

QUINEAN SKEPTICISM ABOUT DE RE MODALITY

AFTER DAVID LEWIS

John Divers

I. INTRODUCTION

The classic articulation of Quine's skepticism about de re modalizing is his (1953b) argument against the semantic and metaphysical coherence of de re modal predication (II). Lewis's theory of de re modality (III) allows us to construct a response to Quine that shows up a crucial flaw in that argument (IV). Moreover, the counterpart theory of de re modality that underpins Lewis's response is a theory that an exacting Quinean should find ideologically congenial (V). So what scope remains for a neo-Quinean, but post-counterpart-theoretic, skepticism about de re modalizing? I consider, but resist, the natural thought that such skepticism ought to focus on the apparent ontological commitments of counterpart theory (VI). Rather, I suggest, the natural and proper focus for a skepticism about de re modalizing is the continuing absence of any substantial account of the utility or function of such judgement (VII).

I do not doubt that it is permissible to read Quine in ways other than the way in which I read him and, certainly, with different emphases. I do not doubt that there are many other responses to Quine's argument that merit just as much attention as the Lewisian response even though I do not discuss them here¹. I do not doubt, either, that some philosophers will have no sympathy at all with the way that issues of de re modality are handled by Quine or by Lewis. However, I think that there is much to be learned by allowing that

there is, at least, *prima facie* force to the case that Quine puts against de re modalizing and by considering the Lewisian response. In any event, and at the very least, even those modal philosophers who do not approve of the road by which I arrive at my ultimate concerns in this paper will find something in those concerns that speaks to them directly. For the (broadly) skeptical challenge that emerges ultimately from the constructed Quine-Lewis dialectic is general, fundamental and can be motivated quite independently of that dialectic.

II. QUINE'S CLASSIC CRITIQUE OF DE RE MODALIZING

Quine (1953b) argues that de re modal contexts are referentially opaque and – consequently – that quantification into such contexts produces metaphysical incoherence.

The first element of Quine's critique is the classic argument for referential opacity (Quine 1953b:139-44). The lemma is that truth-value changes when we substitute within a de re modal context a proper name by another singular term (a definite description) that refers to the same object. Thus (1)-(3) along with their alleged truth-values:

- | | | |
|-----|---|--------------|
| (1) | 9 is identical to the number of planets | <i>True</i> |
| (2) | 9 is necessarily greater than 7 | <i>True</i> |
| (3) | The number of planets is necessarily greater than 7 | <i>False</i> |

Quine, however, will not rest his case on the workings of proper names. For Quine, proper names are superficial and eliminable features of our language, and if there is non-

superficial and significant opacity afoot in our de re modal locutions it must be manifest at the semantically and ontologically more fundamental level of quantification and predication. Consideration of quantification into modal contexts is then found to confirm the initial diagnosis. For as a result of existential generalization on (2) we have:

(2*) $(\exists x)(x \text{ is necessarily greater than } 7)$

But in seeking to judge the truth-value of (2*) we are (allegedly) confounded when we ask the question *which* object it is that is necessarily greater than 7. According to (2) – from which (2*) is inferred – it is 9. But by (1), that object is the number of planets, and that the object which is the number of planets is necessarily greater than 7 is in conflict with the falsehood of (3).

The second element of Quine's critique is an argument that no ontologically satisfactory solution to this conundrum – and so no satisfactory ontological basis for de re modal predication – is available (Quine 1953b:144-59). The argument is, in effect, a dilemma on whether we take the (metaphysical) subjects of de re modal predication – the values of relevant bound variables – to be extensional entities or intensional entities.

On the extensional horn of the dilemma (Quine 1953b: 144-50), we stick with a natural first thought and aim to treat the likes of *being necessarily greater than 7* as a property, or attribute, which we predicate of an extensional entity – an entity with perfectly extensional identity conditions such as a physical object or (more likely in the present

case) a set. But the upshot then is that the putative de re modal properties emerge as radically, and hopelessly, inconstant, language-dependent and mind-dependent. To take a step beyond Quine's text for dramatic effect, the metaphysical picture which emerges on the extensional horn of the dilemma is as follows.

When I utter sentence (2), and in calling our object '9', I thereby do part of what is necessary to *bring it about that* the object has the modal property of *being necessarily greater than 7*. But when I then utter a token of sentence (3), and in now calling our object, 'the number of planets', I thereby do something that is sufficient to *change* the modal properties of the object. A moment ago, and as a result of my former manner of referring to it, the object had a certain modal property and now, as a result of my new manner of referring to it, the object lacks that property. So, for Quine, on the extensional horn of his dilemma, the only *metaphysical* sense that might be made of de re modal predication is not 'Aristotelian essentialist' sense, according to which the essences of things are not relative to, or dependent upon, how the things are specified. The only *metaphysical* sense that 'might' be made of de re modal predication would be *idealist* sense, and that, for Quine, is no sense at all. Hereafter, I propose simply to join with Quine in accepting that such a radically idealist account of the metaphysical basis of de re modal predication is beyond the pale.

On the intensional horn of the dilemma, then, the thought is that we attempt to understand the referential opacity of de re modal predication, by interpreting the variables bound in the formulas of quantified modal logic as ranging over intensional objects (senses,

individual concepts, attributes etc.). However, the intensional alternative is found inadequate since: (i) such entities are dubious for want of adequate criteria of individuation and (ii) even if they are admitted, further examples show that referential opacity is not thoroughly excised (Quine 1953b:150-59).

In section IV, two aspects of the Quinean argument will be scrutinized and found wanting. The first is Quine's undue haste in deriving a metaphysical conclusion from semantical premises; the second is the extensional horn of the dilemma concerning the metaphysical basis of de re modal predication.

III. LEWIS'S ACCOUNT OF DE RE MODALIZING

David Lewis's counterpart-theoretic defence of de re modalizing (1968, 1971, 1973, 1986) is perhaps, as famous as Quine's critique. *Contrasting* himself with Quine, Lewis (1968: 32) claims to find congenial (and defensible) an 'Aristotelian essentialism' – the doctrine that the essences of things are not relative to, or dependent upon, how the things are specified. However when we investigate and appreciate Lewis's 'Aristotelian essentialist' attempt to vindicate de re modalizing, the vindication is arguably more Quinean than Aristotelian.² Indeed, one might even think that the effect of Lewis's treatment is to bury de re modalizing rather than to praise it. But, in any event, I will argue, Lewis's theory of de re modality, whether it is accepted or not, affords a highly illuminating and almost ironic diagnosis of the failure – specifically, the invalidity – of Quine's argument.

There are three elements of Lewis's philosophy on which we may draw in constructing a response to the Quinean critique. The first element is counterpart-theoretic semantics for quantified modal logic. The second element is an emphasis on the context-dependence of the content of token utterances in general, and of intensional locutions in particular. The third element is the diagnosis of the source of indeterminacy, or inconstancy, of *truth-values*, in various cases, as variation in the *truth-conditions* that attach to token utterances of the same type, as opposed to variation in the underlying, *truth-making* facts.^{3 4}

Firstly, then, I offer a (brief and informal) sketch of the counterpart-theoretic semantics (Lewis 1968, 1986 Ch.4). The big idea is that the truth-conditions of de re modal claims about individuals are a matter of those individuals standing in objective similarity relations to others. This big idea is naturally sloganized in such clauses as the following:

- (4) Rene is necessarily a thinking thing iff
all of Rene's counterparts are thinking things.

- (5) Rene is possibly an immaterial being iff
some counterpart of Rene is an immaterial being.

But there are various reasons why these slogans will not, ultimately, do.

The first reason is something of a technicality. Counterpart theoretic semantics – at least, in the canonical, Lewis (1968) version – does not deal directly in proper names. There, it

is assumed that proper names are eliminated (from formulas of quantified modal logic) in favour of definite descriptions prior to translation into the language of counterpart theory. And the intended language of counterpart theory itself contains no proper names.⁵

The second reason – and closer to my present purposes – is that the slogans present truth-conditions as though for sentence types. That is a simplification that we must soon discard in favour of an approach that focuses on sentence tokens since, as intended, there are two salient aspects of the right-sides of the biconditionals that are apt for token-sensitive, contextual determination. In general, and even before we consider the particular case of modal locutions, Lewis's approach to meaning and interpretation places heavy emphasis on token utterances and the context-dependence of their content (1970, 1979). In this interpretational methodology, notably, a fairly radical principle of (charitable) accommodation plays a central role. Frequently, and perhaps even by default, when a speaker, makes a sincere token utterance, she is taken to contribute to the creation of a context in which her utterance expresses a truth. Context here is to be understood very widely, it includes factors of intention, convention, expectation, background belief, location (of place, time and world), space left for semantic decision, connotation of specific terms used etc. With such a methodology in play, when our speaker says on a certain occasion - for example - 'France is hexagonal', we are to take her as creating a context in which standards of the resolution of vagueness (of the predicate, ' _ is hexagonal') are set so that she speaks the truth. When our speaker says on another occasion - for example - 'There's no beer', perhaps when looking in his empty fridge, we are to take him as creating a context in which the quantifiers are so restricted (to range

over the contents of the fridge) as to make his claim come out true. In the case of de re modal locutions in particular, Lewis discerns in the truth-conditions assigned to sentence types, two elements which are characteristically apt for determination on occasions of token utterance. Consider, then, the right-side of slogan (5) - thus (5*):

(5*) Some counterpart of Rene is an immaterial being

The first element is that of quantification. For Lewis all modal locutions are to be treated as quantifiers over some range of the possible worlds: insofar as the range is determinate and can be determined, factors that vary with context play a salient role in such determinations. This view resonates with the commonplace understanding that modalities can be more or less strict. Some are nice, natural, kinds of modality - causal, physical, metaphysical, logical - but other are messier and have vaguer boundaries. Thus consider the complex conditions and constraints of preference, desire and practicality that might allow me to speak truly in saying, 'I can't meet you in town this evening'. But for present purposes, and in order to get to the heart of our matter, we can stipulate – fix by fiat, or by semantic decision – that our concern will only be with de re modal locutions in which the existential quantification afoot is absolutely unrestricted quantification across all possible worlds. This move also allows us to speak directly to the concerns of Quine (1953: 158) which are explicitly with absolute ('strict'), rather than merely restricted, de re necessities and possibilities.

The second element in the truth-conditions of de re modal claims which is apt for determination by context is the selection of the particular counterpart relation(s) invoked by use of the ‘counterpart’ predication. In general, and independently of any specific context, the counterparts of an individual, *x*, are those individuals that are similar to *x* in some relevant respects and to some relevant degree.⁶ Both kinds of relevance - relevance of respect and relevance of degree - are fixed, in so far as they are fixed, by context. In that respect counterpart-theoretic predications are to be understood in the same manner as explicit and commonplace predications of similarity – e.g. ‘The United States is similar to the Roman Empire’, ‘Human beings are like other primates’, ‘Tyson is more like Frazier than like Ali’, ‘Tim is nothing like his twin brother’. It should further be noted that the canonical version of counterpart-theoretic semantics in Lewis (1968) has gradually been deregulated in articulation and in content (Divers 2002: Ch.8). In articulation, it has increasingly been emphasized that there is no question of our being able to say truly – in general – of an individual, and once and for all, which others are its counterparts. In content, the ban on having worldmates as counterparts (postulate P5 of (Lewis 1968: 27)) may be lifted. Aside from gaining certain theoretical and expressive advantages in doing so, there is the following, principled, reason why the counterpart-theorist should lift this ban. Since representation de re supervenes on qualitative character, and obtains in virtue of facts about similarity – facts of sameness of qualitative character in certain respects (Lewis 1986: Ch.4) – facts about similarity should be sufficient for relevance to de re modal truth. Indeed, what seems utterly ad hoc, and unprincipled, is to stipulate that qualitative character and similarities do not count, or are insufficient for de re modal relevance just because the things in question are also related to one another by *non-*

identity-and-spatiotemporal-connectedness (or in whatever kind of way it is that makes for their being distinct worldmates).⁷

Some detect in deregulated counterpart theory two related vices. Initially, it is alleged, that deregulation allows a thoroughly inappropriate free for all over the truth-values of de re modal claims. And this free for all is then viewed as an *ad hoc* means of getting truth-values right in any case by being suitably devious in selecting counterpart relations.

When faced with this complaint, I think, the defender of counterpart theory can make two points in response – and both of these points will inform significantly the Lewisian response to Quine.

The first point is emphasized by Lewis (1986: 248-63) himself. The radical variation in counterpart-theoretic content assigned to de re modal locutions might seem inappropriate if it were in conflict with hard pre-theoretical data to the effect that the truth-values of de re modal sentences are typically clear, constant and context-independent. Perhaps those who place faith in their modal intuitions think that we have such data. But, as I will show shortly, such (putative) data and such intuitions can be accommodated on the Lewisian account. The second point in defence of the emerging, deregulated counterpart-theoretic account is that there is a perfectly clear, general, principled and non ad hoc metaphysical basis to counterpart theory: the facts that make de re modal locutions true are facts of objective (non-modal) similarity. This claim brings us to the third crucial component of the Lewisian story.

The third element of the Lewisian story is the location, in general, of indeterminacy or inconstancy of truth-values for sentence types with variation of truth-conditions assigned and not with variation of underlying, truth-making facts. The principled, clear and unswerving metaphysical thesis - that de re modal facts are facts of objective similarity - sits quite comfortably with a thesis of the softness of content determination for de re modal locutions. The softness of content determination means that, on any given occasion, it will likely be a rather indeterminate matter exactly *which* similarity relations properly figure in the content of an utterance. The softness of content determination also means that a de re modal sentence type can change truth-value with very subtle shifts of context of utterance, or even with very subtle shifts of context of *evaluation* of utterance. But no further, and distinctively metaphysical inconstancy – an indeterminacy or inconstancy of the extra-linguistic facts – need be postulated in order to explain the phenomena of inconstancy of truth-value. In general, it is (I believe) crucial to a proper understanding of Lewis’s thought about de re modality that we should place great emphasis on the distinction between the role and status of the two different elements that contribute to the truth-values of de re modal claims – the inconstant and context-sensitive truth-conditions, on one hand, and the truth-making facts of similarity, on the other. This distinction will be the pivotal point of the response to Quine. Moreover, concentration on this distinction between semantic and metaphysical considerations also helps us to address the outstanding matter that was raised concerning supposedly clear and distinct intuitions about the constancy – the *once-and-for-allness* – of the truth-values of certain modal sentence types.⁸

Lewis, famously, endorses a metaphysical thesis that is commonly attributed to Hume – thus (M):

(M) There are no necessary connections between distinct existences.

For Lewis (M) is best interpreted as a thesis about recombination and duplicates (things that are perfectly alike with respect to their intrinsic natural properties) – roughly: that for any individuals x_1, x_2, \dots and any natural numbers n_1, n_2, \dots there is a world that has as parts exactly n_1 duplicates of x_1 and exactly n_2 duplicates of x_2 , and (Lewis 1986: 86-92, Nolan 1996). We may allow, in general, that it is a hard, fast and perfectly determinate metaphysical matter whether x_1 is or is not a duplicate of x_2 . If there is indeterminacy in reality – because of objective chances or ontologically robust quantum facts – that is another matter, and it does not render indeterminate *all* facts about duplication. This metaphysical thesis (M) is, however, commonly conflated or confused with a semantic thesis that hangs around in the neighbourhood – viz, (S):

(S) There are no truths of the form $\Box Rab$, where the referents of ‘a’ and ‘b’ are distinct (existences).

Perhaps this formulation of the intended semantic thesis could be sharpened or otherwise improved. But no matter. The thought is that one who shares Lewis’s commitment to (M) must be committed to denying (something very like) (S), and at least that she will be committed to denying the truth of various claims of absolute necessity de re that Kripke

did much to make plausible – for example that George W is necessarily the son of George. But the metaphysical thesis (M) does not entail the semantic thesis (S). On the broadly Lewisian account of matters that I am expounding, one is at liberty to hold that there *are* such constant truths of absolute necessity *de re*. But if there is such constancy, then it is for the following reason: a context-dependent feature or parameter of a sentence type may be such that its value is in fact constant across all tokens. Thus, a semantic source of *de jure* inconstancy of truth-value may deliver *de facto* constancy of truth-value. It may be that our intentions and conventions are so entrenched, and their consequences so determinate, that the use in our community of (certain) proper names for humans has come to have a certain specific ‘connotation’ in every context. What that means, for the counterpart-theorist, is that the use of certain words is laden with so much baggage that they have the power to invoke, and make relevant, only a very specific kind of counterpart relation - perhaps even a unique counterpart relation - whenever they are used in modal contexts. Perhaps that's how it is with certain words in certain communities. Then for example, nothing will ever count, in any context, as a *relevant* counterpart of George W unless it is similar in respects that will ensure that every counterpart of George W is a son of someone who is a counterpart of George. But this, to use a classic Lewisian phrase, is an aspect of the question of which thing (on an occasion) *deserves to be called*, ‘ counterpart of George W’, or deserves to be called ‘counterpart of George’. Indeed, in his later work, Lewis (2003) even suggests means whereby the constancy effect can be achieved by quasi-stipulation, and irrespective of whether it ever actually emerges otherwise from our patterns of natural usage. Thus, for example, I may introduce the name ‘Possum-qua-cat’ as a proper name for the cat that already has the

proper name 'Possum'. These two co-referential proper names, however, have different counterpart-theoretic connotations. Thus, perhaps I utter an absolute de re modal truth, with constant content and constant truth-value across all tokenings in case (6):

(6) Possum-qua-cat is necessarily a cat

But perhaps not so in case (7):

(7) Possum-qua-cat is necessarily a Persian

For my choice of the term 'Possum-qua-cat' ensures that in all contexts, all contextually relevant counterparts of Possum are cats. But use of that name alone does not ensure that in all contexts, all contextually relevant counterparts of Possum are Persians.

So it does not matter how firm, or uniform, are your intuitions are about the constancy of truth-value for sentence types involving de re modal predication. If you discern no such inconstancy, the Lewisian story offers an explanation of inconstancy. But if you discern some such inconstancy of truth-values, the Lewisian story relieves you of the need to postulate any metaphysical indeterminacy or metaphysical inconstancy in order to explain that. I now apply the latter point to the (Quinean) case at hand.

IV. THE LEWISIAN RESPONSE TO QUINE'S CRITIQUE

The first element of Quine's critique was the thesis that the de re modal locutions (contexts) of English are referentially opaque. And about this, the Lewisian will say, he is right. It is true that change of truth-value may be, and indeed often is, brought about by substitution inside a modal context of one proper name by another, co-referential, singular term. Most native speakers will feel some pre-theoretical reluctance to hold true some de re necessity claims that can be produced by substitution of (what Lewisians take to be) co-referential terms in apparently true de re modal claims – among these products are claims such as:

- (7) My body is necessarily a thinking thing
- (8) Necessarily, if there is heat there are molecules
- (2) The number of planets is necessarily greater than 7.

Many philosophical semanticists acknowledge these anti-necessitarian intuitions, but offer some, broadly, error-theoretic diagnosis of them. Perhaps the hearer is mistaking the intended alethic necessity for some kind of epistemic necessity. Or perhaps the hearer is misreading the semantic structure of the relevant sentence (since the scope of the modal expression in the structure that is intended, or derived by proper substitution, is not the scope that the expression would have to have in order that the necessity claim be false).⁹ But the counterpart-theorist has no need to postulate any such error. The counterpart-theorist finds not only that anti-necessitarian intuitions of contingent truth may be correct in such cases, but also that the correctness of those intuitions are perfectly consistent with

both the truth of relevant identity statements and with equally correct necessitarian intuitions in the related cases – viz:

(7**) I am necessarily a thinking thing

(8**) Necesssarily. if there is molecular motion there are molecules

(2**) 9 is necessarily greater than 7

Thus, for example, it may well be true that in a given context of utterance I utter a true token of (7**). My utterance is true, on that occasion, since my use of ‘I’ connotes or invokes my counterparts in respect of psychological similarity and all of those are thinking things. But in the next breath I may falsely utter:

(7) My Body is necessarily a thinking thing.

For on this same occasion, my use of the different term ‘My Body’ invokes or connotes my counterparts in respect of corporeal similarity, and not all of these are thinking things (Lewis 1971). And there is no mystery about how both of these judgements of truth-value can be correct even though we also have the truth (in both contexts, and constantly) of the relevant identity statement – viz.:

(7*) I = My Body

The only error that the counterpart theorist will diagnose is that of any *theorist* who thinks that substitution in de re modal contexts invariably proceeds *salva veritate*. For the underlying form of inference is, by counterpart-theoretic lights, the invalid form :

- (N1) Every counterpart-1 of x is F
- (=) x=y_____
- (N2) Every counterpart-2 of y is F

The inference can, of course, be transformed into a valid inference by addition of any one of a number of further premises – e.g. that every counterpart-1 of x is also a counterpart-2 of x. But if we are to adduce such a premise, in a context, we need good and special reason to do so.

It is to be emphasized again, in the spirit of distinguishing metaphysical from semantic claims, that the proper and defensible intuition of contingency – which is sustained by referential opacity and which is endorsed on the counterpart-theoretic account – is a *semantic* intuition. It is an intuition about the truth-values, in various contexts, of certain modal sentence tokens. This claim about the falsehood of certain necessity claims is emphatically *not* to be conflated with any metaphysical thesis that is associated with the term ‘contingent identity’ – for example, the false claim that in some world, some thing is not self-identical (Lewis 1986: 253). Nor is the claim about the dissipation of truth-value on substitution to be understood in terms of any underlying, or subsequent, metaphysical inconstancy.

Recall, now, the hyperbolic-Quinean suggestion of inconstancy in putative modal reality - things acquiring and losing their de re modal properties just as we decide to call them one thing or the other. The Lewisian reply to this charge is now, I hope, easily anticipated. It is that changes in truth-value brought about by substitution of co-referential terms are brought about in virtue of changes in content (truth-conditions) and not by changes in a (truth-making) modal reality. Substitution of co-referential expressions does not preserve all of the factors that are relevant to the selection (as semantically salient) of certain counterpart relations over others, and so such substitution (in the object-language of modal English) does not - in the relevant sense - preserve content. But modal reality does not change. Modal reality, unmasked, is a reality that consists in the individuals that (unrestrictedly) exist and their qualitative features – in particular, the objective similarity relations in which they stand to one another. All that changes, if anything does, is the portion of modal reality that is relevant to the truth of a modal sentence type when its context of utterance is altered or when it is transformed by substitution of one co-referential term by another. In general, selection of certain truth-conditions as relevant may well be a mind-dependent or language-dependent matter even when the truth-making facts are not (so) mind-dependent or language-dependent. In general, what supervenes on facts about us and our language – and what may change as those facts change – are facts about which counterpart relations are relevant in a context, not the facts about the obtaining or otherwise of counterpart relations. There is no need to postulate mind-dependent or language-dependent essences in order to account for the inconstancy of de

re modal predications and so – to that extent – the spirit of ‘Aristotelian essentialism’ survives.

You may, of course, be unconvinced by the Lewisian claim that the truth-conditions of de re modal claims are context-dependent and inconstant in just this way. But there is no gainsaying that the general phenomenon is familiar enough and unmysterious. For if we take the case of explicitly and uncontroversially context-dependent locutions – say talk involving characterization of a place as ‘here’ – we can readily appreciate how truth-value can change across utterances of tokens of the same type. It is not because there is a mysterious underlying indexical or perspectival reality of herenesses that changes at our referential whim: it is not that place *a* used to have the property of hereness but now we have brought about by speaking that place *b* has the property of hereness. The all too mundane explanation is that the content (or character) of our ‘here’ sentences is apt to change from one tokening to another. And what the Lewisian story shows us, whether we accept *that* story or not, is that Quine – in his classic critique – has overlooked that *kind* of explanation of the opacity of de re modal predication.¹⁰

Having so distinguished semantic and metaphysical questions, it is then natural to press the Lewisian on the specifically metaphysical content of the account of de re modal properties. Up to a point, the metaphysics of counterpart-theoretic predication are (relatively) straightforward, as are the semantics. The language of counterpart-theory is fully transparent: substitution of co-referential terms directly within a context of *specific counterpart-theoretic predication* preserves truth-value. If George W. is a counterpart-1

of me (say in virtue of similarity in respect of height) then George W. is a counterpart-1 of the thing I call 'I' and a counterpart-1 of my body. For the thing I call 'I' and my body are one and the same thing, and the indiscernibility of identicals holds good. The things that stand in counterpart relations are individuals (and perhaps sets). Each *counterpart relation*, *C-n*, on Lewis's ontology, is a set of ordered pairs of the things $\langle x,y \rangle$ such that y is a counterpart- n of x . But so far we have no direct answer to the specific, and apparently legitimate metaphysical questions: (a) whether there are *de re modal properties* of things and, if so (b) what is the nature of these properties. There are, I believe, two jointly incompatible, but individually natural, kinds of metaphysical thesis that are broadly consistent with the Lewisian story that has been presented thus far.

The first metaphysical thesis is an *eliminativist* thesis which is inspired by the analogy with indexical predication. Just as there are true indexical predications but no indexical properties of things so, one might claim, there are true *de re modal* predications but no *de re modal* properties of things. Then, one who accepts the truth of an existentially general *de re modal* predication - as in (2*) - may choose to respond straightforwardly to the Quinean question of which object it is that has this mysterious property of *being necessarily greater than 7*. This eliminativist response would be, 'none'. For there is no such property as *being necessarily greater than 7* and none is required in order that (2*) be true.

The second metaphysical thesis is realist about *de re modal* properties – there are *de re modal* properties of things. When one asks after the nature of these properties, the

Lewisian answer is in a sense straightforward: as always, the properties in question are sets of (what we normally think of as) their instances. The property of being possibly human is the set of all things that are possibly human; the property of being necessarily mortal is the set of all things that are necessarily mortal: in both cases, the property is a set and, presumably, a set of individuals. In a sense that is the end of the metaphysical story. And it was ever so. No matter which concepts we use to pick out, or to characterize a property, the property will always be a set. There are, of course, adjacent semantic, conceptual and more broadly metaphysical questions that some philosophers may have in mind despite the fact that they formulate their question as a question about the nature of de re modal properties. And it is open to the counterpart-theorist to offer the beginnings of a story that speaks to these adjacent concerns.

The route from a de re modal predicate (say, 'x is possibly human') to the underlying properties is not very straightforward and it does not obviously terminate in one property rather than many.

Firstly, a de re modal property always involves, in some sense, a hidden relation. For if we challenge the counterpart theorist to characterize, or identify, informatively the *property* of being possibly human, the natural thing for her to say – if she chooses to say anything – is that it is the property of having a counterpart who is human. Thus, a (counterpart) relation is brought into play which was not intimated explicitly in the original de re modal predication. Secondly, the de re modal property is always characterized or identified in terms of an element of generality: it is a matter of either

some, none, or all of a thing's having counterparts that are F's. Thirdly, as already discussed at some length, what is brought into play by any given type of de re modal predication is a *family* of counterpart relations. And so the counterpart theorist may consider that the property of *being necessarily human* is – somehow – constituted by the various members of a certain family of counterpart relations. Now if, again, the challenge is to say something informative – but perhaps not necessarily something that is strictly or fundamentally *metaphysical* – about such 'constitution', the counterpart theorist may consider various models. She may entertain the idea that the de re modal property is a *role*-property in relation to which the various underlying counterpart-relation-involving properties are role-players. She may entertain the idea that the de re modal property is a *determinable* property in relation to which the various underlying counterpart-relation-involving properties are determinates. She may entertain the idea that the de re modal property is a *disjunctive* property in relation to which the various underlying counterpart-relation-involving properties are disjuncts. But if properties are sets, none of these ideas express anything that is *metaphysically* – or at least, *ontologically* – fundamental. Moreover, (and although I cannot make the negative case here) none of the models fits very well. Indeed it looks as though the best analogues we have are cases of rather commonplace predication that are not metaphysically distinguished. Thus, consider the predication 'x has a black relative' and imagine, then, trying to make the case for the existence of the corresponding property of *having a black relative* and telling some story about the nature or constitution of that property.

The predication 'x has a black relative' is vague, or at least indeterminate, not only on 'black', but also on 'relative'. Let us focus on the latter. The word 'relative' varies over a significant range of relations, any of which may be taken as its semantic value. Thus, for example, different relations are brought into play depending on which of the following are, or are not, rated as relevant: proximal ancestors, remote ancestors, the dead and those related by marriage to those who are otherwise admitted as relatives. So we have a family of relations each of which is of potential semantic relevance to the application, on an occasion, of the predicate, 'x is a relative of y'. And a Lewisian metaphysical account of each of the relations in the family is straightforwardly available: each is a set of ordered pairs of individuals. Now if the question is forced as to which of these sets is *the* property of *being-a-relative-of*, no answer is comfortable. If we take the union of all of the sets we have the property corresponding to the widest construal of 'x is a relative of y'. And sometimes that is, semantically the right property. Indeed, one may utter a striking and informative truth in using the sentence, 'Everyone has a black relative'. But that choice of property won't always be semantically appropriate, as there are any number of contexts in which it is true to say 'Some people have no black relatives'. On the other hand, the selection of any subset of the property that corresponds to the widest construal seems arbitrary and, given the point recently made, will also be semantically inappropriate in some contexts. What can most informatively and accurately be said, in general, about 'the property' of having a black relative is that it turns out to be a family of familial-relation-involving properties. Equally, what that can most informatively and accurately be said, on the present view, about de re modal properties is that they turn out to be families of counterpart-involving properties. But the fundamental metaphysics, in each case, is clear.

The underlying properties are sets, and the relations in which these properties directly stand to one another are set-theoretic. All other (nearby) questions about how these sets relate to words are not primarily metaphysical questions. They are questions about the route(s) to the referent(s) of de re modal predicates and not questions about the nature of the referents themselves.

So much then for the Lewisian metaphysical story about the existence and nature of de re modal properties. I turn finally in this section to comment directly on Quine's argument.

In light of the Lewisian story, it is hard to resist the conclusion that there is a mistake at the heart of the Quinean critique which is, ironically, not so distant from that which is anathema to Quine and which Quine famously diagnoses as lying at the rotten heart of our modalizing (1961: 324). For Quine's critique of de re modalizing, we might now observe, is conceived in sin which is at least akin to the original sin of conflation of use with mention. This kindred sin is that of confusing or conflating the metaphysical with the semantic – or at least the vice of reading off too readily metaphysical conclusions from features of the object-language before the resources of regimentation and paraphrase have been brought to bear. In this respect, consider the very first sentences of Quine (1953b) - thus:

One of the fundamental principles governing identity is that of substitutivity - or, as it might well be called, that of *indiscernibility of identicals*. It provides that, *given a true statement of identity, one of its two*

terms may be substituted for the other in any true statement and the result will be true. (1953b:139, emphases as in the original)

The quotation displays a non-negotiated shift from semantic talk to metaphysical talk and back again. The semantic dimension of Quine's remarks is in evidence when he names the intended principle, on the first occasion, as 'that of substitutivity' and when he spells out the principle as a principle about identity statements and their truth-values. But aside from such overtly semantic talk, one can discern a further dimension to Quine's remarks. That, one might think, is what is in evidence when Quine advertises the principle that he is about to expound as being a principle 'governing identity' and as one that 'might well be called that of the indiscernibility of identicals'. A metaphysical reading of these locutions is permissible if not natural. For, one might think, a principle 'governing identity', is a principle governing identity itself or the relation of identity and not a principle about the identity sign or about identity statements. And the only principle that would naturally and properly be called, 'the indiscernibility of identicals', is of this character. The principle of indiscernibility of identicals has it that, for any x and y , if x is identical to y then x and y are indiscernible. The standard further articulation of the principle has it that indiscernibility is sameness of (certain) properties: for any x and y , if x is identical to y , then for any property (in a given range) F , x has F if and only if y has F . On the face of things, then, Quine has conflated - or tendentiously identified - a semantic principle of substitution which governs identity statements with a metaphysical principle of indiscernibility that governs the property of identity. And in light of the

Lewisian story, it seems that the same failing infects Quine's treatment of the semantics and metaphysics of de re modal predication.

In any event, and at the very least, the Lewisian story serves to halt Quine's critique of de re modalizing on the extensional horn of his dilemma. It is possible that the semantic premises are true (that de re modal contexts are opaque and individuals are the metaphysical subjects of de re modal predication) while the absurd metaphysical conclusion is false (that de re modal properties are metaphysically inconstant and language-dependent properties).

My question now is whether, and despite this Lewisian defence, a neo-Quinean skepticism about de re modalizing might yet flourish.

V. IDEOLOGY AS THE FOCUS SKEPTICISM?

The *ideology* of Lewis's theory of de re modalizing is not fertile ground in which a neo-Quinean skepticism seems apt to flourish.¹¹

It has already been noted that the language of counterpart theory is thoroughly transparent: the substitution of co-referential terms in contexts of specific and explicit counterpart-theoretic predications proceeds *salva veritate*. It has also been noted that the kinds of things to which Lewisian counterpart theory commits us ontologically are individuals and – in so far as we are required to quantify over counterpart relations –

properties and relations construed extensionally as sets of sequences of individuals, or sets of these. Moreover, the counterpart-theoretic account does not require us to think of things as having de re modal properties which are metaphysically inconstant and mind-dependent – for the counterpart-theorist may insist, in eliminativist spirit, that there are no de re modal properties or, in realist spirit, that there are such properties but they are not metaphysically inconstant or mind-dependent. These are some of the features that make Lewis's counterpart-theoretic account of de re modality ideologically acceptable from a Quinean standpoint. But there are many more such features that might be made explicit.

The range of concepts or notions taken as primitive in Lewisian counterpart theory are impeccable from a Quinean standpoint (Divers & Melia 2002: 15-24) since they are the set-theoretic, the mereological, the spatiotemporal and the qualitative more generally. The identification of possibilia as spatiotemporally located individuals meets specifically Quinean concerns about criteria of identity and individuation for possibilia (Quine 1953a, Lewis 1973: 87-8, Lewis 1968: 27-8). And there is no problem on Lewis's theory that deserves to be called a problem of transworld identity as that problem is prosecuted by Quine (1976).¹² The metaphysical thesis of transworld identity is denied: it is never the case that one individual exists wholly in two different worlds (no individual is a part of two distinct worlds). The semantic thesis of transworld identity is accepted and explicated: one individual in general exists at – exists according to, is represented as existing by – many different worlds. But identity of what is represented obtains in virtue of the obtaining of counterpart relations: more generally, representation de re supervenes on qualitative character (Lewis 1986 Ch.4, Divers 2002: Ch.16).

Finally, in matters of ideology, we might think of the language of counterpart theory, in an explicitly Quinean way – as ‘canonical notation’ in which our ordinary de re modal claims are to be regimented and paraphrased. The availability and effectiveness of these counterpart-theoretic paraphrases of ordinary de re modal talk – a Quinean might think – exposes the medium of quantified modal logic as an expressively inadequate, ontologically obscure and thoroughly dispensable medium of representation. The consideration that counterpart theory is a proper non-logical theory (Lewis 1968: 29) might also be taken as evidence of the folly of attempting to construct and make semantically coherent a special *logic* of de re modality. And that, one might think, is music to Quinean ears.¹³

I conclude that Lewisian counterpart-theory offers the Quinean most, if not all, of what she could ask for by way of an *ideologically* acceptable theory of de re modalizing. So if a neo-Quinean skepticism about de re modalizing is to emerge, it must find another focus.

VI. ONTOLOGY AS THE FOCUS OF SKEPTICISM?

If we seek within Lewis’s treatment of de re modality a natural focus for a neo-Quinean skepticism, it is the ontology of the theory that immediately commands our attention. For, notoriously, Lewis’s counterpart-theoretic analyses of de re modal claims are set against the background ontology of (genuine) modal realism – a vast infinity of concrete worlds across which all possibilities are realized. And such an ontology threatens to be both uneconomical and anti-naturalistic. Threatening economy, Lewis’s genuine modal

realism postulates the existence of many kinds of thing that are not previously recognized by science or common sense. If the Lewisian pluriverse exists, then Newtonian spaces exist and so do dragons, unicorns, Cartesian egos and all manner of things. Indeed, it has been suggested (Melia 1992) that Lewis's ontology is, in a sense, *maximally* profligate in this respect – no consistent theory postulates more kinds of entity. Threatening naturalism, the ontology of genuine modal realism immediately violates the thesis of ontological naturalism according to which nothing exists except the single world of space and time (Armstrong 1989: 3). Moreover, this ontological non-naturalism then promotes the prospect of commitment to an epistemological non-naturalism with the need to postulate either non-causal means of detecting other-worldly facts, or substantial *a priori* knowledge of their existence and content.

However, I doubt that these considerations are decisive in commanding a Quinean skepticism, since there are two sorts of positions that the Quinean might explore with a view to dealing with them. I will illustrate these positions only briefly, and I do not claim that either is entirely comfortable territory for the Quinean to occupy. But what is significant for present purposes is that each points towards a common and *deeper* source of skeptical dissatisfaction with our de re modalizing.

The first position is that of attempting to maintain counterpart-theoretic analyses without commitment to the ontology of genuine modal realism. This strategy might be pursued either by offering a re-interpretation of counterpart theory or by interpreting counterpart theory at face-value.

Re-interpretation strategies will be uncongenial to the Quinean if the upshot is that they require us to admit (re-admit) unacceptable ideology by way of primitive modal concepts, intensional entities or non-extensional semantic devices. This constraint seems to close off most familiar proposals that there are for having possible-world talk without genuine modal realism – thus, for example, various forms of ersatz realism (Lewis 1986: Ch.3), modalism (Forbes 1985, 1989) and modal fictionalism (Rosen 1990). On the other hand, face-value interpretations of counterpart theory which proceed without admitting an ontology of non-actualized individuals (genuine or ersatz) seem likely to force us to revise radically our views about the truth-values of many *de re* modal claims – in particular claims concerning possibilities that we do not know to be actualized. For example, the truth-condition of the claim that some human (say, Van) might have lived for exactly 36512 days is that van has a counterpart who lives for exactly 36512 days. But if we do not know of the existence of such an actual counterpart of Van, then we cannot hold that the truth-condition is fulfilled and so we cannot hold that the possibility claim is true. The standard response of face-value interpreters to such revisionary implications is to mitigate their error theory or agnosticism about the subject matter by invoking some subsidiary norm which is weaker than that of truth but in terms of which we can still maintain our practices.¹⁴ Thus we may seek to vindicate our established and beneficial mathematical theorizing by thinking of it as meriting and eliciting assent in virtue of conservativeness (Field 1980, 1989). Or may seek to vindicate our established and beneficial microphysical theorizing by thinking of it as meriting and eliciting assent in virtue of empirical adequacy (van Fraassen 1980). However, it should be clear that there are many

reasons why Quine did not, and a Quinean ought not, to embrace that kind of escape from impending ontological commitment. We might observe, for a start, that the distinction between assent as holding true and assent as holding, say, empirically adequate, might be thought operationally dubious. The related thought is that our best overall theory of truth requires us to treat cases of saying *that p* as saying *that p is true*. I certainly do not claim that these very swift considerations are decisive in closing off such a position to the Quinean.¹⁵ But I think it is clear that the path of seeking to avoid commitment to the ontology of genuine realism while maintaining the use of counterpart theory is one that the Quinean, in particular, will find littered with ideological and methodological obstacles. However, it is another aspect of the general strategy of face-value interpretation that merits emphasis. There is a kind of characteristic motivation behind the idea that our desire to avoid problematic ontological commitments should not lead us to abandon face-value interpretation of the target discourse. That motivation rests with the two-fold thought that the discourse in question – mathematical, microphysical etc. – (a) has some special function or role that argues for accommodating it rather than abandoning it and (b) that role is only supported, or is best supported when the discourse is interpreted at face-value. I will return to (a) shortly.

The second position that the Quinean might seek to occupy is that of justifying the acceptance of the ontology of genuine modal realism. We might note at the outset that it would, of course, be most un-Quinean to seek *a priori* grounds on which to insist that the Lewis pluriverse does not exist. And, after all, it has been pointed out that there are models of the general theory of relativity that represent the existence of infinitely many

disjoint spacetimes (Bigelow & Pargetter 1990: 189-93). Moreover, and more to the point, the argument that (the later) Lewis gives for the acceptance of the ontology of genuine modal realism (1986: 3-5) is a variation on a recognizably Quinean theme.¹⁶ The theme is, of course, that of justification of the acceptance of controversial ontology by appeal to the overall benefits that it brings to our total theory. And famously, Quine argues in just such a way for our acceptance of mathematical theories under their face-value – i.e. Platonistic – interpretation and despite the fact that such theories appear to be in conflict with ontological naturalism. The further argument is that this commitment does not amount to a violation of epistemological naturalism. Although Lewis (1986: 5) goes out of his way to emphasize that his argument is not based on a claim of absolute *indispensability* of genuine possibilia – contrast Quine’s claim of the indispensability of mathematical entities – we might say that Lewis’s argument follows Quine in a kind of utilitarian justification for the acceptance of non-natural ontology. So, in principle, perhaps the Quinean is methodologically compelled to consider that if we are to have an accommodating theory of de re modalizing then genuine modal realist ontology is the price we must pay. But everything, I suggest, hangs on that ‘if’. And the questions of whether and why we should have an accommodating theory of de re modalizing are questions that raise again the issue that was raised earlier by the strategy of interpreting at face-value with a view to avoiding ontological commitment – the issue of the utility of de re modal judgement.

VII. UTILITY AS THE FOCUS OF SKEPTICISM?

In taking stock, two considerations about the attempt to accommodate de re modalizing may now strike the Quinean as salient.

The first consideration is the upshot of the dialectic which has recently ensued, viz., that, even with Lewis's help, the Quinean accommodation of de re modalizing is still a long way off. For while Lewis has provided the Quinean with an ideologically acceptable account of de re modalizing, the ideology is associated with ontological commitments which – given various other Quinean methodological commitments and preferences – are neither easy to avoid nor easy to accommodate.

The second consideration, which we now develop, is that no good reason has been offered as to why we should struggle to accommodate de re modalizing in our total theory. It is not out of the question that we may, with substantial effort, achieve such an accommodation. But what would we gain by doing so? What is the function, the benefit, the utility of de re modal judgment that motivates our efforts at accommodation? This is the fundamental skeptical challenge to de re modalizing, for the very point of the activity is now in question. And it is a challenge that might fairly be put to any defender of de re modalizing whether or not she finds the Quine-Lewis dialectic compelling. Indeed, at this point, we may – as it were – dispense with Quine and Lewis and the distinctive and particular trappings of their positions. The dialectic now is between an arbitrary skeptic about de re modalizing and an arbitrary defender of de re modalizing. The generalized skeptical challenge is now put as follows.

You, the friend of de re modality, believe that there is an account of de re modalizing which is – by your lights, and by the sorts of standards that we should expect in philosophy – ideologically, methodologically and ontologically acceptable. You believe that the benefits of the package are worth the – ontological, epistemological and other – costs. But what are the benefits? And let us be clear, this is not the question of why we benefit from accommodating our de re modalizing in one way rather than another. This is the question why we benefit from accommodating de re modalizing *at all*. The distinction between the two kinds of question is readily appreciated by analogy with other discourses.

Once we are convinced that mathematizing is an activity that brings some distinctive benefit to our practical and intellectual lives, an argument from utility may convince us that the best accommodation of mathematizing is one that commits us to Platonistic ontology. Or perhaps some further considerations will convince us that we can have the benefits of mathematizing without the costs associated with Platonistic ontology. But, in any event, it is only because we have substantial prior motivation to accommodate mathematizing – because we have already identified some benefits of mathematizing – that we are so concerned with the ontological and other costs of doing so. Similarly, once we are convinced that indulging in microphysical theorizing is an activity that brings some distinctive benefit to our practical and intellectual lives, an argument from utility may convince us that the best accommodation of that theorizing is one that commits us to the existence of unobservable things. Or perhaps some further considerations will

convince us that we can have the benefits of microphysical theorizing without the costs associated with an ontology of unobservables. But, in any event, it is only because we have substantial prior motivation to accommodate the discourse of microphysics – because we have already identified some benefits of such theorizing – that we are so concerned with the ontological and other costs of doing so. In both of those cases, and others, there is a wealth of reasons that might be given for our accommodating – rather than ignoring, abandoning or rejecting – that way of speaking and thinking. It is not to our immediate point to develop or scrutinize these reasons in detail, but suffice to say that the inferential advantages of both mathematical and microphysical discourses loom large when these reasons are adduced. One might think, for example, that even if mathematical talk is (in a sense) ultimately, deductively dispensable in our theorizing, it is practically invaluable since it affords us tremendous advantages of efficiency in drawing non-mathematical conclusions from non-mathematical premises. One might think, for example, that microphysical talk is not even ultimately dispensable in our theorizing since there are conclusions about observable macro-physical world that we simply could not be in a position to draw without appeal to premises about the micro-physical. So now, the skeptical challenge emerges, what is the distinctive benefit or advantage that *de re* modalizing brings to our practical and intellectual lives and which motivates accommodation rather than rejection?¹⁷

In response to this challenge, there are a number of indirect strategies of response which the defender of *de re* modalizing may wish to explore.

One strategy is to play the quietist card. It is no business of philosophy to call to account any such practice.

A second strategy is to press the skeptic to make clear, and without begging any questions, exactly what an acceptable answer would consist in. How much distance is required between the terms of the discourse and the justification of its use? Presumably, it is not appropriate to offer *simply* that the function of de re modal discourse is that of stating the de re modal facts. (No doubt the function of discourse about entelechies is that of stating the facts about entelechies, and that of discourse about vital spirits is that of stating the vitalist facts.) But it would be quite another thing – and a quite unreasonable thing – to suppose that a thoroughly non-modal answer could be given to the challenge to specify the role.

A third strategy is to appeal to the probability that any way of thinking and speaking that is so firmly entrenched within and across our natural languages serves (de dicto) *some* beneficial function even if we lack a clear account of what the function is. The thought here is that it would be at least prudent to accommodate rather than reject our de re modalizing even if we are not sure exactly why we should do so.

A fourth strategy is to appeal to the consideration that the theory of de re modalizing is effectively cost free since it involves no commitments other than those that we have already taken on for the purposes of accommodating other ways of thinking and speaking. Perhaps Lewis might make such a case in relation to resources that are already

required to give an adequate ontological and conceptual account of (some combination of) propositions, properties, counterfactuals, causation and de dicto modalizing.

A fifth strategy is to develop (to argue in detail, and to clarify) the suggestion that de re modal judgement is “presupposed”, in some sense, by certain of our most fundamental or valuable ways of relating intelligently – cognitively or semantically – to the (actual) world.

No doubt there is some mileage in some of these suggestions, and certainly there is some interest in all. But, firstly, each suggestion stands in need of extensive development if it is to provide an adequate response to the skeptical challenge. And, secondly, one might think that if the best that can be done on behalf of de re modalizing is to resort to some combination of the above responses, that shows the practice, or our understanding of it, in a relatively unfavourable light. After all, it has been suggested, it seems that in other areas of discourse where problematic ontological and epistemological commitments are threatened – mathematical, micro-physical, intentional, moral etc. – there are far more direct and substantive stories to be told. In the case of de re modal judgement – I submit – there are no developed stories of that kind on the market. Indeed, it is striking that in so far as attempts have been made to say anything substantive about the utility or function of modal judgement, these have been, for the most part, attempts that begin with the question of what it is to treat a proposition as necessary.¹⁸ And thereby such accounts focus almost exclusively on the case of de dicto modal judgement from which no substantive story about de re modal judgement need emerge.

I conclude, then, that after Quine and Lewis (and everyone else), skepticism about de re modalizing is alive and well in the form of a skepticism about the utility of de re modal judgement. Arguably, the question of function – which distinctive practical or intellectual benefits is brought by de re modal discourse, and at what disadvantage would we be if we eschewed it – is the first, and not the last, questions that we should be raising about a discourse, the accommodation of which poses so many philosophical problems and imposes so many substantive philosophical commitments. I recommend strongly that we return to that question as a matter of urgency in modal philosophy. Otherwise, all substantive work in semantics, metaphysics and epistemology which is geared toward the accommodation of de re modal judgement might be viewed – and not only by committed Quineans – as dangerously lacking in fundamental and proper motivation.¹⁹

John Divers

Department of Philosophy, University of Sheffield

Arché, University of St.Andrews

j.divers@sheffield.ac.uk

NOTES

¹ For a summary and discussion of various, relatively early and pre-Lewisian responses to Quine see Linsky (1971). Notable among these responses is that of Smullyan (1948). By way of explanation of the chronology, although Quine (1953b) is, indeed, the *locus classicus*, of Quine's critique of de re modalizing, the centerpiece of that critique is a kind of substitution argument (see (II) below), various versions of which appear in earlier publications (e.g., Quine (1943)).

² Plantinga (1987) characterizes Lewis's account of de re (and other) modalities as Quinean in various important respects.

³ Afficionados will recognize that serious, theoretically loaded, appeal to truthmaking facts, and especially if these are to be truthmaking facts for non-contingent truths, is met with a marked lack of enthusiasm by Lewis (1991, 2003). But my talk of truthmaking facts here is entirely dispensable and should be taken as a figure of speech intimating the relevant extra-linguistic reality, whether that reality consists in truthmakers, facts or neither.

⁴ I hereby register the view that commitment to genuine modal realism is not an essential element of the Lewisian response to Quine. But I will save explanation of that remark until Section VI.

⁵ It may be worth emphasizing that this procedure need not fall foul of the most popular and influential objections to descriptive theories of names (Kripke 1980). For the claim need not be that: for each name, there is some definite description such that in every context that description supplies an adequate paraphrase in that context. The weaker claim, and one that fits better into the spirit of deregulated counterpart theory (see ms 9-10 below) is that for every name and every context there is some definite description which supplies an adequate paraphrase in that context.

⁶ You may think that this characterization is so lax as to allow that everything is a counterpart of everything else. Indeed, the universal relation is one counterpart relation, but the case has been made that this is an advantage, rather than a disadvantage of counterpart-theoretic approach (Divers 2002: 146)

⁷ By allowing worldmates to be counterparts theoretical advantages ensue in the treatment of – inter alia – de re modal claims about pairs of things (Lewis 1986: 220-48), de re modal claims about kind-membership (Hazen 1979), the psychological relevance of counterparts (Miller 1993) and certain non-modal claims about persistence, survival and identity from a four-dimensionalist standpoint (Hawley 2001, Sider 2001).

⁸ I am indebted to Joseph Melia for discussions from which this point emerged.

⁹ Kripke (1980: 106-55) acknowledges these intuitions of contingency and (I believe) points to both of the explanations of them that I have characterized as 'error-theoretic'.

¹⁰ As an anonymous referee has suggested, one reason why Quine may have 'overlooked' such a semantic account is that he was concerned with the status of quantified modal *logic* and would not have considered it

a legitimate option for a semantic interpretation of any proper *logic* to attribute context-dependence. But there is, in a sense, no discrepancy between Quine and Lewis on that point. For there is a sense in which Lewis's defence of de re modalizing ought not to be construed as involving an enthusiastic semantic defence of quantified modal logic *qua logic*. For what Lewis (1968) offers is not, strictly, a semantic theory for quantified modal logic at all, but rather a procedure for evaluating the validity of modal inferences which focuses on the status as theorems of the translations of the formulas of quantified modal logic into a first-order *theory*, viz. counterpart theory. Thus one might hold that, if counterpart theory is (by Quinean lights) the best we can do, we still lack a satisfactory and full-blooded semantics for quantified modal *logic* of the kind that Quine would have demanded in order to vindicate the status of quantified modal logic *qua logic*.

¹¹ It is not entirely obvious what should be filed under the heading of 'ideology' and, I suppose, my inclusion of certain considerations under the heading of 'ideology' may seem suspect. But I believe that nothing turns on this taxonomic decision. The substantive claims about what is and what is not acceptable to the Quinean should stand independently of where we file them.

¹² The suggestion in Quine (1976) that counterpart theory has a problem of transworld identity is predicated on the presumption, following Lewis (1968) that there is a (unique) determinate counterpart relation which is invoked in all contexts. And that presumption, it has been argued, ought to be rejected. See Lewis (2003: 27).

¹³ See n10 above.

¹⁴ The notion of a subsidiary norm is introduced and associated with this role by Wright (1992).

¹⁵ For developments of both kinds of strategy for avoiding commitment to genuine possibilities that are not obviously beyond Quinean bounds see (Sider 2002), for a re-interpretation strategy and Divers (2004) for a face-value interpretation strategy.

¹⁶ For an earlier 'paraphrase' argument for genuine realist ontology see (Lewis 1973: 84) and see (Divers 2002: 57-8) on the connection between the two arguments.

¹⁷ Perhaps mention of some further examples will help to allay suspicion that the Quinean is still with us and responsible for implicitly and illicitly making certain assumptions about utility that are steeped in a

kind of ‘scientism’. Thus, on the motives for accommodating, rather than abandoning, talk of propositional attitudes see, e.g., (Dennett 1981) and (Fodor 1987: Ch.1). On motives for accommodating rather than abandoning moral discourse see, e.g., (Mackie 1977: Ch.8) and (Blackburn 1998: Ch.1).

¹⁸ These questions of function are treated as crucial by all of those who align themselves, or even engage seriously with the tradition of modal non-cognitivism. Thus see (Blackburn 1986) and further references there.

¹⁹ For their various helpful comments and suggestions I thank Tom Baldwin, Chris Hookway, Jimmy Lenman, Andy McGonigal, Fiona MacPherson, Joseph Melia, Laurie Paul, Richard Woodward, an anonymous referee for EJP, those present when versions of the paper were presented at the Conference in Honour of William Lyons, Trinity College Dublin, the Universities of Glasgow, Stirling and York, and the Modality project seminar of the *Arché* Centre at the University of St.Andrews. Above all I gratefully acknowledge the support of the British Academy, the present paper having been written during my tenure of their generous Readership award.

REFERENCES

- Armstrong, D. M. (1989), *A Combinatorial Theory of Possibility*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bigelow, J. & Pargetter, R. (1990), *Science and Necessity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Blackburn, S. (1986), 'Morals and Modals', in *Fact, Science and Morality: Essays on A. J. Ayer's Language, Truth and Logic*, G. MacDonald and C. Wright (eds), Oxford: Blackwell, 119-142.
- Blackburn, S. (1998), *Ruling Passions*, Oxford: Clarendon.
- Dennett, D. (1981), 'Three Kinds of Intentional Psychology', in *Reduction, Time and Reality*, R. Healey (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Divers, J. (2002), *Possible Worlds*, London: Routledge.
- - - (2004), Agnosticism About Other Worlds: A New Antirealist Programme in Modality. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 69, 659-84.
- Divers, J. & Melia, J. (2002), 'The Analytic Limit of Genuine Modal Realism', *Mind*, 111, 15-36.
- Field, H. (1980), *Science Without Numbers*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- - - (1989), *Realism, Mathematics and Modality*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Fodor, J. (1987), *Psychosemantics* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Forbes, G. (1985), *The Metaphysics of Modality*, Oxford: Clarendon.
- - - (1989), *The Languages of Possibility*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hawley, K. (2001), *How Things Persist*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Hazen, A. (1979), 'Counterpart Theoretic Semantics For Modal Logic', *Journal of Philosophy*, 76: 319-38.
- Kripke, S. (1980), *Naming and Necessity*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lewis, D. (1968), 'Counterpart Theory and Quantified Modal Logic', *Journal of Philosophy*, 65:113-26. Page references to reprinted version in Lewis (1983), 26-39.
- - - (1971), 'Counterparts of Persons and their Bodies', *Journal of Philosophy*, 68: 203-11. Page references to reprinted version in Lewis (1983), 47-54.
- - - (1972), 'General Semantics', *Synthese*, 22: 18-67.
- - - (1973), *Counterfactuals*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- - - (1979), 'Scorekeeping in a Language Game', *Journal of Philosophical Logic*, 8: 339-59.
- - - (1983), *Philosophical Papers Volume I*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- - - (1986), *On The Plurality of Worlds*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- - - (1992), Review of D. A. Armstrong, 'A Combinatorial theory of Possibility', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 70: 211-24.
- - - (2003), 'Things qua Truthmakers' in *Real Metaphysics*, Lillehammer, H. & Rodriguez-Pereyra, G. (eds.), London: Routledge.
- Linsky, L. (1971), 'Introduction' in *Reference and Modality*, L.Linsky (ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1-16.
- Mackie, J. L. (1977), *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, London: Penguin.
- Melia, J. (1992), 'A Note On Lewis's Ontology', *Analysis*, 52: 191-2.
- Miller, R.B. (1992), 'Concern for Counterparts', *Philosophical Papers*, 21: 133-40.
- Nolan, D. (1996), 'Recombination Unbound', *Philosophical Studies*, 84.2-3: 239-62.

- Plantinga, A. (1987), 'Two Concepts of Modality: Modal Realism and Modal Reductionism', *Philosophical Perspectives*, 1: 189-231.
- Quine, W.V.O. (1943), 'Notes on Existence and Necessity', *Journal of Philosophy*, 40: 113-27.
- (1953a), 'On What There Is', in his *From a Logical Point of View*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1-19.
- (1953b), 'Reference and Modality', in his *From a Logical Point of View*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press,. Page references to second edition, New York: Harper and Row, 1961, 139-59.
- (1961), 'Reply to Professor Marcus', *Synthese*, 20:177-84.
- (1976), 'Worlds Away', *Journal of Philosophy*, 73: 859-63.
- Rosen, G. (1990), 'Modal Fictionalism', *Mind* 99, 327-354.
- Sider, T. (2001), *Four-Dimensionalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- (2002), 'The Ersatz Pluriverse', *Journal of Philosophy* 99: 279-315.
- Smullyan, A.F. (1948), 'Modality and Description', *The Journal of Symbolic Logic*, 13: 113-27.
- Van Fraassen, B. (1980), *The Scientific Image*, Oxford: Clarendon.
- Wright, C. (1992), *Truth and Objectivity*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.