It would therefore have been worthwhile for Berg to have covered at least some of the writings to which he alludes, as an opportunity for him to explain, not the concept of direct belief (a term not often found in philosophical discussions generally), which is clear enough, perhaps, and we

⁵ Ibid., pp. 3–4.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 1–2.

are guided by Berg also along the way in our understanding of the category, but the thesis that the truth value semantics of belief ascriptions generally are those of direct belief ascriptions.

The objection is that the semantics of direct belief as Berg explains it is extensional, referentially transparent, supporting the intersubstitution of coreferential terms or materially equivalent sentences *salva veritate*, and explaining away the appearance of substitution failure as utterance inappropriateness rather than semantic falsehood, whereas belief as we experience doxastic states phenomenologically is none of those things. Some readers would be grateful if in a 142 page text Berg had at least briefly reviewed the primary sources on direct belief on which he relies, and to which he here only obliquely avers. The reader wants to be able to see transparently where and how Berg's research has led him to arrive at the thesis, not that there is such a thing as direct belief, which, having explained the concept, most open-minded critics would probably agree without much persuading is true, but that the truth conditional semantics of *all* belief ascriptions is that of direct belief ascriptions, that effectively *all* belief is direct, and *all* belief ascription sentences are direct belief ascription sentences.

Why should the open-minded critic further agree to that sweeping generalization? What, moreover, does Berg mean in the final sentence quoted above when he says not only that Lois Lane (directly) believes that Superman is a reporter, but that she *thinks* it? Would Lois Lane not minimally need to entertain the proposition that Superman is a reporter with a certain accompanying proposition-coloring doxastic commitment? We are assured by the comics authors and the contents of her thought bubbles and voiceovers that she never thinks that Superman is a reporter. It does not make sense to coopt the term 'believes' for what is instead a deductively valid (trivial) implication of the fact that Lois Lane has a true or false belief about Clark Kent. If we consider belief states as psychological occurrences, and if we suppose that as finite cognitive agents we can in principle have exhaustive knowledge of what we believe, then we may prefer a philosophical terminology in which Lois Lane does not believe that Superman is a reporter, while recognizing that beyond the realm of her beliefs the proposition is true, and therefore logically implied by what Lois Lane does believe about Superman or Clark Kent, that Superman is a reporter.

The point of circumscribing beliefs is precisely to distinguish those particular psychological phenomenological doxastic attitudes toward specific propositions as the intended objects of belief implying their acceptance as true by particular doxastic agents. Lois Lane does not psychologically or phenomenologically accept the proposition that Superman is a reporter, and if belief is to mean anything where we can otherwise more properly speak of logical implication of what is actually believed, Lois Lane does not believe or 'think' that Superman is a reporter. She believes that Clark Kent is a reporter, but she does not believe that Superman = Clark Kent. The glasses and business suit, mild manners and occasional feigned cowardice, are such a brilliant disguise that Lois Lane sometimes suspects, but in the classic story-line, anyway, never comes to believe that Superman is a reporter and in particular that Superman is her colleague reporter Clark Kent.

Berg wants to drain intensionality from the intentional, and chalk everything else up to blunders of conversational implicature and inappropriate utterance. What this maneuver thinly disguises is that in doing so he is no longer speaking of *belief* with anything like the meaning it is usually taken to have. He offers no reason to justify a

departure from the useful role the category of (indirect, intensional *de dicto* referentially opaque) belief has played in distinguishing those propositions that particular agents would assent to accepting as true from all other propositions that may after all be true, but that the agents in question would not willingly assent to accepting as true. To say that Lois Lane *thinks* that Superman is a reporter, when she would not assent to accepting that proposition as true, drags another intentional psychological verb into Berg's quagmire with *believes*. Lois Lane certainly *thinks* no such thing, if by *think* in this connection we mean entertain the proposition in a thought that accepts the proposition as true. That is precisely what Lois Lane never does. Instead, she has beliefs about Superman and Clark Kent that (trivially) deductively imply (because they are also true, independently of Lois Lane's beliefs) the propositions that Superman = Clark Kent, and that Superman is a reporter. Lois Lane neither believes nor thinks that Superman is a reporter, to judge from the original adventures. We speak of her (fictional) belief states precisely because they are limited with respect to all of the things that are actually true about the intended objects of property predications in the propositional contents of her beliefs, as among the true or false propositions she accepts as true.

Suppose, contrarian that I am, confident that I have common sense on my side, I simply deny that Berg's sentence *S*, *Lois Lane believes that Superman is a reporter*, is true. I declare, in frontal opposition to Berg, that Lois Lane does not believe that Superman is a reporter. Berg holds that Lois Lane (directly) believes that Superman is a reporter, while conceding that it would be inappropriate to come out and say so. I would say that Lois Lane, at least in the golden age comics and TV series, manifestly does not believe that Superman is a reporter, that his secret identity is a secret especially from her, and that therefore the truth conditional semantics of all belief ascription sentences is not that of direct belief ascriptions. There may be a combination of direct and indirect belief ascription sentences at work, but the implication then is that belief ascription overall is intensional rather than purely extensional, *de dicto* as well as *de re*, referentially opaque as well as referentially transparent, on a case-by-case basis. Berg approaches the commonsense judgment that it is false that Lois Lane believes that Superman is a reporter as a misapprehension that will disappear as soon as we understand its origin. If we can explain where the 'Fregean' intuition 'derives' from, then we can lay our cares to rest when we feel the urge to insist that Lois Lane does not believe that Superman is a reporter. Speaking personally, I do not care where the intuition derives from. It could be aliens tampering with my brain waves. That is not my question, but whether or not according to the story Lois Lane truly believes that Superman is a reporter. Berg goes no distance toward satisfying skeptics that it is not simply true, in the sense of positively corresponding with the relevant belief states of fictional doxastic agent Lois Lane that she does not *believe* in any sense that Superman is a reporter or that Superman = Clark Kent.

Berg's sentence *S* is false because the proposition that Superman is a reporter is not among the propositions to which Lois Lane would assent as true. Her beliefs only extend so far, and do not comprehend all truths about things concerning which she has some true or false beliefs. What is logically implied by the fact that Lois Lane has such beliefs, given the belief-independent facts of the world, is another matter. The concept of belief is meant to carve up precisely these two individually personalized subdomains of propositions a given doxastic agent would assent to as true, and those

the doxastic agent would not assent to as true. Truth conditional (truth-maker and truth-breaker) semantics is a matter of correspondence or lack thereof between proposition and fact. If, on the present interpretation of the concept of belief, Lois Lane would not assent to as true the proposition that Superman is a reporter, then there is no corresponding fact to support the semantic truth in Berg's sense of the proposition that Lois Lane believes that Superman is a reporter. It may also be inappropriate in terms of prevailing circumstances of Gricean conversational implicature for anyone to say so. Perhaps Bruce Wayne, the Batman, who knows that Superman = Clark Kent, might inappropriately spill the beans by uttering the sentence to Lois Lane at a cocktail party, 'Lois, of course, you know that Superman is a reporter...Oops!'

From what does the Fregean intuition derive? It would be naughty to answer, from Frege. Berg wants to explain the intuition away by appeal to pragmatic utterance appropriateness conditions rather than semantic truth conditions. The origin of the intuition is nevertheless altogether explanatorily irrelevant, unless the explanation somehow changes the fact that the proposition that Superman is a reporter is not among Lois Lane's beliefs. Knowing the origin of the 'intuition' that *S* is a false belief ascription sentence does nothing to change the fact that *S* is a false sentence because it is not the case that Lois Lane believes (or accepts or would assent to as true the proposition) that Superman is a reporter. When Berg's purely extensionalist referentially transparent semantics fails to adequately cover the semantics of belief ascriptions, instead of rethinking the semantics, Berg makes belief ascriptions one and all ascriptions of direct beliefs. What passes for belief mediating sense-laden indirect belief states, according to Berg, as a further consequence, no longer have a meaning content for semantics to explain.

One would think that just the opposite is true, especially from Berg's standpoint. If intersubstitution of terms or sentences fails utterance appropriateness, it certainly does not follow logically that it does not *also* fail to preserve truth. For all that Berg argues, the failure of utterance appropriateness in the contexts under consideration could further explain without excluding a failure to preserve truth. The fact, if it is a fact, that what appear to be substitution failures *salva veritate* result from failure to preserve utterance appropriateness *salva propria*, does not mean that such substitution failures are not also failures to preserve truth that may even be responsible for truth preservation failures *salva veritate*.

If inappropriateness of utterance is supposed to be of epistemic relevance, Berg does not introduce a single case to suggest that it is ever such. It is not enough for Berg merely to establish a place for direct belief at the table along with indirect belief. Rather, Berg maintains that belief generally is direct belief, in the sense that the truth conditional semantics of belief ascription sentences are those of direct belief ascription sentences. It is here that Berg seriously oversteps his methodology and starting place, although the roots of the problem extend further back in Berg's assumptions about belief and the kind of thing belief is most plausibly and fruitfully thought to be, in relation to the epistemically applicable semantic conditions of presumably meaningful sentences in a language, and in particular their respective truth values. True belief is the major component of knowledge, with some type of Gettier-resistant justification left over as entirely within the jurisdiction of epistemology, rather than psychology and philosophy of mind. It is referential and propositional meaning, intending existent and nonexistent intended objects, including individual objects of true constitutive property

predications, and of the intended objects of the most fundamental constitutive property predications, to or of which the relevant constitutive properties are truly predicated, or at least intentionally attributed.

Semantics versus Pragmatics of Belief Ascriptions

Throughout, Berg adheres to an unexamined distinction between semantics and pragmatics:

...whatever we are to say about the *semantics* of belief ascription sentences must be distinguished from, and coordinated with, what we say about the *pragmatics* of utterances of those sentences. Moreover, the semantic question cannot be divorced from the substantive one — we cannot seriously consider what the word ‘believes’ *means* without considering what *belief* is. It is my aim in this essay to address the question at hand in a way that takes into account all three of these related aspects — the semantics, the pragmatics, and the metaphysics of belief.⁷

However, it is not clear, certainly not from anything Berg offers by way of argument in the book’s three chapters, that the semantics and pragmatics especially, and even the metaphysics, of belief, can be divided up in the way that Berg’s distinction requires. Can we decide, independently of pragmatics, what the truth value of the sentence ‘It’s coming in 15 min’ has? Is it true or false? If Berg is right, then in principle we are supposed to be able to answer that question independently of answering whether or not it would be appropriate to utter the sentence in relevant circumstances of conversational implicature. How could we possibly do so?

Moreover, why suppose without preparatory analysis that we exhaust the pragmatics of belief ascription sentences when we know when they would be *appropriate* to utter and when their utterance by expectations of conversational implicature would be *inappropriate*? ‘Appropriate’ is an oily word, anyway. What exactly does it mean? It might be true but inappropriate to mention at my brother’s wedding that the bride and I had a college fling. Is that the kind of inappropriateness of true utterance that Berg has in mind as explaining away substitution failure in belief ascription and propositional attitude contexts generally as preserving pragmatic *salva propria* rather than semantic *salva veritate*? We as readers of Berg’s book do not know, because we are not given any carefully examined instances of how substitution failure *salva propria* is supposed to occur. We need an independent basis for making these classifications, because it will not do for Berg simply to say that the inappropriate utterances of belief ascriptions resulting from intersubstitution of coreferential terms or materially equivalent sentences in a starter true belief ascription sentence are those that would otherwise be judged intensional, *de dicto* referentially opaque or indirect beliefs, as determined by the substitution failure *salva veritate* criterion. What would be the point, in that event, if the instances all turn out to be precisely the same, of giving up the *salva veritate* criterion as a test of whether or not a belief ascription is direct or indirect, in favor of a

⁷ Ibid., p. 1.

counterpart *salva propria* interpretation? What do we gain by switching to utterance inappropriateness to explain what happens in inferences involving belief ascriptions?

Nor will it do, and this comes still more explicitly close to one of Berg's formulations, to say that the utterance of the true (direct) belief ascription sentence that *Lois Lane believes that Superman is a reporter* is inappropriate because it could cause someone to falsely believe that Lois Lane believes that Superman=Clark Kent. For then the belief ascription that Lois Lane *believes* that Superman is a reporter is false after all, just as common sense would have it. Perhaps utterance of the true (direct) belief ascription sentence *Lois Lane believes that Superman is a reporter* is inappropriate not because it could cause someone to falsely but *inappropriately* believe that Lois Lane believes that Superman=Clark Kent. Perhaps there is inappropriateness, like turtles, all the way down, for anything except direct belief ascription sentences. These efforts are excessively extraordinary measures for the sake of bolstering Berg's direct belief analysis of the truth conditional semantics as distinct from the pragmatics of expressing direct belief ascription sentences. What would justify adopting such paraphrastic reformulations to uphold the counterintuitive proposition that the semantics of all belief ascription sentences is the semantics of direct belief ascription?

We might accept any complications for the sake of a good solution or conceptual insight into the nature of an interesting and otherwise intractable philosophical puzzle or paradox. Remarkably, Berg does not offer one single problem that is solved or better resolved or more clearly understood by the theory of direct belief, as compared with the commonsense view that there are some direct but mostly indirect beliefs. Berg describes but does not argue in support of the principles of an analysis according to which the semantics of truth value assignments to sentence types is the purely extensional semantics of direct belief. He offers no reason to shift allegiance from commonsense commitment to the existence of a mixed extensional and intensional truth conditional *semantics* of direct and indirect beliefs, intensional relations subsuming extensional, and not the other way around, to the extreme view that the semantics of belief ascription sentences are exclusively those of referentially transparent direct belief ascriptions. Berg's analysis is not only unsupported by virtue of commanding a unique conceptual purchase on any otherwise unyielding philosophical problems, but endures further difficulties. As seen in due course, Berg's identification of the truth conditional semantics of belief ascription sentences with those of direct belief ascription sentences is laden with implausibilities and theoretical liabilities that encumber it with significant theoretical disadvantages, and finally threaten its semantic integrity in applications resulting in logical inconsistency.

Salva veritate is an embarrassment for Berg's proposition that the semantics of all belief ascription sentences is that of direct belief ascription sentences. Berg's strategy is to bite the bullet, argue that semantically speaking it is strictly true, however much she may disown believing any such thing, that Lois Lane (directly) believes that Superman = Clark Kent, and that Superman is a reporter. Lois Lane directly believes that Clark Kent is a reporter, and it is true that Superman = Clark Kent and that Superman is a reporter. Berg considers that Lois Lane thereby directly believes things that she would never acknowledge as among her occurrent or nontrivially dispositional beliefs, excluding those she would believe, if she believed them at all, and the like, among the propositions that she would accept or assent to as true. The immediate question for Berg is then, *Why speak of belief?* Why say that Lois Lane (directly) *believes* that Superman = Clark Kent, when she has no

inclination to accept that identity statement as true? Why not simplify everyone's thinking by speaking of the deductively valid implications of Lois Lane's indirect, intensional, *de dicto*, referentially opaque, substitution *salva veritate* failing true belief ascription sentences? When we echo common sense by saying it is false that Lois Lane *in any sense* truly *believes* that Superman = Clark Kent, then we are speaking as Berg thinks we should, however contrary to his judgment, of the *semantics* rather than pragmatics of the relevant belief ascription sentence. We are asking, not whether it would be *appropriate* for anyone to make this ascription to Lois Lane or utter the sentence in or out of her presence, to her or another speaker, on the grounds that they might then believe something false about her, we are asking whether the belief ascription sentence, *Lois Lane believes that Superman = Clark Kent* is true of Lois Lane, in the sense of positively corresponding with the facts about the contents of her belief states, of what she believes and what she does not believe.

Berg's division between truth conditional semantics and pragmatics nullifies the possibility of a pragmatic semantics and semantics that relies heavily on pragmatic presuppositions in order to explain meaning, even at the level where truth values are determined, presumably by positive correspondences with states of affairs that sentences truly or falsely propose as existent, once their meaning is pragmatically established. Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* remarks about meaning in language games having pragmatic point and purpose, grounded pragmatically in a form of life, are unintelligible on Berg's distinction between semantics and pragmatics (Wittgenstein 2001). More troubling, second, is the fact that Berg does not lay the groundwork for understanding the distinction between semantics and pragmatics that he only mentions but does not adequately explain, on which the insight going back to his graduate school years trying to get a grip on *de dicto / de re* is supposed to have dawned, carving off inference failures *salva veritate* from inference failures *salva propria*.

The exact distinction between semantics and pragmatics is a lacuna in his doxastic theory that Berg does not try to supply. Nor does he evince any recognition of the obligation to seal up his argument against these kinds of counterexample objections. How does Berg propose to treat as independent the question of the truth conditional semantics of our favorite sentence 'It's coming in 15 min', and the pragmatics of appropriate utterance? In the course of a conversation, if the anaphora of the impersonal pronoun is pragmatically fixed or presupposed as part of an ongoing conversation as appropriate utterance, then and only then can the truth conditional meaning of the sentence be considered. The impersonal pronoun 'it' must have a definite reference, and time of utterance must be known, in order for the sentence, 'It's coming in 15 min', to be either true or false. Else there will be no specific facts with which an abstract positive correspondence truth relation can be expected to hold if and only if the sentence is true, and the sentence will have no truth value.

Berg develops the direct belief side of the theory in two parts, both of which are conspicuously incomplete. He makes no effort to determine that a doxastic subject actually does directly believe a given sentence to be true, beyond showing that the agent believes something or other, truly or falsely, about the subject of predication in the sentence, and that what he claims holds as the agent's direct belief implies a truth about the predication subject concerning which the doxastic agent may be completely unaware, involving events of which the direct believer can have no knowledge in the usual sense. Is this *belief*, or what we mean by the word 'belief', as opposed to what we mean

by ‘true proposition’ or even ‘proposition’? The fact that it would be an inappropriate utterance to say that the person directly believes the sentence does not make the sentence itself either true or false, and we have no reason to suppose that sentences in and of themselves have any truth value. In fact, there is every indication in semantics to believe the contrary, giving pragmatics a far greater *semantic* role in the determination of truth value than Berg’s division permits. From the assumption that there is an explanation of substitution failure by reason of utterance appropriate expectations rather than truth does not bestow any particular truth value on the sentences in which intersubstitution fails due to utterance inappropriateness. Substitution failure of coreferential terms or materially equivalent sentences *salva propria*, we have emphasized, logically does not exclude substitution failure *salva veritate*. Even if Berg can show convincingly that in certain contexts (not in his book, apparently) it would be inappropriate to express the direct belief ascription that Lois Lane believes that Superman is a reporter, it still does not follow that it is true that Lois Lane believes that Superman is a reporter, or that the relevant belief ascriptions and facts of the world do not result in substitution failures *salva veritate* as well as *salva propria*. It may finally be hard to make sense of substitution failure *salva propria*, except in light of substitution failure *salva veritate*.

Beliefs and Doxastic Explanation of Decision Making

The implausibility of Berg’s interpretation of the semantics of all belief ascription sentences as those of direct belief ascription sentences is illustrated by the following thought experiment. Suppose that Lois Lane wins her dream apartment in Metropolis if she guesses behind which of two curtains Superman is temporarily concealed. She is shown curtain 1 and curtain 2, but she has seen Clark Kent surreptitiously entering behind curtain 1 on the game show studio lot. Lois Lane now pre-theoretically believes or accepts as true (doesn’t she?) that Superman by process of elimination must be behind curtain 2, precisely because pre-theoretically, among a doxastic cognitive web of other beliefs and disbeliefs, suspensions of belief and disbelief, and the like, she believes that Superman \neq Clark Kent, or at least does not believe that Superman = Clark Kent, thereby making Berg’s sentence *S* false.

Common Sense INDIRECT Belief Ascription

1. Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent is behind door 1.
 2. Lois Lane does not believe that Superman = Clark Kent.
 3. Lois Lane does not believe that Superman is behind door 1.
 4. Lois Lane believes that if Superman is not behind door 1, then he can only be behind door 2.
 5. Lois Lane believes that Superman is behind door 2.
 6. Lois Lane chooses door 2 in her effort to win the dream Metropolitan apartment.
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7. Lois Lane rationally (albeit falsely) chooses door 2 in her effort to win the dream Metropolitan apartment. VALID

Versus:

Berg DIRECT Belief Ascription

1. Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent is behind door 1.
 2. Superman = Clark Kent
 3. Lois Lane (directly) believes that Superman is behind door 1.
 4. Lois Lane chooses door 2 in her effort to win the dream Metropolitan apartment.
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5. Lois Lane rationally (albeit falsely) chooses door 2 in her effort to win the dream Metropolitan apartment. INVALID

In the second Berg DIRECT Belief Ascription argument, the conclusion that Lois Lane chooses rationally appears insupportable, since she chooses against her belief that Superman is behind door 1. Assumptions (1)-(4) can all be true, but Lois Lane does not *rationally* choose door 2 on the basis of her (direct) beliefs, rendering conclusion (5) false, and making the inference deductively invalid. Berg's concept of direct belief and of the truth value semantics of all belief as that of direct belief makes it hard to understand the actions of doxastic agents based on their presumably limited access to information and what are usually supposed to be their subjectively variable and dynamically changing beliefs.

Lois Lane believes that reporter Clark Kent has entered behind curtain 1. To the extent that Lois Lane's reasoning reflects her beliefs, direct or otherwise, as the question has now been opened, it would seem, to complete the story, that in choosing curtain 2 as screening Superman, she does *not* believe that Superman = Clark Kent. For otherwise, desiring the dream apartment, she would rationally choose curtain 1. This is to say that Lois Lane does *not* believe that Superman is a reporter, which is to say that Berg's sentence *S* is false, after all. Any behaviorist theory of belief would certainly conclude that Lois Lane does not believe that Superman = Clark Kent in this situation, and does not believe Berg's sentence *S*, that Superman is a reporter. Moreover, this is the plain fact of the matter, from the present standpoint, rather than a murky intuition to be explained away via complicated and finally implausible paraphrasing as effects of conversational implicature. If Lois Lane's reasoning does not reflect her beliefs, then why are we bothering to talk about beliefs at all, as opposed to the set of all true (and ultimately also all false) propositions comprehended by Berg's concept of direct belief?

Appeals to conversational implicature are generally legitimate in and of themselves in understanding the meaning of colloquial linguistic practice, and as far as they are justified by prevailing circumstances and the expectations for participation of speakers insofar as they can be identified. However, utterance appropriateness in circumstances of conversational implicature is not a magic wand to wave in installing any philosophical distinction we like. If we are back to Superman = Clark Kent, then Lois Lane believes that Superman \neq Clark Kent (if we like, because of such discrepancies in her attribution of properties to Superman and Clark Kent), on the grounds that Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent is a reporter, and she believes that Superman is not a reporter. Berg's analysis implies that by believing that Clark Kent has entered behind curtain 1, Lois Lane believes that Superman is not hidden behind curtain 2, but must be behind curtain 1 instead, since that is where she has seen Clark Kent go, and Superman = Clark

Kent. If Lois Lane believes that Superman = Clark Kent, then, on the contrary, she should choose curtain 1 rather than curtain 2. Lois Lane demonstrates by her choice behavior that she does not believe that Superman = Clark Kent, and by implication, that she does not believe that Superman like Clark Kent is a reporter. Were Lois Lane not so to reason, based on these propositional beliefs, we could not consider her to be fully rational.

The trouble with Berg's direct belief concept is that because Superman = Clark Kent, Superman is as much behind curtain 1 as Clark Kent, so that in (directly) believing that Clark Kent is behind curtain 1, Lois Lane also (directly) believes that Superman is behind curtain 1, despite the fact that she believes (rather than anything about his cape or Clark's glasses) that Superman is not behind curtain 1, but behind curtain 2, as the doxastic inferential situation is described. If Lois Lane is not to be cast into a woeful and completely avoidable gratuitous logical incoherence concerning the contents of her beliefs, then how is it that she directly (truly) believes that Superman is behind curtain 2 (since we are assuming that he is in fact), and she directly (falsely) believes that Superman is not behind curtain 1? Lois Lane must then directly believe that the proposition that Superman is behind curtain 1 is true and false. Lois Lane is not so confused, however, nor is confusion reflected in her unhesitating choice of curtain 2 in full expectation of winning the prize. If there is a weak connection in this picture, it is Berg's conflation of the semantics of all belief ascription sentences with those of direct belief ascription sentences. It appears in Berg's unconvincing effort to tidy up afterward by explaining away via conversational implicature the legitimate function of intensional referentially opaque *de dicto* belief ascriptions in describing the limitations of Lois Lane's propositional beliefs.

If there are indirect as well as direct beliefs, then the opaque curtains contest can be tolerated without putting pressure on Berg's theory of direct belief. Berg, unfortunately, leaves no negotiating wiggle room for such relief, by making all belief direct, and all belief ascriptions in their *semantics* uncompromisingly *de re*. Where there is belief, Berg wants to claim, it is direct. Berg consequently considers sentence *S* true: Lois Lane truly (directly) believes that Superman is a reporter. The reason is that Lois Lane believes something (true or false) about Clark Kent, that he is a reporter, and it is true as a matter of independent fact that Superman masquerading as Clark Kent is a reporter. This is how and where the overwhelming problems begin for Berg's semantics, pragmatics, and metaphysics of belief as direct belief. Berg's sentence *S* is *semantically* true, but it can be used in utterance to convey something that might be thought to induce judgment that a certain related (identical?) belief attribution is false. It is true that *S*, Berg holds, and the only problem is to understand how *S* can be used pragmatically within the conventions of Gricean conversational implicature to convey the false belief that *S* is false.

Berg is unquestionably right that there is a distinction to be observed between the meaning, including the truth value, of a sentence, and the pragmatics of 'what can be conveyed by an utterance' of the sentence, let it even be Berg's sentence that Superman is a reporter. Pragmatic considerations relevant to the semantic truth condition satisfaction of sentences are nevertheless much more extensive and pervasive in truth conditional semantics than Berg acknowledges. Nothing whatsoever that Berg offers goes any distance toward showing that belief ascription sentence *S*, that *Lois Lane believes that Superman is a reporter*, is *not* false. Berg announces that he will *opt* for its truth, but truth is not determined by what philosophers find themselves driven to

accept, on grounds other than correspondence with the facts. Berg instead tries to explain away the Fregean intuition that S is false. Another easier way to explain the sense that S is false is to maintain with good reason that S is false. Sheering off semantics from pragmatics without philosophical justification as Berg does is not admirable semantic, pragmatic, or philosophical methodology. Why should pragmatics not be considered part of, instead of distinct and independent from, semantics, even if it is not obviously an explicit part of formal set theoretical semantics?

The burden of argument Berg assumes by propounding his theory of direct belief as explaining the semantics, pragmatics, and metaphysics of belief encounters so many difficulties that it cannot be justified by any explanatory advantages resulting from a theory of the semantics of belief as direct belief, were the theory to be accepted, and supposing Berg to have offered any. Again, Berg does not mention so much as a single philosophical problem that could be better clarified or resolved were his direct belief thesis to be accepted. We are left with no reason for accepting an analysis that is in so many ways at odds implausibly with common sense. We do not know why we should switch affiliations from the view that there are some direct and mostly indirect beliefs to the position that there are only direct beliefs, and we do not even know beyond such a general description exactly what choice we are being offered.

Direct Belief and the Limits of Belief and Nonbelief

Berg's concept of direct belief may nevertheless comprehend so many beliefs, too many beliefs, as to trivialize its application from a theoretical explanatory standpoint, especially in the particular cases about which Berg is interested. Nor is this explosion of beliefs a unique feature of Berg's category of direct beliefs, but is common to dispositional *de re* beliefs similarly interpreted counterfactually without explicit restrictions.

To say, in Berg's example, that Lois Lane (directly) believes (of) Superman (that he) is a reporter, on the grounds that Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent is a reporter, together with the fact, of which Lois Lane is assumed to be unaware, that Superman = Clark Kent, is further implausibly to attribute to Lois Lane a direct belief related to every fact or true predication of properties to Superman and Clark Kent, not to mention Kal-El, The Man of Steel, and whatever other proper names Superman may have acquired over the years. In fact, it is easy to expand the domain of Lois Lane's direct beliefs to include at least every true proposition, and, ultimately pushing triviality to its logical limit, *every* proposition. Lois directly believes an unlimitedly larger number of propositions, if Berg's account of direct belief is correct, than the alliteratively named reporter would or could ever acknowledge, or to which she would or could ever be able in principle to assent, in the finite amount of time allotted to human cognitive agents.

If Lois Lane directly believes that anything has any constitutive property, then Lois Lane not only directly believes that the object in question has the property, which could hardly be held against her, but she directly believes *every true proposition*, including those she has never heard of or considered. Let us retry the previous example by assuming instead that Lois Lane directly believes that Superman is *not* a reporter, on equal authority as Berg's preferred example, involving instead the assertion that Lois Lane (directly) believes that Clark Kent is a reporter. Suppose that Superman falls in love with Lois Lane and decides one day to pop the question. He appears as Clark Kent

and drops on one knee, choosing to reveal all to his future intended life partner from whom he considers he should conceal no such vital information about his previously secret identity. He bursts the buttons on his shirt with both hands and discloses his blue and red action garb and heroic yellow chevron inscribed with an S under his street clothes. If Berg's account is correct, then Lois Lane undergoes no alteration in her beliefs about Superman and Clark Kent as a result of this episode, because she believed all along that Superman = Clark Kent. There are not many alternatives for Berg in this scenario. He can say that Lois Lane thereby becomes *aware* that she directly believed all along that Superman = Clark Kent. Or that she acquires a redirected direct belief about Superman's cape and the rest of his costume, that it is worn by Clark Kent, as Berg proposes in one part of the book.⁸ Or, perhaps, that Lois Lane does not augment her (direct) belief that Superman like Clark Kent is a reporter. The latter strategy marks an important difference, but offers a significant departure from Berg's analysis of examples.

My plausibility alarm is not exactly ringing off the wall for any of these choices. If believing is distinct from being or becoming aware of the contents of one's beliefs, then we speak only of the difference between occurrent and dispositional direct beliefs. What does this achieve, and at what costs? The second alternative will not serve for the following reason. Lois Lane directly believes that Superman's cape (and the rest of his costume) belongs to and is regularly worn by Superman. So far, this is virtually a tautology. Since Superman = Clark Kent, it follows on Berg's analysis that Lois Lane also directly believes that Superman's cape (and the rest of the costume) belongs to and is regularly worn by Clark Kent.

As objects of direct belief, a cape and costume are ontically no different than a person, Earthling or Kryptonian. All the same problems as to Lois Lane's undergoing any sort of doxastic alteration arise as well for the cape as the wearer, and as such offers no relief for Berg's theory of direct belief, when Clark Kent comes clean to Lois Lane concerning his otherwise long protected secret identity as the Man of Steel. Superman = Clark Kent → Superman's cape = Clark Kent's cape. It is not as though capes unlike superheroes in disguise or on the job are such that a thinker's beliefs about them become magically referentially opaque rather than transparent, or that capes unlike superheroes somehow stand outside the referential transparency and transitivity to which Berg maintains direct belief about Superman or Clark Kent having this or that property are ineluctably subject.⁹

The implication is a clearcut *reductio* of Berg's concept of direct belief and thesis that the truth conditional semantics of all belief ascription sentences are those of direct belief ascription sentences. It entails that if a thinking subject directly believes anything whatsoever, the subject directly believes every true or false proposition. Where *x* and *y* are any intended objects, *s* is any thinking, intending, psychological subject or doxastic

⁸ Berg (2012), pp. 114–115: 'But then how exactly is [Lois Lane's] *thinking of him as Superman* (and not as *Clark Kent*) supposed to lead her to ascribe to the person who just greeted her the various properties belonging to her Superman conception of him — is called 'Superman', wears a cape, flies, etc. — as opposed to the properties belonging to her Clark Kent conception. And so, thinking that the person who just greeted her is called 'Superman' (not 'Clark Kent'), wears a cape (not a suit), flies (is not earthbound), etc., she would naturally react with her Superman behavior rather than her Clark Kent behavior.' The question is why Lois Lane should be able to explain her differential behavior toward Superman appearing as Superman (swoons) and as Clark Kent (no swoon) in fixed differences of belief about the associated clothing of Superman as Superman and as Clark Kent, if she cannot already ground her differential behavior in fixed differences of belief about Superman and Clark Kent, as the same directly intended object of belief appears in distinct guises.

⁹ Ibid.

agent, and dB is the relation of Berg direct believing, Berg's referential semantic transparency of direct belief thesis (DB) can be formalized as the general doxastic-semantic principle:

$$(DB) \forall x, y, s [[x = y \wedge dB(s, Fx)] \rightarrow dB(s, Fy)]$$

There is no presumption that anything has property F , only that s in Berg's sense dB 's (directly believes) that *something* has property F . The trouble is that (DB) opens the floodgates to too many direct beliefs. If Superman = Clark Kent, and Lois Lane directly believes about Clark Kent everything she believes about Superman, and conversely, then Lois Lane directly believes everything that is true of Superman or true of Clark Kent. There is nothing special about the identity statement Superman = Clark Kent in that respect. What matters is that Lois Lane directly believes that Clark Kent is a reporter, and it is *materially implied* by the independently known truth that Superman = Clark Kent, on Berg's analysis, that Lois Lane consequently directly believes that Superman is a reporter. We thus obtain a generalized propositional version of (DB) in the principle:

$$(DBP) \forall p, q, s [[dB(s, p) \wedge [p \rightarrow q]] \rightarrow dB(s, q)]$$

This version may be closer to home, but it remains open to serious counterexample. Consider q as any true proposition, where s directly believes (dB) proposition p . Then it follows from (DBP):

$$(GDBP) \forall q, s [q \rightarrow dB(s, q)]$$

Clearly, (GDBP) is rampantly inflationary. If doxastic agent s is Lois Lane, then Lois Lane (directly) believes every true proposition, just as she (directly) believes the proposition that Superman is a reporter and Superman = Clark Kent. The Berg-inspired principle (DB) and (PDB) implies that every doxastic agent (directly) believes every true proposition in the generalization, (GDBP). More problematic is Berg's assimilation, from (B) and (DB), in our notation, to the intolerable maximally trivialized fully generalized direct belief principle, deducible as a further consequence of (DBP):

$$(FGDBP) \forall p, q, s [[dB(s, p) \wedge \neg p] \rightarrow dB(s, q)]$$

Since q is any proposition, with no further qualifications, q might even be false. Thus, (FGDBP) implies that any doxastic agent directly believes any and every proposition, true or false. Moreover, since it is Berg's main thesis that the truth conditional semantics of belief ascription sentences are those of direct belief ascription sentences, it further follows that:

$$(B) \forall p, s [[dB(s, p)] \leftrightarrow B(s, p)]$$

Collecting these dilemma results in (DBP)+(B) produces what for Berg must certainly be the unacceptable *reductio*:

$$(B\text{-RAA1}) \forall p, s [\exists q [B(s, q)] \rightarrow B(s, p)]$$

Thus, trivializing Berg's analysis of the concept of direct belief and excluding any distinction between belief and direct belief. We can further derive from Berg's

assumptions so formalized and the consequence (B) of Berg's principal thesis the unwanted modal implications that:

$$(B\text{-RAA2a}) \quad \Box \neg \exists p \forall s [\neg dB(s, p)]$$

$$(B\text{-RAA2b}) \quad \Box \neg \exists p \forall s [\neg B(s, p)]$$

What if Lois Lane directly iteratively believes (accepts the proposition) that she does not indirectly, intensionally or opaquely believe that Superman = Clark Kent? Then, for Berg, her direct belief is *false*. Does it go further? Lois Lane cannot truly directly or otherwise believe that she does not directly believe, for any x, y , that $x \neq y$, if, in fact, outside her knowledge or awareness, $x = y$. If Lois Lane directly believes *anything* about x or y , then she believes and directly believes *everything* that is true or false about the object designated as x or y , or in any other singular referring expression. So, she directly believes that $x \neq y$, and she cannot directly believe that $x \neq y$. That is a paradox not buried away in the intensionality and intentionality of Lois Lane's belief states and belief ascription sentences about what Lois Lane believes or does not believe, but inheres in Berg's concept of direct belief. According to the logical criticism developed, Lois Lane also absurdly directly believes everything that is false about x and about y . If Lois Lane believes or directly believes anything true or false about any intended object, then Lois Lane directly believes and directly believes every proposition and its negation. These are among the prominent problems in Berg's Chapter 1 and Chapter 2.

Berg Against and Dependent on an Inner Speech Model of Belief

In Chapter 3: Conceptions, belief, and "inner speech", Berg may be correct to hold that the inner speech model (whatever that is, exactly, since he does not explicate the notion) is untenable. If called upon to answer for the existence and meaning of a belief, the question that the inner speech model is intended to address is what would the doxastic agent ideally *say*? The problem, so formulated, requires a linguistically expressed answer as to what an ideal believer *would* communicate. If we *speak* actually or counterfactually, then speech in some sense is manifestly involved in the explanation of belief ascriptions, in the first instance, and further, of beliefs.

What is inner speech? An actual mental rehearsal or formulation of a sentence, shaped in the recesses of thought by the mind in stages, as a controlled learned movement of the lips and tongue and palette, and so on, must create the physical sentence in the process of expressing the appropriate sounds in external speech what may first have been 'spoken' in inner speech? Does inner speech involve the editing and re-editing of propositional thought content, as Daniel C. Dennett has proposed in explaining the nature of consciousness, in *Consciousness Explained?* (Dennett 1991, pp. 72-79).

Phenomenologically, this does not seem to be how all or even most of our thought works, judging from individual phenomenological attentiveness and what we encounter other people saying, that we utter sentences to ourselves in the private subjective resonating chambers of our thoughts before we release our gems in public expression. However, there seems to be no reasonable theory that requires us to use language in conscious episodes of thought as any sort of prelude to verbal and written expression of exactly those thoughts. Nor is it necessary to deny that such mental rehearsals and trials, consideration

and refinements of what is to be said, sometimes occur, and that they are sometimes of cognitive and more generally decision making value. Are there no intensional beliefs, no referentially opaque, or, to adapt Berg's terminology, *indirect de dicto* beliefs?

We can acknowledge Berg's distinction by ignoring substitution failures grounded in inappropriateness of utterance, devoting all our attention to intersubstitution of coreferential terms or materially equivalent propositions failures of preserving sentential truth value. Whatever the interest in appropriateness of sentence utterance and its complement, we shall henceforth confine discussion to questions of sentential truth preservation, and in particular of true statements as to what a doxastic agent actually believes, in the kinds of examples Berg discusses.

Berg's device throughout is to hoist substitution failure *modulo* sentential truth versus appropriateness of utterance in circumstances of conversational implicature, in order to argue that where truth preservation and an adequate semantics for belief ascriptions is concerned, belief is always direct, referentially transparent, maximally wide scope dispositional unqualified *de re* belief. We learn more about what kind of doxastic attitude this is from Berg's pages, which is essentially that we directly believe everything that is true about anything about which we believe anything true or false. Direct belief cuts through all limitations of phenomenological belief states. A subject *S* directly believes that object *a* has property *G*, provided that *S* believes anything about *a*, as that *Fa*, which may or may not actually be true, provided it is true that *Ga*. That *S* would not actually assent to the truth of *Ga* is taken as irrelevant to Berg's concept of direct belief. That is what makes it direct, unmediated in its reference by any Fregean reference (*Bedeutung*) determining sense (*Sinn*), or as falling *under* a term or description by which it is designated. Direct belief bypasses all of the descriptions and other intention narrowing linguistic devices, by which intended objects, including propositions and the states of affairs whose existence they propose, are knowingly intended, and hence knowingly believed.

Berg's position is easily shown to imply, in the first instance, that every doxastic agent directly believes every true proposition, by virtue of or in consequence of truly or falsely believing any proposition. Needless to say, this consequence already trivializes Berg's concept and category of direct belief, when joined with his assertion that all belief is direct belief. Whereas belief only appears to be indirect when substitution failures *salva veritate* are explained as revealing utterance inappropriateness *salva propria*, rather than meaning or semantic structure, especially correspondence with what is strictly true. It is strictly true that Lois Lane (directly) believes that Superman = Clark Kent, although, if Berg is right, it would be inappropriate for her or perhaps another believer to say so. Why would it be inappropriate, however, unless it is because in fact she does not believe it, if the belief ascription to Lois Lane of believing that Superman = Clark Kent is not factually false, not actually among her beliefs? What else is supposed to make the utterance inappropriate, especially for Lois Lane, than the fact that she does not believe it? Is it inappropriate for someone else to utter the sentence, in or out of the presence of Lois Lane? We learn from Berg that we must stretch things this far and cope with a logical inconsistency internal to the concept of direct belief if we try to defend both the direct belief and the proposition that the truth conditional semantics of all belief ascription sentences are those of direct belief ascription sentences.

Berg seems in this regard to have gotten things precisely turned around. Does it not seem more natural to say instead that it would be inappropriate for Lois Lane to say that Superman = Clark Kent, given that she believes that Clark Kent is a reporter and despite the fact that it is true that Superman = Clark Kent, because Lois Lane, unaware

of the relevant facts, does not believe that Superman = Clark Kent? Cart precedes horse, if we hold with Berg that Lois Lane truly does (directly) believe that Superman = Clark Kent, although it would (for what reason?) be inappropriate for her (why?) or another speaker to offer any such pronouncement, given the circumstantial expectations of Gricean conversational implicature.

We learn only late in the game what price we must pay in order to accept Berg's theory of direct belief. We nevertheless wonder in reflecting on Berg's concept of direct belief whether the concept of Gricean conversational implicature on which Berg's fundamental semantic-pragmatic distinction depends can be extended to account also for Lois Lane's unexpressed beliefs, without appealing to precisely the concept of 'inner speech' or its conscious phenomenological equivalent that Berg is at pains to refute and reject in his concluding chapter against the inner speech model. How, in Berg's theory of direct belief, applied in his example to the Superman fantasy, if that is our data, are we to explain the belief status, transparent or opaque, purely extensional or intensional, *de re* or *de dicto*, of the contents of Lois Lane's inner thought bubbles, where the artist inks and letters in these cloud shapes with sentences or parts of sentences, unlike the crisp outlines of what she says out loud to others in each panel, what she thinks and sometimes what she is ascribed as believing? To close rhetorically, Are these not what Berg must consider in the example he favors and develops as the propositional contents of Lois Lane's private episodes of inner speech?¹⁰

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¹⁰ Berg (2012), pp. 108–142. A somewhat sympathetic anticipation of Berg's position appears in (Chisholm 1996), pp. 36–37.