

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD at the University of Warwick

Permanent WRAP URL:

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/97361>

Copyright and reuse:

This thesis is made available online and is protected by original copyright.

Please scroll down to view the document itself.

Please refer to the repository record for this item for information to help you to cite it.

Our policy information is available from the repository home page.

For more information, please contact the WRAP Team at: wrap@warwick.ac.uk

**REPRODUCED
FROM THE
BEST
AVAILABLE
COPY**

B E L I E F

by

Anthony O'Hear

Abstract

This thesis examines the cognitive attitude of belief, taking belief to be the attitude people take to what they think is true. Can this attitude be analysed in terms of mental occurrences or events? The theories of Hume, Ogden and Richards, and Brentano are examined and criticised for faults peculiar to each of them. Occurrence theories are rejected generally for failing to account satisfactorily for implicit and unformulated beliefs.

Is belief then a disposition to act? Behaviourism is discussed in the version presented by J. B. Braithwaite and shown to provide neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for the attribution of belief. Behaviourism is criticised for its general tendency to reduce speculative concerns to practical.

Belief, along with attitudes such as hope, is shown to differ from occurrent mental events and states, although sharing with such states a degree of epistemological privacy. How is belief to be identified? Belief of individuals is shown to be founded on each individual's acceptance of public criteria for and attitudes to truth. Wayward beliefs are possible only given that the individual shows in other ways that he grasps these criteria and attitudes. This theory brings out the strengths of both associationist and behaviourist accounts.

The object of belief is shown to be a proposition rather than the concrete sentences or statements assented to. In this theory, propositions are thought of in terms of the understanding of the believer rather than as timeless, abstract entities. Attempts to give an extensional account of belief-objects fail because of referential opacity; they also have problems in that two people, particularly if they come from different cultural backgrounds, may assent to the same statement and mean different things by it.

Moral beliefs and belief in people and things are shown sometimes to include attitudes of emotive commitment and other feelings which can be distinguished from cognitive belief.

The relationship between the long term and largely unformulated attitude of belief and explicit acts of judgment or assent is examined. These assents are constitutive of belief, in that a person making an assent thereby forms his belief on the subject. This is because of what we are doing when we actually judge that something is so. Theories which postulate unconscious, as opposed to unformulated beliefs, and theories which suggest that we know what we believe by introspecting our internal states are rejected.

The relationship between belief and the will is discussed. Descartes' account of this relationship in his Fourth Meditation is partially defended against criticism made by J. L. Evans, on the grounds that it shows us we ought to make ourselves responsible for our assents. In assenting, we accept certain standards for judgment; we should become conscious of this in order to make ourselves responsible for what we believe.

The undesirability, but not the impossibility of having logically inconsistent beliefs is demonstrated. Beliefs naturally tend to form themselves into a coherent picture of the world. But we learn to believe through entering such a system. The influence of the context of belief on individual beliefs is examined in examples taken from the history of science and common sense. Belief systems also influence the way evidence is seen and interpreted. But these factors are shown not to lead necessarily to sceptical or relativistic conclusions.

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Introductory Note	
Chapter 1 - Occurrence Theories of Belief	1
Part 1 - Hume and Ogden and Richards	1
Part 1a - Hume	2
Part 1b - Ogden and Richards	6
Part 1c - Criticism of Hume and Ogden and Richards	10
Part 2 - Brentano: Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt ...	16
Part 3 - General Criticism of Occurrence Theories	23
Chapter 2 - Belief as a Disposition to Act	27
Part 1 - R. B. Braithwaite: Belief as a Disposition to Act ..	27
Part 2 - The Behaviouristic Assumption	38
Chapter 3 - Belief as an Attitude of Mind	46
Part 1 - Mental Concepts and Belief	46
Part 2 - Analysis of Belief	55
Chapter 4 - Belief as a Propositional Attitude	66
Part 1 - Propositions as the Objects of Belief	66
Part 2 - Moral Beliefs	88
Part 3 - Belief in People and Things	95
Chapter 5 - How do I Know what I Believe?	100
Chapter 6 - Belief and the Will	123
Part 1 - Descartes and Evans: Error and the Will	124
Part 2 - Descartes on Error: Assessment	134
Part 3 - Assent as Something for which We are Responsible ...	139
Chapter 7 - Individual Beliefs and Systems of Belief	149
Part 1 - The Need for Logical Consistency in Belief	150
Part 2 - Contexts and Credibility	155
Part 3 - Community and Evidence	177
Part 4 - Conclusion	186
Bibliography	189

Introductory Note

Although all the following points are taken up in the thesis, it would be as well before starting to clarify the precise nature of the subject matter. What is being attempted is an analysis of belief as simply the general attitude people take to what they think is true. We are not, therefore, trying to put belief on some point of a scale of epistemological attitudes, somewhere between certainty or probable opinion, for example. Nor are we attempting to distinguish occasions when people might be justified in saying that they know from occasions when they should simply say that they believe. In thinking of belief as a cognitive attitude essentially, we are able to distinguish it from feelings of conviction and from such attitudes as the trust or commitment people have to their friends or their values - attitudes which sometimes accompany cognitive beliefs and which are sometimes spoken of as 'beliefs'. Finally, what we are dealing with is belief as found in mature human beings, an attitude which seems to be open, ideally, to rational control and development. Although we shall suggest a legitimate analogous sense of 'belief' which may be applied to animals and non-rational beings, what we say in this thesis provides some support for Aristotle's postulation of an intimate connection between belief - at least in its fully-fledged form - and rationality.*

*c.f. De Anima, 428a16-23

CHAPTER IOccurrence Theories of BeliefIntroduction

The theories we will consider in this chapter have one point in common; they all see belief in terms of actual occurrences in the mind of the believer. We say 'occurrences' rather than 'acts', because of the three accounts considered, only that of Brentano lays any stress on the idea that belief may be based on the conscious activity of the believing subject. In Part 1, we look at Hume and Ogden and Richards, who see belief in terms of the passive, almost mechanical association of ideas in the mind of the believer. In this respect, Brentano's account* has certain advantages. But, as we will show in Part 3, all three accounts fail in the first place because of their common assumption, that belief is to be analysed in terms of mental occurrences. Such an assumption must be modified to deal with the fact that we predicate and predicate correctly beliefs of people without implying that there is any mental activity going on. Moreover, following Wittgenstein, it becomes extremely difficult to say just what is going on in one's mind, even when we do actually reflect on or form our beliefs.

Part 1 - Hume and Ogden and Richards

Owing to the basic similarities between the accounts given by Hume and Ogden and Richards, despite the somewhat different vocabularies used, our criticisms of the two accounts share most of the fundamental points. So, after an exposition of Hume**, we will go straight on to an exposition of Ogden and Richards***, and then give a combined criticism of both theories****.

*Part 2

**Part 1a

***Part 1b

****Part 1c

Part 1a - Hume*

Despite being somewhat discredited of late, Hume's theory of belief has had a considerable influence as being one of the clearest expositions of an associationist view of mental activity. As we shall see, it has been presented in a more up to date looking form as recently as 1930 in Ogden and Richards' The Meaning of Meaning.

Hume sees his task as that of distinguishing between ideas we believe and those we simply imagine. Unlike the behaviourist, he insists that there must be a difference in our mental states themselves to account for the difference between having an idea and believing it. According to him, it would be the belief that has an effect on the action, not the action which constitutes the belief. In EHU**, the distinction between imagination and belief has to be drawn in terms of two different mental states, otherwise we would have to say that we could believe what we wanted. For the mind can imagine what it pleases, whereas, Hume thinks, we cannot believe what we please; 'it follows, therefore, that the difference between fiction and belief lies in some sentiment or feeling, which is annexed to the latter, not to the former, and which depends not on the will, nor can be commanded at pleasure.'

At this point, it must be noted that Hume excludes from his account of belief propositions which can be known by a priori means (intuition or demonstration). Here there is no problem for him because of the terms he has set up the problem in. For he thinks that once we understand the terms being considered, we have to proceed in the correct way. It is not possible for 'the imagination to conceive anything contrary to a demonstration'.*** Although Hume is surely wrong here, for a man could on occasion

*In this thesis, the Treatise of Human Nature (THN) and the Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding (EHU) are both quoted in the editions of Selby-Bigge (Oxford 1896 and 1962, respectively). References to EHU are not by pages, but by the marginal sections of the text.

** 39

*** THN, p 95

think and perhaps even believe that $2+2=5$, his approach here highlights his attempt to deal with the problem of belief as one concerning the relations between ideas. It may be possible to give an account of the development of analytic ideas on this basis, by showing how one idea leads necessarily through association to another. But in judgments about the world, we can imagine what we like, whereas Hume is certain we cannot believe what we like. What is it that makes us believe some ideas and not others?

The difference cannot be in the ideas themselves, for, when one man believes an idea and another disbelieves it, they must both be dealing with the same idea or there would be no disagreement between them. Something must be added to the mere idea to constitute belief. Hume* asks if this addition might be the idea of existence, but says that this cannot be what is wanted because

the idea of existence is nothing different from the idea of any object, and that when after the simple conception of any thing we wou'd conceive it as existent, we in reality make no addition to or alteration on our first idea.

Hume seems to be saying here that when we think of any object, for example God, we think of that object as existent, and that, further, to believe that God exists in no way alters the idea we had of God in the first place, but is simply to take the idea to be true.** Because the idea of the existence of an object is no addition to the simple idea of the same object, Hume thinks that anything we conceive of, we conceive of as existing. Here he runs together two distinct things, the simple idea of a given object x and the existential proposition, 'there is an x '. Certainly, 'there is an x ' and the bare term ' x ' are not substitutable for each other in many contexts, while the proposition 'there are unicorns' is false, even if it is not asserted, but the simple idea of a unicorn is

* THN, p 94

** c.f. THN, p 96n

neither true nor false. Moreover, on Hume's view, it would be difficult to deny the existence of anything without self-contradiction. However, he is correct in saying that in believing God to be existent, my idea of God neither increases nor diminishes. In judging that God is existent, I make God the subject of an existential proposition which I then assent to. If in believing God to exist, I altered the concept in some way to extend the definition of God, there would be no disagreement between theists and atheists, for they would not be talking about the same thing. So Hume is right to say that it is not the addition of the idea of existence which transforms a simple idea into a belief.

Hume's solution to his problem is to say that when we believe an idea we add to it 'a certain feeling or sentiment; in something that depends not on the will, but must arise from certain determinate causes and principles, of which we are not masters'.* In terms of his own system, Hume is not justified in appealing to a causally produced feeling to explain belief, because he will use the subjective experience of belief in order to explain the illusion we have of causal necessity. However, as it stands, the idea has a certain phenomenological plausibility. Our beliefs do seem constrained in a way in which our ideas are not, while the difference between an idea and a belief can sometimes be characterised by a feeling of solidity, vivacity, firmness, etc., present in a belief and absent in a mere fiction - something which gives to a belief a sense of reality analogous to that which the mind finds in a present impression.

The belief feeling is not one that we can call up at will. It is one that arises when a present impression leads to an associated idea. These present impressions may be either actual present sensations or memories. Hume maintains that there are three ways in which ideas can be associated with a present impression, resemblance, contiguity and

* THN, p 624

causation (which he finally analyses in terms of customary or constant conjunction). Resemblance and contiguity can enliven and help to revive beliefs; a picture of an absent friend makes my idea of him more lively, while proximity to my home makes it touch me more deeply than when I am distant from it. But it is only causation that can actually bring about the feeling of belief. EHU 44 explains how:

When I throw a piece of dry wood into a fire, my mind is immediately carried to conceive, that it augments, not extinguishes the flame. This transition of thought from the cause to the effect proceeds not from reason. It derives its origin altogether from custom and experience. And as it first begins from an object, present to the senses, it renders the idea of the flame more strong and lively than any loose, floating reverie of the imagination. That idea arises immediately. The thought moves instantly towards it, and conveys to it all that force of conception, which is derived from the impression present to the senses.

It is to be noted that transition from the impression to the belief is quite mechanical, and is based on what has happened to us in the past. Our memory of past happenings is called forth when some part of the past happening is repeated, in such a way that we expect what has happened in the past to happen again.* The parallel between this human process and animal instinct and learning is not one that Hume rejects; indeed, he considers it to be one of the strong points of his analysis:

The experimental reasoning itself, which we possess in common with beasts, and on which the whole conduct of life depends, is nothing but a species of instinct or mechanical power, that acts in us unknown to ourselves... Though the instinct be different, yet still it is an instinct, which teaches a man to avoid the fire; as much as that, which teaches a bird, with such exactness, the art of incubation, and the whole economy and order of its nursery.**

Hume does not ask why resemblance and contiguity cannot produce belief. Indeed, as H. H. Price points out***, there is a passage in THN which deals with beliefs which arise when the mind is in a deranged state, which contradicts the assertion that only constant conjunction can produce

* c.f. EHU, 82

** EHU, 85

*** Belief. London, 1969, pp 171-5

belief:

When the imagination, from any extraordinary ferment of the blood and spirits, acquires such a vivacity as disorders all its powers and faculties, there is no means of distinguishing betwixt truth and falsehood; but every loose fiction or idea, having the same influence as the impressions of the memory, or the conclusions of the judgement, is receiv'd on the same footing, and operates with equal force on the passions. A present impression and a customary transition are now no longer necessary to enliven our ideas... We may observe the same effect of poetry in a lesser degree... in the warmth of a poetical enthusiasm, a poet has a counterfeit belief... *

From what he has said before, it is by no means clear that in proposing a causal theory of mental activity, Hume should be able to distinguish well-formed from ill-formed beliefs, which is what he is doing here. Price concludes on the basis of this passage that Hume may be intending us to take constant conjunction as the associative link present in sane and sensible beliefs. But in face of his repeated insistences that the distinguishing mark of belief as such is the presence of the relation of constant conjunction associating a present impression with a lively idea, it would be difficult to uphold such an interpretation simply on the basis of one passage which is inconsistent with the rest. Price adds that in matters of empirical fact, constant conjunction may be a fair criterion of a good belief. But whether constant conjunction is enough to account for empirical beliefs is something we shall have to consider after we have looked at Ogden and Richards' analysis of belief.

Part 1b - C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards: The Meaning of Meaning.**

Ogden and Richards's account of belief differs from that of Hume in that they try to do without specifically mental elements such as ideas, or at least to explain them in physical terms. However, in giving an account of thinking in 'purely causal terms', they show themselves descendents of Hume, and the similarities between the two analyses are indeed striking. Basically, thought and belief are treated as

* THN, p 123

** London, 1930 - all references to this edition

expectations based on traces of past experience, expectations which are roused by some stimulus, which the subject has learned to associate with the experience:

Thus when we strike a match, the movements we make and the sound of the scrape are the present stimuli. But the excitation which results is different from what it would be had we never struck matches before. Past strikings have left in our organisation, engrams, residual traces, which help to determine what the mental process will be. For example, this mental process is among other things an awareness that we are striking a match. Apart from the effects of previous similar situations we should have no such awareness. Suppose further that the awareness is accompanied by an expectation of a flame. This expectation again will be due to the effects of situations in which the striking of a match has been followed by a flame. The expectation is part of an engram complex, which is called up by a stimulus (the scrape) similar to a part only of the original stimulus-situation. *

An engram is taken to be the residual trace of an adaptation made by the organism to a stimulus, while a sign is a stimulus similar to some part of the original stimulus sufficient to call up the engram of the whole stimulus.

When an engram is called up, we adapt ourselves once again to what is called the referent - that is, the experience which the sign which excites the engram stands for. Thus, in a cognitive situation of expectation, the re-occurrence of only part of the whole original situation will cause us to make ourselves ready for the whole. There seems nothing specifically rational about this type of expectation; the behaviour of animals is analysed on the same lines - as the result of a stimulus, the organism adapts itself to future change in the environment by bodily change or movement. However, Ogden and Richards should not be taken to be denying that in human beings, expectations often take the form of cognitive awarenesses of the things expected. What they are trying to do is to show that these cognitive awarenesses can be analysed in the same way as the non-cognitive adaptations made by animals.

So the process of thinking is caused by what happened in the past,

* p 52

and is directed towards the future. Ogden and Richards say that without recurrent contexts (a context is a set of events, mental or physical, which comes to be related in some way) there would be no such thing as thinking. Thinking itself occurs when a psychological context is triggered off by some sign which has in the past come to be associated with that context:

To say that I recognise something before me as a strawberry and expect it to be luscious, is to say that a present process in me belongs to a determinative psychological context together with certain past processes (past perceptions and consumptions of strawberries). These psychological contexts recur whenever we recognise or infer. Usually they link up with... external contexts... When they do not, we are said to have been mistaken.*

Thus, for a conditioned dog, a gong sound had often recurred in conjunction with a savoury odour, longing for food, being given food and gratification. This was the external context. When he hears the gong again, his present hearing links with the memory traces of the past savourings, longings, etc. This is the psychological context, as a result of which he runs into the next room. If the psychological context is fulfilled by the presence of the correct external context - in this case, food being there - then we say that his belief is true. An external context which a belief looks for is known as the referent of that belief. Ogden and Richards see universal beliefs arising because of the tendency of thought to a 'wider scope and range'. ** After a series of similar verified interpretations, in the absence of a falsified interpretation, a universal belief might arise. The difference between a universal and a particular belief is simply one of degree.

Ogden and Richards finally try to show that there is no qualitative difference between ideas which are merely entertained and those which are believed. Although this is a departure from Hume, they seem to be correct in thinking that a causal account of mental activity must say that all

* p 57

** p 64

mental references must be caused by some present stimulus reviving some memory from the past. All ideas arise in the mind because of stimuli, for example, words one hears. To take a simple idea, the idea 'green' is 'of' any sensation similar to the sensations which previously accompanied the sign which brings up the idea of green. The idea refers to the same set of occurrences as will verify the indefinite belief symbolised by the statement 'There are green things'. Ideas, especially when it is seen that complex ideas can be broken down into simple ones, can thus be covered by the contextual theory of reference, and so 'the distinction between an idea and a belief is... one of degree, although through symbolic conventions, it can sometimes appear insuperable'. *

Ogden and Richards, however, admit an 'affective-volitional' quality in belief. In fact, they speak of belief being the volitional aspect of the cognitive state; so the blurring of the idea-belief distinction is presumably meant to refer only to belief qua cognition. When they deal with the non-cognitive adjuncts of belief, they come close to Hume once more. This comes out clearly in Appendix A,** especially pp 257-260. What is usually called 'belief' is the 'affective-volitional' aspect of a cognitive state, and theoretically separable from the strictly cognitive content, which is an idea or a collection of ideas, for

any word... comes to be, qua symbol of a reference to some state of affairs, capable of truth or falsehood; and in this respect it differs in no way from a sentence used symbolically for purposes of statement. ***

Ideas then are what are true or false, and this is irrespective of whether they are accompanied by belief-feelings. The assertion of an idea or a complex of ideas in a sentence has the conventional purpose of informing others that the speaker has the belief-feeling himself concerning the ideas, and of stimulating the hearers to similar feelings. So to believe

* p 71

** 'On Grammar'

*** p 258

is to take an emotive attitude to an idea, and it is this emotive accompaniment that distinguishes beliefs from ideas. Ogden and Richards are correct in thinking that it is not being believed that renders an idea true or false, for many ideas are either true or false independently of anybody believing them. But does this mean that the only way of distinguishing an idea from a belief is in terms of some non-cognitive, emotional element? As we shall now see, there are some major difficulties in this view.

Part 1c - Criticism of Hume and Ogden and Richards

Both main prongs of these theories, the idea of a specific belief-feeling and the associationist account of mental activity, are open to criticism. To take the idea of a belief-feeling first, it would be wrong to deny that sometimes belief is accompanied by emotional adjuncts. These adjuncts because of their connection with belief may be thought of as feelings of belief. But is it plausible to think of belief as constituted by feelings? Assuming that we were convinced that belief was always accompanied by a feeling, abstracted from the belief-context, could we discriminate a belief-feeling from some other feeling, say of fear, similarly abstracted? Would there be anything more than a general heightening of metabolism and tautening of gut or muscles? In fact, even this sort of general feeling seems to arise mostly in cases where we are emotionally involved in the matter; plenty of beliefs we hold with absolute conviction, for example $2+2=4$, produce little or no emotive movement when we reflect on them. Even if we were to maintain that nonetheless, there was a feeling of belief, it becomes extremely difficult to identify these feelings except as those feelings which accompany ideas we believe. Hume's exposition breaks down at this point:

it is impossible perfectly to explain this (belief) feeling or manner of conception. We may make use of words which express something near it. But its true and proper name... is belief; which is a term that everyone sufficiently understands in common life. *

* EHU, 40

Although it is undoubted that belief is a term which everyone understands in common life, it could be argued that Hume's account would render such a common understanding impossible. (In so far as Ogden and Richards hold that belief is the volitional as well as the affective aspect of a cognitive state, they avoid this objection. Whether it is in fact possible to regard belief as a disposition to act on an idea will be considered in Chapter 2). If belief consisted essentially in a private feeling, how would we know that we were correct in saying that we had it, or that other people had it? As far as public criteria were concerned, there would be no difference between having it and not having it. There would be nothing to point to to show that the feeling we had at time t_1 was the same as the feeling we had at time t_2 , or that either of these feelings were the same as the one someone else was currently having, except to speak of them as belief feelings. But, as Antony Flew puts it,

if the criterion of belief were indeed the occurrence of a peculiar feeling or modification, then unless that feeling or modification were, as apparently it is not, one which could be adequately identified by a description containing no reference to belief, it would be in principle impossible to teach the meaning of the word belief. *

As it stood, the concept of belief would have no grip on our public language. As a consequence of the uncertainty regarding the concept, we would never know for sure whether we had the belief feeling at any given moment. This would be absurd, as it is senseless to say that we can be wrong about whether or not we believe what we are currently thinking about; moreover, in recognising the feeling, we would presumably have to say we believed we had it, and so the way would be open for an infinite regress of beliefs about beliefs. In the case of other people, we do attribute beliefs to them, but in so doing, we do not mean that they are having certain feelings; neither do we have the doubts about whether or not belief is the same thing for others as it is for us that would be endemic if belief were constituted by having a private feeling.

* A. Flew, Hume's Philosophy of Belief, London, 1961, p 101

The epistemological objection just raised to identifying belief through a private feeling can also be made in an oblique sort of way against the causal or associationist account of belief. The solution we propose to the problem of how belief becomes a public concept will be through postulating a logical connection between what we believe and what is true.* The associationist account makes it at the most a happy coincidence that there is any connection between belief and truth; Hume actually has to introduce 'a kind of pre-established harmony between the course of nature and the succession of our ideas',** to explain the connection. (He thus foreshadows Peirce's idea of abduction, that 'man's mind has a natural adaptation to imagining correct theories of some kinds'). But clearly there would be no necessary connection of this sort; theoretically the associations made by some or all men could be out of step with nature, owing to the waywardness of their experience. At this stage, however, we need not put too much weight on this point; it is merely mentioned here for the sake of completeness.

More straightforwardly, associationism has a number of questions to answer from a common-sensical point of view. In the first place, it is not clear that we always do believe in accordance with habitual experience, if we have good reasons for thinking our experience is misleading us. Certainly people often think that they should not be 'misled' by appearances or impressions when they are judging other people, even though their experience of other people might suggest that in most cases the impressions people give are ultimately correct. They might do this because they want to think the best of other people. However misguided this might be, it does suggest that habitual experience is only one of a number of possible reasons for coming to a belief. In ordinary life, although beliefs are often caused on the basis of recurrences in the past experience of the

* c.f. below, Chapter 3

** ENU, 44

believer, when people say that they believe something they do not mean simply that this is what has often or usually happened to them. Further if belief is simply a matter of mechanical association, it would make no sense to say to someone that he should make sure that he always believed what was true, because he would not be able to help believing whatever he had to believe. Associationists presumably would not find this an objection to their theory, convinced as they are of the possibility of a causal explanation of all mental activity. However, the models so far presented fail to account for several features of mental activity.

In the first place, apart from any factual implausibilities in Hume's theory, there is a theoretical objection, raised by K. R. Popper, to seeing belief as caused simply by the frequent repetition of similar experiences:

The kind of repetition envisaged by Hume can never be perfect; the cases he has in mind cannot be cases of perfect sameness; they can only be cases of similarity. Thus they are repetitions only from a certain point of view. (What has the effect upon me of a repetition may not have this effect upon a spider). But this means that, for logical reasons, there must always be a point of view - such as a system of expectations, anticipations, assumptions or interests - before there can be any repetition; which point of view, consequently, cannot be merely the result of repetition. *

So belief cannot be seen as the result of purely passive reception of experiences. The believer has an important factor to contribute - some hypothesis or interpretation according to which he can recognise repetitions as such and which is logically prior to them. No doubt once he has framed some hypothesis, which need not be an explicit process on the part of the believer, repetitions of the relevant event will help to strengthen and solidify the belief, but the repetitions themselves depend on interpretations and expectations by the believer.

J. W. N. Watkins** points out an interesting passage in Hume himself

* Conjectures and Refutations, London, 1969, pp 44-5

** In 'Hume, Carnap and Popper' in The Problem of Inductive Logic (ed. I. Lakatos), Amsterdam 1968, pp 271-282

where he seems to admit that constant conjunction is not a necessary condition of belief-formation. Indeed, only a little reflection is needed to show that, as a matter of fact, we often form beliefs without even once having experienced the effect in question. Hume's answer to this problem is a revised theory of belief which, apart from the residual dogma that we need one example of a type-1 event being followed by a type-2 event before believing that type-1 events cause type-2 events, is not unlike the hypothetico-deductive method. After we have formed the belief-forming habit itself, we become able to

build an argument on one single experiment, when duly prepar'd and examin'd. What we have found once to follow from any object, we conclude will forever follow from it; and if this maxim be not always built upon as certain, 'tis not for want of a sufficient number of experiments, but because we frequently meet with instances to the contrary. *

This looks like an abandonment of the theory of belief by constant conjunction.

Of course, neither Popper's point nor any of the other objections we are about to make tell against an ultimate explanation of belief in physical terms, but only against the type of theory offered by Hume and Ogden and Richards. Both Flew and Price point out that associationism explains at most general empirical beliefs (and Popper's objection shows it cannot even do that). Belief in singular probable occurrences, whose grounds are not based on numerical correlations are clearly not covered by this type of explanation; neither can it show how we could arrive at the idea of a genuinely universal belief - no amount of examples of particular dead men could take us to the idea of all men being mortal, unless the idea of 'all' were surreptitiously introduced.

Ogden and Richards speak of stimuli sparking off mental activity; this is presumably intended as a scientific refinement of Hume's impression causing its accompanying idea. Even if it were plausible to think of

* THN, p 131

belief in terms of discrete mental acts and happenings, the introduction of the word 'stimulus' should not deceive us into attributing to the account a rigour it simply lacks. The assumption is that there is a stimulus either in the environment or in the subject himself which produces an idea or a belief as its response. But the point about stimulus-response vocabulary is that it is abstracted from experiments in which the stimulus is objectively and independently identified and lawfully related to the response. But, as Chomsky shows in connection with verbal behaviour, in normal speech situations, it is impossible to identify the stimulus independently of the response, and so 'we cannot predict verbal behaviour in terms of the stimuli in the speaker's environment since we do not know what the current stimuli are until he responds'. * A fortiori with mental associations. The probability of any particular verbal or mental response arising from any given situation is so slight as to be null, as a little introspective experiment might verify. One is forced to the conclusion that in any scientifically analysable sense of the term 'stimulus', human thought and language is stimulus-free, unless of course any physical event impinging on the organism is taken to be a stimulus, in which case human behaviour has not been demonstrated to be lawful.

A full discussion of the idea that belief consists mainly in mental occurrences must await the conclusion of this chapter. This will be another objection to the associationist account, in so far as they assume that believing is an introspectible experience. For apart from the objections we have already considered to the particular descriptions of the belief-experience given by Hume and Ogden and Richards, there are general objections to any theory that thinks of belief as something taking place in the believer's mind. But these objections apply to Brentano's account as well, so we will see what he has to say first.

* N. Chomsky, Review of Skinner's Verbal Behaviour, in J. Fodor and J. Katz (editors), The Structure of Language, New Jersey, 1964, p 553

Part 2 - Brentano: Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt

The theory of belief and judgment which is to be discussed in this section is that proposed by Franz Brentano in his Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*, especially in Book 2, Chapter 7. One of the problems in interpreting Brentano is that it is never clear whether he is doing logic or psychology, and this is particularly true of his discussion of the act of judgment. He himself thinks that the cornerstone of his method is the inner perception of psychic phenomena, although he is willing to take into account the externalisation of the psychological life of other persons. Yet he does not, in discussing judgments, embark on a Galton-type enquiry**, and many of his observations pertain to the logical analysis of judgments, rather than to anything in them that we experience. His underlying assumption, however, is clearly that belief is a psychological experience or act, on a similar level to loving or hating, and intrinsically different from merely having an idea. What he says may be true, but he gives no indication of what it means to speak of judgment as a psychological phenomenon or state of mind. Even less convincing is his suggestion that each object, about which we judge, 'is taken into consciousness in a double manner, as represented (i.e. as a mere idea), and as affirmed or denied'.*** In so far as what he says is of value, it is because of what he suggests regarding the logical structure of belief and the emotions.

Brentano thinks that the difference between understanding an idea and believing it is to be explained in terms of two fundamentally different modes of consciousness of an object. He rejects Bain's behaviouristic explanation of belief on the grounds that there must be something more to

* 2 Vols, Leipzig, 1924-5

** Sir Francis Galton, in his Inquiries into the Human Faculty, London 1907, asks people what sort of things go on in their heads when they remember and imagine things. His method is simply to get people to write down as accurately as possible all that they are conscious of when remembering or thinking.

*** Psychologie, Vol 2, p 38

belief than its simply being a conception we are prepared to act on; there must be something in our manner of conceiving the idea which explains why we are prepared to act on some ideas rather than on others. Brentano then discusses associationist accounts of belief, in the form in which they are proposed by James Mill and Herbert Spencer. Brentano in fact takes over the criticisms levelled at his father's theories by J. S. Mill, to the effect that while association of ideas is often sufficient to cause a belief that the objects or events represented in the ideas are associated in the world as well as in the mind, association of ideas is not sufficient reason for so believing. To say that it is the cause of all beliefs is to imply that belief or judgment is simply a matter of habit or accident, and to rub out the distinction between the belief of the wise and the foolish. Brentano adds to these criticisms, the objection that the habitual association of ideas is not an act of thought, but a mere disposition, which itself requires some explanation. This criticism is significant in its emphasis on the need for an act of thought here. As we shall see, even if we could do what Brentano fails to do and give an adequate characterisation of the acts in question, it is not clear that they are a necessary condition of belief.

Although Brentano is looking for a difference between the modes of consciousness of having an idea and believing it, he correctly rejects two possible characterisations of the difference. The first of these is that judgment differs from a simple idea in the degree of intensity with which the object is represented. But this is clearly wrong. An idea would in this case be a feeble judgment, while it would be very difficult to explain what a negative judgment consists in. It is quite obvious that we can very clearly apprehend things we do not believe in, while we can just as well assent to something we hardly understand, let alone have

a very clear idea of. Another suggestion which might be made is that there is some difference in the respective contents of judgments and ideas. As we have seen in connection with Hume*, this is not tenable, and Brentano rejects it; there is nothing in the content of an idea which shows whether it is being taken for real or imaginary.

Before coming on to his own theory, Brentano discusses the view proposed by J. S. Mill, who speaks of an ultimate and primordial distinction between merely having an idea and believing it. This Brentano fully accepts, but he disagrees with Mill when he goes on to say that in every act of belief something is predicated of something else. Mill writes in his System of Logic** that 'every proposition asserts, that some given subject does or does not possess some attribute; or that some attribute is or is not... conjoined with some other attribute'. Brentano maintains that 1) this account, in insisting that all propositions are of the subject-predicate form, fails to cover existential propositions of the form 'A is', and that 2) all categorical judgments are reducible to this existential form. His reason for 1) is that

if we say 'A is', this proposition is not a predicative one... in which existence is joined as a predicate to A as a subject. It is not the union of an attribute 'existence' with A, but A itself which is the object we affirm.***

On the other hand, when we affirm a genuine predicate (e.g. 'blue') of A, we are doing more than affirming A. Moreover, in complex negative judgments, (e.g. 'No bird is learned') we do not deny each part of the judgment (in the example, we still admit there are such things as birds and wisdom), but we deny the union of the two. But when we say 'A is not', A alone is the object of the rejected judgment; there is no difference between the denial of A and the assertion that existence is not to be predicated of A. Brentano's own interpretation of the 'is', as in 'God is', is that it is not a predicate, but a sign of the act of judgment.

* pp 3-4

** 9th edition, London, 1875, Vol.1, p 180

*** Psychologie. Vol. 2, p 49

In fact, he tries to reduce all categorical judgments to affirmations of existence, showing that the copulative 'is' in such a judgment has the same function as the 'is' of existence:

some man is ill	= there is a sick man (or, a sick man is)
no stone is living	= there is no living stone
all men are mortal	= there is no immortal man
some man is not learned	= there is an unlearned man

Brentano concludes from this that the 'is' of existence is 1) equivalent to the copula, 2) not a predicate, and 3) in itself meaningless. The subject-predicate form of the categorical judgment is said to be merely a linguistic formula. Brentano's account gets some plausibility from his examples, but there are sentences which bring out the inadequacies of the theory - for example, 'Zeus is the king of the gods', 'Jupiter is non-existent' or 'Unicorns are possible creatures'. If the copula and the 'is' of existence are equivalent, Brentano seems to be committed in these examples to asserting the existence of non-existent and possible beings. P. T. Geach suggests that some motivation for saying that all categorical judgments are basically existential probably comes from the attempt to maintain an over-rigid correspondence theory of truth, according to which a true judgment says that something IS as it IS, laying an unnatural stress on the 'is'.* Brentano ultimately abandoned this view of the categorical judgment because of the inflated ontology it committed him to.

In his criticism of J. S. Mill, however, he is correct in thinking that judgment does not consist essentially in uniting a subject and a predicate. For predication can be used non-assertively; in the proposition 'F is G', G is predicated of F whether the proposition is asserted or used in some other way, as part of a disjunction or as the protasis in a conditional sentence, for example. Mill certainly does not distinguish clearly between predication and assertion. In his note on p 162 of Vol. 1 of *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* by his father James Mill,**

* c.f. 'Assertion', *Philosophical Review*, Vol. 74, 1965, pp 449-465

** London, 1869

In fact, he tries to reduce all categorical judgments to affirmations of existence, showing that the copulative 'is' in such a judgment has the same function as the 'is' of existence:

some man is ill	= there is a sick man (or, a sick man is)
no stone is living	= there is no living stone
all men are mortal	= there is no immortal man
some man is not learned	= there is an unlearned man

Brentano concludes from this that the 'is' of existence is 1) equivalent to the copula, 2) not a predicate, and 3) in itself meaningless. The subject-predicate form of the categorical judgment is said to be merely a linguistic formula. Brentano's account gets some plausibility from his examples, but there are sentences which bring out the inadequacies of the theory - for example, 'Zeus is the king of the gods', 'Jupiter is non-existent' or 'Unicorns are possible creatures'. If the copula and the 'is' of existence are equivalent, Brentano seems to be committed in these examples to asserting the existence of non-existent and possible beings. P. T. Geach suggests that some motivation for saying that all categorical judgments are basically existential probably comes from the attempt to maintain an over-rigid correspondence theory of truth, according to which a true judgment says that something IS as it IS, laying an unnatural stress on the 'is'.* Brentano ultimately abandoned this view of the categorical judgment because of the inflated ontology it committed him to.

In his criticism of J. S. Mill, however, he is correct in thinking that judgment does not consist essentially in uniting a subject and a predicate. For predication can be used non-assertively; in the proposition 'F is G', G is predicated of F whether the proposition is asserted or used in some other way, as part of a disjunction or as the protasis in a conditional sentence, for example. Mill certainly does not distinguish clearly between predication and assertion. In his note on p 162 of Vol. 1 of *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* by his father James Mill,**

* c.f. 'Assertion', *Philosophical Review*, Vol. 74, 1965, pp 449-465

** London, 1869

J. S. Mill writes 'the characteristic difference between a predication and any other form of speech is, that it does not merely bring to mind a certain object... it asserts something respecting it'.

But Brentano is himself wrong in his analysis of 'A is'. Strictly we do not here affirm an object, A, but the existential proposition which says that A exists. This is certainly about A, but logically only a proposition or a sentence can be the object of a judgment, for judgments are either true or false. But as Brentano admits* a judgment can add no content to what is judged, so what is judged must itself be either true or false, whether it is judged or not. But a thing or event on its own is neither true nor false. What is true or false is the sentence or proposition that says something about it - that it is the case, for example. How the proposition 'A is' is to be analysed need not detain us here, but we should note that the realisation of the fact that we can use such propositions unasserted should have saved Brentano his vain effort to analyse all categorical judgments in terms of some existential element. The concept of existence has no special relevance to beliefs or assertions; existential propositions need not be asserted (without being any the less about existence), nor need judgments that propositions are true assert the existence of anything (without being any the less categorical judgments).

After this discussion of the logic of judgment, Brentano investigates the similarities and differences between what he thinks are the three basic types of psychic phenomena, having an idea, having an emotion and making a judgment. The second and third of this trio both presuppose the first, as they are seen in terms of taking up an attitude to an idea. Having an idea is taken to be having some content before the mind, though not necessarily a self consistent content. (A square circle is a possible idea). Once again what Brentano says is of interest in suggesting logical

* above p 18

aspects of mental attitudes, but he does not give much clue as to what is going on in our minds when we believe or love and hate; and in so far as he does, he seems to be wrong - he talks, for example, of the same content being before the mind in two ways, as an idea and as an object of belief. As far as mental activity is concerned, it seems to be a simple mistake to suggest that asserting or judging consists in two acts, although of course, it is possible to divide a judgment logically into entertaining and asserting.*

Brentano's discussion of psychic phenomena opens by saying that while mere ideas cannot be contradictory because they do not assert anything of their objects, of the pairs love and hate, belief and disbelief, a person may take up only one member with regard to the same object at the same time without contradiction. Ideas may show the identical object in contradictory lights, but because nothing is asserted in a mere idea, there is no contradiction involved on the part of the person having contradictory ideas, so long as he merely entertains them.

Brentano's second point centres on the fact that in the actual reference to the object by an idea there can be no difference of intensity. The idea may be more or less vivid, but it cannot refer more or less to an object. Love and hate, as well as conviction (our feeling of belief) have variations of intensity, which have nothing to do with the vividness or clarity with which the subject of the emotion or belief is presented to us. One may doubt the validity of this argument. The fact that I am thinking of p cannot vary in intensity, but then neither can the bare fact that I assent to p or love p. However I can be more or less aware of something, even half-aware of something in the background, as well as having stronger or weaker ideas of objects, in a similar way to having stronger or weaker beliefs and emotions. It does not seem that Brentano

* c.f. L. Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, transl. G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford, 1957, p 11

has succeeded here in pointing out a genuine difference between ideas and the attitudes we take up to them.

The third difference between having an idea merely crossing one's mind and the other mental states discussed by Brentano is rather more substantial than the spurious difference in intensity. It boils down to this, that while the transitory contents of consciousness do not involve us in being right or wrong, both beliefs and emotions involve and commit us to being right or wrong. This is because in believing and loving or hating something we are saying that it is true and worthy of love or hate respectively. Even if emotions do not commit us morally as actions do, to love someone is certainly to act or feel towards him as if he is worthy of love. This is doubtless why we disapprove of obsessive loves and hatreds bestowed on people regardless of their true worths. As a result of this new dimension of assessment, Brentano is able to conclude that while it may be possible to discover psychological laws according to which ideas proceed and develop, there will always be another range of questions to be asked about beliefs and emotions.

Although Brentano improves on Hume's account relating belief and emotions to the activity of the subject, and although he says some important things about them being attitudes we take up to ideas, he does little to show that belief and emotions are discrete acts of mind, or that what we believe is present to consciousness in a twofold way. Indeed, as far as belief is concerned, there is no sign that he recognises a dispositional sense of belief at all, and this accounts for the use of the words 'judgment' and 'belief' as equivalents in this exposition of his theory. In criticising Bain, Brentano insists on an act of judgment before a man can be said to be acting on a belief. But how plausible is it to think of belief as some kind of peculiar conscious activity and how far can belief and thought be distinguished as different aspects or modes of

cognitive consciousness? In order to answer these questions we must consider general objections to the idea that belief is a mental act or occurrence.

Part 3 - General Criticism of Occurrence Theories of Belief

A first and obvious difficulty with which theories of belief which see belief solely in terms of mental activity must contend, arises from the fact that a man may be said to believe things he is not currently thinking about. A man who is asleep is said to believe whatever he believes when he is awake, while when he is awake, he is said to believe things that he is known or thought to assent to as a rule, even if he is not actually thinking about them at the time. Indeed, the firmness with which a man holds his beliefs is often assessed according to how much he is influenced by them, even when he is in situations where he is not consciously adverting to them.

In a sense, occurrence theories of belief might be able to accommodate a dispositional sense of belief by saying that a man is to be held to believe those things he has at one time or another assented to without later withdrawing this assent. The onset of a belief would then still be measured in terms of the supposed mental occurrence or act. But even this is going to run into difficulties. There are a great number of assumptions we make in everyday life which we probably never advert to, because they are so obvious, or the contrary would be so outlandish. Thus it might be said that the paper I am writing on is white, while I do not believe that the house next door is inhabited by a family of gorillas. Judging the surprise I would feel if either of these beliefs turned out to be false, I hold them very strongly indeed. Neither would it make any sense to say that I began having these beliefs only when I reflected on them for the first time. Wittgenstein gives a good example of such a belief, which brings out clearly the fact that the strength of the belief

cognitive consciousness? In order to answer these questions we must consider general objections to the idea that belief is a mental act or occurrence.

Part 3 - General Criticism of Occurrence Theories of Belief

A first and obvious difficulty with which theories of belief which see belief solely in terms of mental activity must contend, arises from the fact that a man may be said to believe things he is not currently thinking about. A man who is asleep is said to believe whatever he believes when he is awake, while when he is awake, he is said to believe things that he is known or thought to assent to as a rule, even if he is not actually thinking about them at the time. Indeed, the firmness with which a man holds his beliefs is often assessed according to how much he is influenced by them, even when he is in situations where he is not consciously adverting to them.

In a sense, occurrence theories of belief might be able to accommodate a dispositional sense of belief by saying that a man is to be held to believe those things he has at one time or another assented to without later withdrawing this assent. The onset of a belief would then still be measured in terms of the supposed mental occurrence or act. But even this is going to run into difficulties. There are a great number of assumptions we make in everyday life which we probably never advert to, because they are so obvious, or the contrary would be so outlandish. Thus it might be said that the paper I am writing on is white, while I do not believe that the house next door is inhabited by a family of gorillas. Judging the surprise I would feel if either of these beliefs turned out to be false, I hold them very strongly indeed. Neither would it make any sense to say that I began having these beliefs only when I reflected on them for the first time. Wittgenstein gives a good example of such a belief, which brings out clearly the fact that the strength of the belief

consists precisely in my not actually thinking about it: 'When I sat down on this chair, of course I believed it would bear me. I had no thought of its possibly collapsing'.*

Of course, there is such a thing as the onset of a belief, either when I changed my mind on some issue at some dateable moment, or when I am consciously forming my view on some new subject, and there are occasions when I reflect on an old belief without changing, but it would be wrong to think of all beliefs as depending on such mental acts. Where occurrence theories of belief break down is that they see all belief solely in terms of thoughts or experiences currently occupying our minds.

But even when we do think about our beliefs, how plausible is it to think of belief as an experience which occupies our mind in the same sort of way as a pain or a feeling of excitement? In Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein writes:

Misleading parallels: the expression of pain is a cry - the expression of thought, a proposition. As if the purpose of the proposition were to convey to one person how it is with another: only, so to speak, in his thinking part and not in his stomach.**

Although Wittgenstein is surely wrong in denying that one's purpose in uttering a proposition can be to let someone know how it is in one's 'thinking part', in saying sincerely 'I think (i.e. believe) p', if not 'I think (i.e. entertain) p', one is logically making a judgment about p, and not, as in the case of expressing a pain, referring directly to one's inner state. We shall deal more fully with the fact that the expression of a thought (=belief) is only indirectly about the state of the believer in Chapter 5, but perhaps more important for us here is the fact that in expressing thoughts one either believes or entertains, in contrast to expressing pains or excitements,**where the truth of the expression depends on the actual existence of the occurrence in question, it is extremely

* Philosophical Investigations, p 152

** p 104

*** examples of mental states given by Wittgenstein in Philosophical Investigations, p 59n

difficult to isolate any occurrence 'behind' the expression of the thought. Hume himself admits this in the case of belief, where the associating of the past experience with the present expression 'may operate on our mind in such an insensible manner as never to be taken notice of'.

In fact, if we follow Wittgenstein in examining phenomena like the speed of thought, how a thought goes through one's head like lightning, how problems become clear to us in a flash, and so on, it becomes clear that the model of thought as an occurrence like a pain is mistaken. What actually occurs in the moment of thinking the thought is often no more than a mental shorthand for the thought as a whole. If I want to express the thought verbally, I have to fill this out:

The lightning-like thought may be connected with the spoken thought as the algebraic formula is with the sequence of numbers which I work out from it.*

The criterion of success - of having the thought - is not simply that a mental event took place, but also that I can fill out the whole context and meaning which the event stands for. If I can do this, the event seems irrelevant; if I can't, what does it mean to say that I have had a thought?

If the actual moment of thinking a thought is difficult to see simply as a particular occurrence unrelated to a whole context of dispositions before and after, it is equally hard to apply to the act or moment of thinking the sort of description we can normally apply to experiences that occupy or colour our consciousness. If someone said that he thought that the film started at nine o'clock, and we asked him what his thought was like in terms applicable to experiences such as having pains, depressions or mental images ('stabbing?' 'continuous?' 'vivid?' etc.), in all probability he would not be able to answer.

There are then problems involved in identifying and describing occurrent thoughts solely in terms of actual mental events, apart from

* Philosophical Investigations, p 105

their wider meaning-contexts, their antecedents and their effects. The language appropriate to the examples Wittgenstein gives of mental states seems inapplicable here. This is not to deny that thoughts can be dated, but to suggest that what happens in the dated moment is not to be thought of as an experience which is complete in itself, and which we 'express' by saying the thought out loud.

The difficulty of thinking of belief as simply an occurrence that is complete as and when it happens is of course even greater than that which arises from thinking of occurrent thoughts in this way. It is clear that in saying that a person *a* believes a proposition *p*, we are not saying that certain mental processes are going on in *a*. *A* will probably not be reflecting on *p* when we make the statement about his belief, and indeed he may never have done so, without our statement necessarily being false. Even if we could say all there is to be said about thoughts that actually are crossing our minds in terms of what goes on in our heads at the precise moment of thinking, it is clear that we will have to say more about belief. Could it be that what makes a belief that *p* into a belief is not that *p* is present to consciousness in some peculiar way, but simply that we are prepared to act on *p*? If the inner process of belief receives its outward criterion through dispositions to act, we will easily avoid the problems inherent in occurrence theories of belief. We turn to this suggestion in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2

Belief as a Disposition to Act

Introduction

Having failed to analyse belief satisfactorily in terms of occurrent mental acts, we now turn to a completely different account, namely that which attempts to locate belief primarily in our actions. In the first part of this chapter, we will consider the behaviourist theory of belief in the account given of it by R. B. Braithwaite, and ask whether his account gives conditions which are either necessary or sufficient for a definition of belief. In the second part of the chapter, we will make some suggestions concerning the assumption underlying behaviouristic attempts to find a logical connection between belief and action.

Part 1 - R. B. Braithwaite: Belief as a Disposition to Act

In this section, two papers by R. B. Braithwaite, in which he attempts behaviouristic analyses of belief, will be discussed. They are 'Nature of Believing'* and 'Belief and Action'**. In the first of these, belief is actually taken to be a propensity to action, while in the second, a propensity to action is not part of the concept of belief, but is a test of the sincerity of given beliefs. We will concentrate on the first paper, as it embodies the more radical thesis.

Braithwaite says that his analysis applies only to belief in propositions which are the object of indirect knowledge. By this move, he intends to exclude belief in propositions which are seen to be logically necessary and belief in propositions about my present sense-data. This is because he thinks that once we understand the meaning of such propositions we assent to them in the same act. They are, for Braithwaite, directly known, and are not, strictly speaking, believed, because belief

* PAS, Vol.33, 1932-3, pp 129-146, quoted here as reprinted in Knowledge and Belief, edited A. Phillips Griffiths, Oxford, 1967, pp 28-40

** SPAS Vol.20, 1946, pp 1-19

CHAPTER 2

Belief as a Disposition to Act

Introduction

Having failed to analyse belief satisfactorily in terms of occurrent mental acts, we now turn to a completely different account, namely that which attempts to locate belief primarily in our actions. In the first part of this chapter, we will consider the behaviourist theory of belief in the account given of it by R. B. Braithwaite, and ask whether his account gives conditions which are either necessary or sufficient for a definition of belief. In the second part of the chapter, we will make some suggestions concerning the assumption underlying behaviouristic attempts to find a logical connection between belief and action.

Part 1 - R. B. Braithwaite: Belief as a Disposition to Act

In this section, two papers by R. B. Braithwaite, in which he attempts behaviouristic analyses of belief, will be discussed. They are 'Nature of Believing'* and 'Belief and Action**'. In the first of these, belief is actually taken to be a propensity to action, while in the second, a propensity to action is not part of the concept of belief, but is a test of the sincerity of given beliefs. We will concentrate on the first paper, as it embodies the more radical thesis.

Braithwaite says that his analysis applies only to belief in propositions which are the object of indirect knowledge. By this move, he intends to exclude belief in propositions which are seen to be logically necessary and belief in propositions about my present sense-data. This is because he thinks that once we understand the meaning of such propositions we assent to them in the same act. They are, for Braithwaite, directly known, and are not, strictly speaking, believed, because belief

* PAS, Vol.33, 1932-3, pp 129-146, quoted here as reprinted in Knowledge and Belief, edited A. Phillips Griffiths, Oxford, 1967, pp 28-40

** SPAS Vol.20, 1946, pp 1-19

consists in understanding the proposition concerned plus something else.

It might be possible to challenge the view that to understand a simple logical proposition was at the same time to assent to its truth. Short of assenting to direct contradictories, there seem to be almost no limits to what people can believe under certain conditions.* Neither is it clear that, even if sense-data themselves are directly and infallibly apprehended, propositions about sense-data are themselves similarly direct and infallible. However, Braithwaite's views on direct knowledge are of only secondary interest here.

Belief in propositions which are indirectly known is analysed as follows: 'I believe p', where p is such a proposition 'means the conjunction of the two propositions:

1. I entertain p..., and
2. I have a disposition to act as if p were true' **

2 is a hypothetical proposition 'about my physical behaviour', to be analysed without recourse to intentional language, and is the 'objective' aspect of a man's belief, that which distinguishes it from mere imagination. Braithwaite in this article takes 2 to be not only a criterion of belief, but 'part of the actual meaning of believing'. In holding that 2 alone is enough to distinguish believing from entertaining or imagining the proposition, he is proposing an analysis which is able to stand without talk of mental acts of assent or judgment, and which goes much further than the unquestionable assertion of some as yet undefined connection between belief and action. The attractiveness of Braithwaite's view is that a) it gives us a neat definition of the connection between belief and action, and b) we can often say that a man believes a proposition without being able to point to any act of assent. The content of the thought that p is so is the same whether a man actually believes that p is so, or whether he is merely reflecting on the possibility of p being so. When

* See below, Chapter 6

** p 30

he actually believes that p is so, he need not first entertain p and then assent to it. Psychologically, belief does not consist of two separable components. Braithwaite is suggesting that the only difference between entertaining and believing p is that in the latter case the thought has effects on one's behaviour.

In this, he follows Alexander Bain, whom he quotes approvingly:

Belief has no meaning except in reference to our actions... no mere conception that does not directly or indirectly implicate our voluntary exertions can ever amount to the state in question (belief). *

This view has the strange consequence that I come to know what I believe, not by reflecting on the grounds there might be for or against the proposition proposed, but by asking whether or not the proposition is to have an effect on my behaviour. According to Braithwaite, I discover this inductively, by inference from my past behaviour, or from imagining myself in a hypothetical situation relevant to the proposition, or from considering my feelings on the matter. **

It might be objected immediately that the same act (thinking that p) cannot have different consequences, as is here supposed, in that sometimes it will lead to action and sometimes not. Braithwaite mentions this objection, but says that it can be safely ignored as it rests on the deterministic hypothesis that different events always have different causes and that this hypothesis may be false, and so cannot be part of the meaning of belief. He argues further that even if the hypothesis is true, all it shows is that the total state of myself, including no doubt my disposition to act on the proposition, must be different when I believe p from when I merely entertain p, but that it does not show that there must be a difference in the act of cognition between thinking that p and believing p. G. Ryle*** and H. H. Price **** also maintain that mental dispositions may

* A. Bain, The Emotions and the Will, London, 1859, p 568

** c.f. his p 37; knowledge of one's beliefs will be discussed further in Chapter 5

*** Concept of Mind, London 1949, p 43

**** Thinking and Experience, London, 1953, p 322

be postulated without any implications regarding any categorical basis. But as D. M. Armstrong, who quotes Ryle and Price, points out,* this leads to difficulties, particularly in the case of non-manifested dispositions. Braithwaite admits, of course, that not all beliefs are in fact put into action. But we are entitled to speak of a disposition apart from its manifestations only if we assert that there is a non-contingent connection between categorical properties and the disposition. Otherwise there is no reason for assuming that because the categorical properties will also *of an object remain unchanged, its dispositional properties* follow as before. In fact,

It is only to the extent that we relate disposition to 'categorical basis', and difference of disposition to difference of 'categorical basis' that we can speak of dispositions... Thus if belief... is a disposition, then it is entailed that while I believe p my mind is in a certain non-dispositional state, a state which in suitable circumstances gives rise to 'manifestations of belief that p'. The fact that we may not know the concrete nature of this state is irrelevant.

Of course, if we do not know the nature of this state of mind, it could be that Braithwaite's analysis shows us how we learn and use the concept of belief. What we now want to show is that Braithwaite's analysis of belief does not give us either necessary or sufficient conditions for using the concept of belief. We will concentrate on his second condition because we have already suggested that entertaining p might not be a necessary condition for believing p, ** and it is the second condition - acting as if p were true - which is the specifically behaviouristic element in the analysis, and is to be found in some form or other in all behaviouristic accounts of belief.

- (1) A disposition to act as if p were true is not a necessary condition of believing p

Braithwaite explains a disposition to act as if p were true as follows:

My disposition to act as if strawberries gave me indigestion means that, under relevant external circumstances... and my needs being to preserve my health, I shall behave in a manner appropriate to the indigestibility of strawberries, namely, I shall refuse them. Under similar external circumstances, if my need is to have

* A Materialist Theory of the Mind, London 1968, esp pp 85-8

** pp 23-4

indigestion... I shall accept the strawberries. And my belief that strawberries are, to me, indigestible... consists of such a disposition to action.*

(Need is taken to be 'the relevant internal circumstances of my body and my mind'). Are we to imply from this that every time a man eats something he knows to be indigestible, he has a need to have indigestion? Suppose a man's need were partly to preserve his health, but further to eat something enjoyable, and the latter need over-ruled the former, Braithwaite's criterion would not allow us to say whether he believed strawberries were indigestible, but only that he believed that they were enjoyable. A man could surely believe that strawberries were indigestible without ever refusing them when offered, even given an explicit need to preserve his health, which he simply ignores.

What Braithwaite will have to do is to say that 'a believes that strawberries are indigestible' means that, given relevant needs and circumstances, he will act appropriately to their indigestibility, provided that his need to preserve his health is not over-ruled, and also that he is not bluffing, play-acting, paralysed, being unserious or schizoid** etc. But even if we could give a complete list of all the cases where belief would not manifest itself in action - that is fill out the 'etc' - it is not clear that some of the defeating conditions relating to the agent's sincerity etc., could themselves be defined without reference to what a believed. How, for example, could bluffing be defined without some mention of a's beliefs? Unless we are sure that we could delimit in advance and without circularity all the possible exceptions to the straightforward working of the proposed analysis of the meaning of belief, we cannot claim to have given necessary and sufficient conditions for the application of the concept.

Even if a full list of exceptions could be given without circularity,

* loc cit pp 31-2

** J. N. Findlay in Values and Intentions (London, 1961, p 95) speaks of schizophrenics who have no wish to adapt themselves to situations normally thought of as most urgent.

There will still be beliefs which never have an influence on conduct owing to the relevant circumstances never arising. Although the behaviouristic analysis does not say that the criterion of belief is a set of actual actions, there is an epistemological problem here. Even if we accept Braithwaite's account of how we come to know our beliefs*, he seems to assume that I always know what it would be like to act on any given belief, and could always imagine myself in the appropriate circumstances. But it does not seem to be impossible that I could have some beliefs, about the shape of molecules, for example, which, as a non-scientist, I simply have no conception of what it would be like to act in or out of accord with, apart from saying that I believe them.** According to the behaviouristic analysis, it is hardly possible to say I have such beliefs. But, as Price puts it,

actually we know very well that we believe them. How do we know this? Is it possible that we just know it by introspection, as the traditional theories of belief maintained?***

A further difficulty in Braithwaite's theory, which he does recognise, is that one of the factors in the analysis is that acting on the proposition believed must in some way fulfil the agent's need; but this cannot itself involve a belief on the part of the agent, or the analysis would be circular. This difficulty is answered by a simple denial that any element of belief enters into the satisfaction of a need:

The appropriateness of my action consists in its satisfying my needs, and the satisfaction of needs is something into which no element of belief, or indeed any mental element need enter. For I am meaning by needs more than conscious desires: I mean the instinctive tendencies (whatever these may be) which are the motive forces of my life, and it is agreed that these do not always manifest themselves directly in my conscious wishes.****

So needs need not be consciously recognised by the believer. They are to

* above p 29

** We will deal with the appeal to verbal behaviour to answer difficulties in the behaviourist theory below, on p 35

*** Belief, p 265

**** loc cit p 32

be discovered by analysing what a man does and the states of quiescence or restlessness resulting from his activity. While talk of unconscious needs and the motive forces of life frees Braithwaite from the difficulty it was introduced to solve, as well as from having to talk about needs which are not in fact acted on (like the ineffective 'need' to preserve health which the strawberry eater ignores, which is not the actual motive force of the action, and so cannot be a genuine need either), the identification of the appropriateness of an action with the actual satisfaction of a need suggests a further problem.

A psychiatrist might say of a patient, 'Smith's need (that is the motive force of his life) is to kill his father'. Assuming Smith has plenty of chances to kill his father, do we have to say that he does not really believe the proposition 'Mr. Smith is Smith's father'? We could reply to this that the psychiatrist must have found that some of Smith's acts were occasioned by this need, and were in that way appropriate to it. But an act occasioned by a need is not necessarily one that satisfies it. Wondering whether strawberries were indigestible might be occasioned by the need to preserve one's health, but wondering will not satisfy the need. Neither would an act which was 'occasioned' by a need in this way be enough, on Braithwaite's criterion, to test the sincerity or reality of my beliefs. He is suggesting that it is only in the actual satisfaction of my needs, or in full-blooded attempts to do so, that my real beliefs appear. (Incidentally, in the second of his articles, the truth or falsity of my beliefs is decided by whether or not they tend to satisfy 'my springs of action').

It is possible that some more detailed analysis of satisfying and tending to satisfy needs could get round these problems. Certainly Braithwaite could reply to an objection of R. M. Chisholm* in which an

* on p 138 of 'Sentences About Believing', PAS Vol. 56, 1955-6, pp 125-48

example is given of how a true and sincere belief can frustrate rather than satisfy our needs, that he does not really require that a true belief actually fulfil a need, but that, other things being equal, it tends to satisfy the need. But there may be considerable difficulty in establishing the nature of a man's needs without making certain assumptions about his beliefs. If we did not assume that Smith believed Mr. Smith to be his father, how could we say that his needs were of an oedipal nature, rather than caused by some other form of jealousy or dislike? Or that if he killed Mr. Smith, his crime was parricide rather than homicide? Even the nature of a man's instinctive motive forces can be assessed only with some reference to his actions, and any description of human action will involve some description of what the agent thinks he is up to. In cases of voluntary needs, chosen and apprehended by the agent, this is even more clear. We could not say of a robber who broke into a house that his need was for the jewels he wrongly thought were there, unless we knew he had this false belief. Even then, it would be circular to test the sincerity of his belief by the fact that he did break in. The unreliability of such a test would be apparent if we suspected that he was really a spy, looking for certain documents in the house.

What Braithwaite is clearly looking for is behaviour characteristic of given beliefs. Our efforts to define such behaviour have indicated that given certain defeating conditions, almost any act could be consistent with a given belief. Moreover, the criteria which Braithwaite insists on before allowing a man to have a belief are impossibly high. As well as suggesting that Smith must set about killing Mr. Smith before the former really believes the latter is his father, these criteria prejudice the question as to whether I can fail to act on my moral beliefs.* Finally, the needs through which we are to discover a man's beliefs themselves

* On this, see below p 44

presuppose other beliefs of the agent. One line, however, remains open to Braithwaite, and that is to say that my verbal behaviour basically depends on my beliefs. This would, for example, solve the problem of the beliefs I do not know how to act on, because acting on them would consist in making the appropriate replies when asked about them.

One might be inclined to agree with C. S. Peirce that the whole point of behaviouristic analyses would be 'completely volatilized if you admit that sort of practicality', but a disposition to verbal behaviour is still in some sense a disposition to act. Braithwaite does not take this line because he does not wish to attempt to define public meaning behaviouristically, which would have to be done if verbal behaviour were to be offered as an adequate behaviour characteristic of belief. Chisholm raises what may be an insuperable objection to any such programme, unless we were prepared to say that a person makes a certain verbal response not only when he actually is stimulated by what is conventionally named by what he responds, but also when he thinks (i.e. believes) he is being so stimulated:

"The German word Riese means giant" does not mean merely that people in Germany - however ~~was~~ may qualify them with respect to their desires - would call a thing ein Riese if and only if the thing were gigantic. It means at least this much more - that they would call a thing by this name if and only if they took the thing to be gigantic or believed it to be gigantic or knew it to be gigantic.**

Unless some way could be found round this, the whole procedure of giving a behaviouristic account of belief through verbal behaviour would be self-defeating.

Unless it were possible to give a behaviouristic account of public meaning, when the behaviourist says that belief is a disposition to verbal

* Collected Papers V.33

** loc cit p 143

behaviour, the mentalist will simply reply that when someone puts his belief into words 'not parrotwise, but with consideration', what he is doing is precisely to make up his mind or to make an act of judgment.* If he later proceeds to act on the judgment, we may have corroboratory evidence as to his sincerity, but a hypothetical future action cannot be a necessary condition of his making the judgment or having the belief in the first place.

(ii) A disposition to act as if p were true is not a sufficient condition of belief

This need not detain us long. Apart from cases where I pretend that a proposition is true and act accordingly - an exception Braithwaite admits** - people often have to act on hypotheses they do not believe. As Bertrand Russell pointed out, scientists have to test hypotheses they do not believe.*** In every day cases, like betting or gambling, we sometimes have to take one course of action out of two or more alternatives, where we would be unwilling to say that we actually believed in what we had chosen. In such a case, when the alternative does fulfil our purpose - and we win the pools - we would probably say that, on making the choice we hoped, rather than believed that our choice was the right one. It should, in other words, be possible to say of someone, that he is disposed to act as if p is true, although he does not believe p, or perhaps even believes p to be false;**** but, as D. J. O'Connor points out, on a scheme such as Braithwaite's, to say such things would be to contradict oneself.*****

* c.f. P. T. Geach, Mental Acts, London 1957, p 9. The behaviourist should not object to Geach's qualification about putting one's belief into words with consideration; we have already seen the need to include in the behaviourist account some stipulation as to the sincerity of the actions proposed to test a given belief.

** c.f. 'Belief and Action', p 8

*** in 'Pragmatism', in Philosophical Essays, London 1966 esp p 84

**** K. R. Popper, in The Logic of Scientific Discovery, London 1968, p 92, speaks of scientists using statements known to be false to derive results adequate for certain purposes.

***** in 'Beliefs, Dispositions and Actions', PAS, Vol. 69, 1968-9, pp 1-16

So a disposition to act as if p were true has been shown by Braithwaite to be neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of believing p . In the rather more moderate account in 'Belief and Action', possible action is introduced not as the differentia of belief, but as a criterion of a sincere belief.* Thus, he is not now saying that to make a statement about someone believing p is the same as to make a hypothetical statement about his overt behaviour, but that to give reasons for accepting or rejecting such statements will involve making some statement about possible actions.

But how are we to know which beliefs are to be tested? Presumably in the last analysis by asking the subject what he believes. And when he replies, the mentalist will once again say that he is making an act of judgment. However, even as a criterion of the sincerity of beliefs, a test involving hypothetical behaviour is open to problems. In the first place, the subject might have reasons for concealing his beliefs. Once again, it would be difficult to give without circularity a list of all the possible cases where a test might not be conclusive, and even to decide whether the subject was really lying or bluffing in his behaviour. Moreover, as we shall see below**, there may be cases where there is no reason to expect people to act on their beliefs. Further, many beliefs seem likely never to be behaviouristically tested, while others, the believer might not know how to act on. It is difficult to see how, except by verbal behaviour, such beliefs could be tested.

One final move, made for example by C. S. Peirce, in his paper 'Belief and Judgment' *** is to admit that some beliefs have no effect on our action, and to treat them simply as expectations of future experience. While this might avoid some of the problems involved in saying that belief is a habit

* p 10

** pp 39-40

*** Collected Papers, V.538-548

of action, it is in the end a somewhat desperate move. For, as A. J. Ayer points out, it could be objected that expectation itself is nothing but a form of belief.* Some non-intentional analysis of expectation would be required before this circle could be broken, and whatever Ayer might hope in this direction, we are at the moment far from being able to interpret any but the most rudimentary of goal-seeking expectations as 'sets' of the organism to future experience which fulfils or disappoints the set, for in any more complex situations a relevant factor is what the subject takes the experience to be. For fulfilment or disappointment of an expectation depends not only on whether what is expected actually occurs, but also on whether the subject realises (perceives or believes) that what is expected is occurring, and this re-introduces intentional terminology.** Until this can be done, analysis of beliefs as if they were physiological sets to future experience cannot be said to further the dispositional account of belief.

Part 2 - The Behaviouristic Assumption

In our discussion of Braithwaite, we said that being disposed to act on p could not be taken to be a necessary condition of believing p because of i) difficulties of finding behaviour characteristic of given beliefs, ii) difficulties in giving an account of all the possible exceptions in a subject's behaviour, iii) the problem of knowing what it would be to act on some dispositions, iv) the difficulty of knowing a subject's needs without making assumptions about his beliefs, v) the connection between a correct description of his behaviour and his beliefs, and vi) the unacceptability of taking verbal behaviour as the type of action required here.

But there is an assumption at the root of this discussion, which has been left unquestioned, and which gives the behaviourist account of belief much of its intuitive plausibility. This is the assumption that a subject

* The Origins of Pragmatism, London, 1968, p 48

** c.f. R. M. Chisholm, Perceiving, Ithaca, New York, 1957, pp 181-5

will act according to his beliefs, even if we cannot in advance specify what this will entail. Further, even if we do not think that belief can be defined in terms of dispositions to act - and so reject an account such as Braithwaite's - we might still hold that if a person can be shown actually to act against his professed belief, he thereby gives up his belief. The notion of an acid test, in which a man may give up his belief when faced with putting it into practice, is sometimes invoked here.

But unless we have an a priori reason for disqualifying 'beliefs' we fail to act on in relevant circumstances, can we really hold this? In Gambling With Truth,* Isaac Levi gives the following example:

Recently certain medical groups temporarily suspended dispensing the birth control pill, Enovid, pending further examination of evidence regarding its safety. Several physicians endorsed this policy, even though they acknowledged that they believed the pill to be safe.

Levi concludes

If moral considerations demand greater insurance against possible harmful side effects of use of the pill than our cognitive scruples demand against possible error, the available evidence could render it quite reasonable to predict the safety of the drug and still not to recommend its use.

Levi goes on to point out that we can specify situations in which a rational agent would not act as if a proposition *p* were true unless he had an infallible guarantee of its truth.

Evidence might warrant acting on the proposition relative to some objectives; owing to the seriousness of error, however, the same evidence might justify acting as if the proposition were false relative to other objectives. This situation cannot be avoided except by evidence that entails the proposition in question. Thus an action analysis of belief that Braithwaite at one time advocated entails the requirement that a rational agent believe only those propositions to be true that constitute evidence. This would imply... that rational belief will tend to be restricted to the evident.**

Once we realize that different criteria for decisions are applicable for theory and practice, and indeed for different practical decisions, the

* New York and London, 1967, p 10

** pp 13-14.

'put up or shut up' model, as Levi describes it, loses much of its force. So too does the notion of the acid test; a football supporter may believe with good reason that his team will win, without thereby wishing to put all his money on the result.

Interestingly enough, the idea that an excessive risk should cause us not to act on our beliefs is one that is discussed in Catholic moral theology. An example is given of a man who is out shooting wild animals, and sees something moving in the undergrowth. He has every reason to think that it is a bear, but there is just a faint possibility that it might be a man. Although for many purposes, he might be prepared to act on his belief as far as shooting the object is concerned. 'My very probable conviction that it is a wild beast will not, as a fact, safeguard the man, if a man happens to be there, and every man has the right that I should not take the risk of injuring or killing him.*

It is open to the behaviourist to object that unless a man is prepared to act on p in every case, he believes p only to a limited degree. Certainly there is some indefiniteness in the use of the term 'belief', which covers mental attitudes from ill-formed and hasty opinions which we renounce almost as soon as we have made them right up to judgments we are absolutely and unshakeably certain of. The behaviourist might wish to equate the degree of confidence we have in a certain belief as far as acting on it is concerned with degree to which we believe it. However, to believe p to a positive degree requires as a necessary and sufficient condition belief that p.

A man who declared that he believed to a positive degree that Lyndon Johnson would be elected President in 1964 but said that he was agnostic as to Johnson's prospects in 1964 would have to be accused either of a misuse of language or of an irrational system of opinions. If Jones is highly confident that Johnson will be elected, and Smith is inclined to the same belief but with less confidence, they nevertheless both believe that Johnson will be elected; one is simply less certain of that than the other is.**

* H. Davis, Moral and Pastoral Theology, London, 1946, Vol. 1, p 99

** Levi, op cit, pp 122-3

As Levi remarks, belief is not a matter of degree any more than striking a match is - though, of course, there are vast differences in what we are prepared to do with our beliefs.

At this point the Lockean notion of degrees of assent will probably be invoked. Locke held that the degree of assent we give to a proposition should be proportionate to the probability of that proposition.* To a proposition that was probable rather than certain, we should give less than full assent. The idea of a limited assent seems perfectly reasonable in its suggestion that we should not fully commit ourselves to something we are not certain of. It was, nonetheless, attacked by Cardinal Newman in his Grammar of Assent, on the grounds that assent as such is unconditional. Newman had various theological reasons for wanting to say that assent is unconditional, which we need not agree with, but we can note he is not trying to say that we should assent to what we do not have good grounds for. He thinks that we should speak of an opinion rather than of a belief (or an assent) when we do not take the proposition in question to be true unreservedly. He explains his position on matters in which we are less than fully convinced as follows:

There is only one sense in which we are allowed to call such acts or states of mind assents. They are opinions; and, as being such, they are, as I have already observed, when speaking of Opinion, assents to the plausibility, probability, doubtfulness, or untrustworthiness, of a proposition; that is, not variations of assent to an inference, but assents to a variation in inferences. When I assent to a doubtfulness, or to a probability, my assent, as such, is as complete as if I assented to a truth; it is not a certain degree of assent. And, in like manner, I may be certain of an uncertainty; that does not destroy the specific notion conveyed in the word 'certain'. **

Although the Locke-Newman dispute may seem purely verbal, the side we come down on will make quite a difference to our interpretation of statistical probability statements. Failure to realise that assent to 'probably p' should not be thought of as equivalent to limited assent to 'p', has given

* An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Bk IV, Ch XV-XVI

** New York, 1955 edition, p 147

plausibility to the so-called subjective interpretation of probability statements, according to which the degree of probability of a statement p is the measure of the trust (or assent) it is proper to accord to p , in the light of the information we are able to get from the available evidence supporting or giving 'probability' to p .

Among other problems, this view of probability leads, directly as a result of its making assent to 'probably p ' equivalent to a limited assent to ' p ', to what Popper calls the paradox of ideal evidence. He explains the paradox in appendix^{ix} to The Logic of Scientific Discovery by means of the following example:

Let z be a certain penny, and let a be the statement 'the n th (as yet unobserved) toss of z will yield heads'. Within the subjective theory, it may be assumed that the absolute (or prior) probability of the statement a is equal to $\frac{1}{2}$, that is to say,

$$(1) \quad P(a)^* = \frac{1}{2}$$

Now let e be some statistical evidence: that is to say, a statistical report, based upon the observation of thousands or perhaps millions of tosses of z ; and let this evidence e be ideally favourable to the hypothesis that z is strictly symmetrical - that it is a 'good' penny, with equidistribution... We then have no other option concerning $P(a,e)^*$ than to assume that

$$(2) \quad P(a,e) = \frac{1}{2}$$

This means that the probability of tossing heads remains unchanged, in the light of the evidence e ; for we now have

$$(3) \quad P(a) = P(a,e)$$

But according to the subjective theory, (3) means that e is, on the whole, (absolutely) irrelevant information with respect to a .

Now this is a little startling; for it means, more explicitly, that our so-called 'degree of rational belief' in the hypothesis, a , ought to be completely unaffected by the accumulated evidential knowledge, e ; that the absence of any statistical evidence concerning z justifies precisely the same 'degree of rational belief' as the weighty evidence of millions of observations which, prima facie, support or confirm or strengthen our belief. **

The paradox of ideal evidence suggests that belief in probabilities should be carefully distinguished from limited assent. In fact, in the example of penny tossing, what we are doing could be interpreted as

* $P(a)$ means the probability of a ; $P(a,e)$ that of a given e .

** pp 407-8

assenting to the probabilistic hypothesis h that the chance of the penny turning up heads on any given occasion is $\frac{1}{2}$. We might, though with some reservations*, wish to say that as a result of e , h becomes more corroborated, but from start to finish our assent, which is always a complete assent is to h rather than to a . A rational person will not believe a at all, even in a 'limited' fashion, whatever that might mean. Popper sums up:

A 'rational gambler' always tries to estimate the objective odds. The odds which he is ready to accept do not represent a measure of his 'degree of belief' (as is usually assumed), but they are, rather, the object of his belief. He believes that there are, objectively, such odds: he believes in a probabilistic hypothesis h . If we wish to measure, behaviouristically, the degree of his belief (in these odds or in anything else) then we might have to find out, perhaps, what proportion of his fortune he is ready to risk on a one-to-one bet that his belief - his estimate of the odds - was correct, provided that this can be ascertained. **

So we should distinguish degree of conviction (what we are prepared to bet) from the misleading degree of assent - misleading because it fails to distinguish less than total conviction from assent to probabilistic hypotheses. For this reason, we must support Newman against Locke. The behaviourist might still wish to say that we have full belief, properly speaking, only when we are prepared to act on the belief in any circumstances. But, as Levi showed, to have any, even a small degree of confidence in a belief that p requires as a condition belief that p , and it makes no sense to speak of degrees here. If the behaviourist still wishes to favour the model in which belief is totally subsumed in practice, he may go on to say with, for example, F. P. Ramsey that judgments about the strength of beliefs are really judgments about how we should act in hypothetical circumstances. *** But to assume even this is to see the ultimate end of all enquiry as action and to think that enquiry is to be evaluated solely in terms of possible action. To think this is to ignore the fact that many people find something 'alleviating, soothing, gratifying and giving

* c.f. Popper, op cit, p 418

** p 415

*** The Foundations of Mathematics, London, 1931, p 171

a feeling of power' as Nietzsche puts it* simply in tracing something unknown back to something known. Scientific researches indeed often have no practical objectives and the right of science to free enquiry regardless of what may result is one that has been jealously fought for.

However, these rather exalted considerations apart, it is undoubtedly true that in its ordinary use there is often no direct logical connection between some beliefs and actions. In addition to the cases where the risk of acting on one's belief is too great to warrant it, there are obviously cases where people simply do not live up to their beliefs. No doubt some of these cases are simply hypocrisy, but it would be presumptuous to say that they all were. In the case of moral beliefs in particular, the model of an acid test seems to be of only limited value. Can we say the rich young man did not believe he ought to follow Christ? But loss of courage can clearly occur in non-moral situations as well: does the fact that an inventor is reluctant to test his own machine necessarily prove that he believes that it is unsafe?

One might still wish to say that people ought to act on their beliefs or that we will talk about a belief only when they do act on what they think. To say the first may be reasonable enough; if people never acted on what they believed, we would lose the concept of action, for nobody would have any idea of what he was doing. At the same time, we might think it socially desirable that some people refrain from acting on some of their beliefs. As to the second, to say that we believe only what we act on would be to change the meaning of the word 'believe', which as it is refers primarily to what we think is true rather than to what we think we should do. It is perhaps significant that much of the impetus to define belief in terms of action has come from the philosophy of science, for science is more directly concerned with observable results than is poetry, for example.

* Twilight of the Idols, Harmondsworth, 1968, p 51

As one commentator puts it of Rilke, 'the beliefs of such a poet... may be of so subtle, esoteric and even eccentric a sort that it would be unwise to try to live by them. But he is not necessarily less 'trustworthy' as a prophet of truths than any other type of prophet'. * Neither should we say that his beliefs are necessarily any less beliefs than those of any other type of believer.

* E. Heller, The Disinherited Mind. Harmondsworth, 1961, p 136

CHAPTER 3Belief as an Attitude of MindIntroduction

Having found difficulties in the accounts of belief which see it in terms either of mental occurrences or of dispositions to act, we will now try to give a positive account of how belief might be analysed. Part 1 of this chapter will clarify the sense in which belief is an attitude of mind. It will open by examining again reasons against thinking of belief primarily in terms of mental occurrences. This will lead us to distinguish broadly between two different types of state, both of which can be characterised as 'mental', and we will show how belief fits into one of these categories. We will suggest that both types of state, however, share a certain degree of epistemological privacy, and that this leads to certain problems in the public application of the relevant concepts. Part 2 of this chapter, which carries our analysis of belief rather further, can be seen as an attempt to answer the question as to how the concept of belief, though referring to an attitude of mind, is yet publicly applicable.

Part 1 - Mental Concepts and Belief

In Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein gives as examples of what he calls mental states or processes, depression, excitement and hearing sentences or tunes.* At least one of the conditions for the truth of the ascription of any of these concepts to someone would seem to be that that person is currently undergoing some experience, or that there is some mental event that he is conscious of. (We take it that Wittgenstein has in mind here the actual moments of excitement or depression one has in playing a game, for example, rather than the dispositional sense of being excited or depressed about some long term project). We might be said to realise that we are in one or other of these states by some sort of introspection; some mental occurrence is going on. Belief, on the other hand

* pp 59n and 61

is not essentially a particular colouring of our thoughts; though we may, on occasion, experience what we call a feeling of conviction, such a feeling is not necessary to believing. As we have seen it is legitimate to say of someone that he believes something at times when he is not consciously adverting to the proposition concerned, and sometimes even before he has consciously reflected on the belief.* Belief is not so much a particular occurrence or colouring of our thoughts as a long-term disposition like knowledge or understanding, though of course, belief does not have to be correct in the way that knowledge or understanding do.

Wittgenstein sums up the negative thesis about belief:

We say "I am expecting him", when we believe that he will come, though his coming does not occupy our thoughts. (Here "I am expecting him" would mean "I should be surprised if he didn't come" and that will not be called the description of a state of mind). **

What is to be criticised is the idea that belief is like having a pain or an occurrent thought, the model that sees belief as a matter of introspecting some sort of feeling or of having something before one's consciousness in a particular way. Having made this point, however,

Wittgenstein can say:

"I believe..." throws light on my state. Conclusions about my conduct can be drawn from this expression. So there is a similarity here to expressions of emotion, of mood, etc... ***

He adds, correctly, that if 'I believe it is so' throws light on my state, then the bare assertion 'It is so' does as well. In fact, it is relatively unusual for a man to preface his assertions with the words 'I believe'. We normally assume that a man believes what he says, while if we are suspicious of his sincerity, his adding of the words 'I believe' will not necessarily reassure us.

At this point, we must distinguish what we are saying from another thesis which links 'I believe p' with an assertion of 'p'. It is that of

* c.f. above p 23

** op cit, p 152

*** p 191

is not essentially a particular colouring of our thoughts; though we may, on occasion, experience what we call a feeling of conviction, such a feeling is not necessary to believing. As we have seen it is legitimate to say of someone that he believes something at times when he is not consciously adverting to the proposition concerned, and sometimes even before he has consciously reflected on the belief.* Belief is not so much a particular occurrence or colouring of our thoughts as a long-term disposition like knowledge or understanding, though of course, belief does not have to be correct in the way that knowledge or understanding do.

Wittgenstein sums up the negative thesis about belief:

We say "I am expecting him", when we believe that he will come, though his coming does not occupy our thoughts. (Here "I am expecting him" would mean "I should be surprised if he didn't come" and that will not be called the description of a state of mind). **

What is to be criticised is the idea that belief is like having a pain or an occurrent thought, the model that sees belief as a matter of introspecting some sort of feeling or of having something before one's consciousness in a particular way. Having made this point, however, Wittgenstein can say:

"I believe..." throws light on my state. Conclusions about my conduct can be drawn from this expression. So there is a similarity here to expressions of emotion, of mood, etc... ***

He adds, correctly, that if 'I believe it is so' throws light on my state, then the bare assertion 'It is so' does as well. In fact, it is relatively unusual for a man to preface his assertions with the words 'I believe'. We normally assume that a man believes what he says, while if we are suspicious of his sincerity, his adding of the words 'I believe' will not necessarily reassure us.

At this point, we must distinguish what we are saying from another thesis which links 'I believe p' with an assertion of 'p'. It is that of

* c.f. above p 23

** op cit, p 152

*** p 191

is not essentially a particular colouring of our thoughts; though we may, on occasion, experience what we call a feeling of conviction, such a feeling is not necessary to believing. As we have seen it is legitimate to say of someone that he believes something at times when he is not consciously advertent to the proposition concerned, and sometimes even before he has consciously reflected on the belief.* Belief is not so much a particular occurrence or colouring of our thoughts as a long-term disposition like knowledge or understanding, though of course, belief does not have to be correct in the way that knowledge or understanding do.

Wittgenstein sums up the negative thesis about belief:

We say "I am expecting him", when we believe that he will come, though his coming does not occupy our thoughts. (Here "I am expecting him" would mean "I should be surprised if he didn't come" and that will not be called the description of a state of mind). **

What is to be criticised is the idea that belief is like having a pain or an occurrent thought, the model that sees belief as a matter of introspecting some sort of feeling or of having something before one's consciousness in a particular way. Having made this point, however, Wittgenstein can say:

"I believe..." throws light on my state. Conclusions about my conduct can be drawn from this expression. So there is a similarity here to expressions of emotion, of mood, etc... ***

He adds, correctly, that if 'I believe it is so' throws light on my state, then the bare assertion 'It is so' does as well. In fact, it is relatively unusual for a man to preface his assertions with the words 'I believe'. We normally assume that a man believes what he says, while if we are suspicious of his sincerity, his adding of the words 'I believe' will not necessarily reassure us.

At this point, we must distinguish what we are saying from another thesis which links 'I believe p' with an assertion of 'p'. It is that of

* c.f. above p 23

** op cit, p 152

*** p 191

J. O. Urmson in 'Parenthetical Verbs';* Urmson argues that when someone says 'I believe p', what he is doing is to indicate the degree of certainty with which he holds p - on a scale, believing comes lower than knowing, but higher than suspecting. So to qualify p with 'I believe' is equivalent to 'probably p'. While there is an idiomatic use of 'I believe' which is like this, this is not the sense of belief that we are dealing with. Even when applied to ordinary speech, what Urmson says is by no means always true; the man who says 'I believe in God' does not mean that God probably exists. We are discussing belief in the sense in which what a man believes, he takes to be true without qualifications of the sort Urmson suggests.**

If then 'I believe p' does throw light on my state (a point Urmson's thesis overlooks, by the way), how precisely does it do this? Clearly I am not reporting on or expressing my inner state in the same sort of way as I do when I say that I am in pain. 'I believe p' is like my assertion 'p' in that it directly refers to p; to put it boldly, I am looking at p, rather than at myself in making these assertions. Nevertheless, it is clear, as Wittgenstein says that when we know what someone believes, it will be possible to draw conclusions about his conduct - and, we would add, about his thoughts. Conclusions might also be drawn about the physical state of his brain, but as yet, it is not clear what these might be, nor whether these conclusions are discoverable independently of correlations with the 'surface' aspects of belief. What we will look at now is the perfectly obvious and uncontroversial way that 'I believe p' throws light on my state, which has nothing to do with states of my brain, nor with anything that I am currently experiencing; it is, that along with other psychological attitudes, such as hoping, wishing, intending, respecting, choosing goals and so on, belief makes up my way of looking at and approaching the world.

These psychological attitudes are different in important respects

* Mind. Vol 61, 1952, pp 480-496

** c.f. also p 131 below

from Wittgenstein's examples of occurrent states of mind, and other similar phenomena, such as having an after-image or a feeling of conviction, which all involve us in more or less passively attending to current experiences. With the psychological attitudes, to a greater or lesser extent depending on the attitude, there is an element of conscious direction of intention or purpose involved in taking them up explicitly; as we show in Chapter 5, this is especially true in the case of belief, where we become aware of our beliefs precisely in assenting to them. Because of the element of intention or purpose in the psychological attitudes, they can up to a point be controlled or at least assessed by rational considerations, as Brentano suggests in his comparison of belief and disbelief with love and hate.

This is not to deny that there are implicit and unformulated beliefs and desires; nor does it mean we are always conscious of what we are said to believe. As we have seen, the existence of a dispositional sense of belief - and this goes for the other psychological attitudes as well - is one of the ways in which belief is to be distinguished from occurrent mental states. Nevertheless, for a being who is capable of explicitly formulating his beliefs and goals, we speak of his having implicit beliefs and goals on analogy with his having explicitly formulated these attitudes. As we shall show in Chapter 5 in more detail, to say of a man *a*, that at time *t* he believes proposition *p* though he is not aware of this, implies that at *t*, *a* would assent to *p* if he reflected on *p*. This follows partly from the fact that behaviour alone does not finally reveal a man's beliefs, and partly from the nature of explicit assent.* The question of conscious

* We predicate beliefs of animals by means of similar, though more distant analogising, as there is no clear cut case of an animal giving assent. Because a dog, for example, behaves in certain ways, we say he has certain beliefs. If he jumps up and down on hearing his master's voice outside, we may say that he believes or judges that his master is coming. This can be characterised as a rudimentary form of belief. But in addition to the fact that we have only non-linguistic behaviour to go on here, the absence among even the more highly developed animals of, for example,

i) any belief-expressing behaviour which cannot be thought of as a response to some stimulus in the animal's environment, ii) stimulus-free thought and language, so characteristic of human mental activity, iii) the rational and conscious development and criticism of their beliefs, and iv) any manifestations of beliefs not connected with what we take to be their desires and not concerned with the present and particular, we should perhaps be wary of speaking of the belief of animals except as what J. N. Findlay has called 'a low-grade analogue of (human) belief' - which is the main subject of this thesis. (c.f. Values and Intentions, p 102. On point iv) above, c.f. Jonathan Bennett, Rationality, London, 1964, esp pp 86-9). Psychological talk of desires etc which are in principle unconscious works at an even greater distance of analogy. For the question here is not of the subject being unable physically to express his desire, but, of his being in a deep sense unwilling to do so. Still, there remains some degree of analogy with talk of conscious desires, for in attributing unconscious desires to someone, we are saying that he is acting just as he would if he consciously desired whatever is being suggested.

reflection or purpose is clearly not involved when we say that someone is in pain, for example; pain requires us to attend to it; it forces our attention, usually against our wishes. Of course, the distinction between the occurrent experiences we passively undergo and what we are calling the psychological attitudes is not absolute. There are mid-way cases like long-term infatuation, and the psychological attitudes themselves can be both short term and overlaid with gut reactions of one sort and another. Nevertheless, a broad distinction between occurrent mental experiences and the (ideally) more rational and intentional psychological attitudes can be drawn on the lines we suggest. If we do so, the occurrent experiences play a comparatively small part in making up our general picture of the world, and our emotional and conative relationship to it, which has traditionally been thought of as the characteristic function of the mind. On this traditional view, someone who tells us about his psychological attitude, about his beliefs and ambitions, for example, tells us about his mental state in a deeper and more far-reaching way than if he were simply to tell us the experiences of perception or pain which he was currently undergoing. (Indeed, there is something a little odd about saying that pain is a mental state at all).

Analysis of expressions of belief seems to further the idea that there is some sense in speaking of belief as a mental attitude. Again following suggestions of Brentano, it is possible to distinguish the meaning of what is said from the assent - the mental attitude - we give to the meaning, when we express a belief in a statement. For, whether we believe *p* or doubt *p* or imagine *p* or ask if *p* is the case or intend *p* or wish for *p* and so on, the *p* remains constant. What changes is only the mental attitude we take up to *p*. Although we are not suggesting that in taking up some attitude to a proposition there are two things - or even one thing - going on in the speaker's mind, we can see in the element of assent which we give to *p* when we believe it, an internal analogue to

Frege's assertion sign:

Of course we have the right to use an assertion sign in contrast with a question mark, for example, or if we want to distinguish an assertion from a fiction or a supposition. It is only a mistake if one thinks that the assertion consists of two actions, entertaining and asserting... and that in performing these actions we follow the propositional sign roughly as we sing from a musical score. *

Were there no such assertive force in expressions of belief, it would make no sense to speak of being sincere or lying in our speech, for it is only in terms of our attitude to the proposition that the sincerity of our belief statements can be judged, given the inadequacy of action criteria.

But these considerations about belief being usually thought of as a mental attitude do not take us very far, unless we can give some account of what this mental attitude is. In the first place, can any reason be given for talking about it as 'mental'? Does it share any features with pain and the other occurrent experiences which Wittgenstein speaks of as states of mind?

At the outset, we must emphasise that, although as Russell once put it, believing is the most mental thing we do, we are not suggesting that it is something that is done by the mind as opposed to or apart from the body. Indeed, Aristotle's warning that it is better not to say that the soul (or mind) pities, learns or thinks, but that the man does these things with his soul, could well be noted here. ** A possible suggestion is that what is common to those concepts which, at least since Descartes, have been thought of as mental, is not that they can be applied to disembodied minds, nor that they can necessarily be applied, even in their first person use, with an infallible degree of certainty, but that we can at least sometimes apply them correctly to ourselves without having to imply in any particular case the satisfaction of the publicly determinable criteria which are

* Wittgenstein, op cit., p 11

** De Anima, 408b13

required to make a correct application of them to others.* In other words, with a mental concept we are inwardly aware when it can be applied to ourselves, and in so applying it, we make no necessary claim that the public criteria for the concept are satisfied in any particular case. We thus exclude concepts of physical activity (walking, running, etc.), which we might also apply to ourselves without making use of the sort of observation we need to apply them to others, but whose correct application presupposes the satisfaction of the public criteria in every case.

It might be objected that this view would make knowing and understanding non-mental, because to claim correctly to know or to understand implies that at least some of the public criteria are in fact satisfied in every case; in knowing that p, p has to be the case, while to understand something means that I must actually have the ability to carry out successfully whatever exercises might be involved in understanding it. Although it might be possible to object in turn to this view of understanding, it would hardly be relevant to the present discussion, as we are quite prepared to admit an extra-mental and non-subjective element in both knowledge and understanding, although they share some of the inwardness of mental concepts.

The problem of other minds in fact has centered very largely on how concepts which we apply to ourselves inwardly and without implying the satisfaction of the public criteria in any particular case can also be public concepts. This perhaps explains why pain and sensation have played so large a part in the philosophy of mind, despite the strangeness, already noted, of thinking of pain as something mental. If this analysis of mental concepts in terms of private awareness is not acceptable, it

* What follows in this chapter is based on 'On Belief' by A. Phillips Griffiths (PAS Vol. 63, 1962-3, pp 167-186) here quoted as in Knowledge and Belief, pp 127-143. Our idea of mental concepts derives from Griffiths' b-concepts, which have their peculiar epistemological status because the subject may be said to know them in his own case immediately.

should not matter substantially, as no great weight is being laid on the use of the word 'mental'. But it is precisely here that the problem about these concepts is located - if they can be applied without recourse to publicly identifiable criteria, how are they concepts in our public language at all?

Before attempting to answer this question with reference to belief, we must first suggest how we might justify the claim that in predicating belief of ourselves we do not have to imply in any given case the existence of the type of evidence necessary to predicate belief of others. A full discussion of my knowledge of my own beliefs must await Chapter 5, in which we discuss the relationship between the attitude of belief and the mental acts connected with it. However, it is clear enough that in order to establish our own beliefs, we do not have to listen to what we say, or look at what we do, or think about what we might do. These are the main ways of getting at the beliefs of others. It is just possible that in coming to a cognitive decision, we might occasionally do some of these things, but as a rule we do not; we either know what we think, or else we simply weigh up the various possibilities about the state of affairs in question and come to some conclusion. There is usually nothing like applying the sort of tests we make in getting at the beliefs of others; to do that would be like observing one's own states and actions from the outside and would have the inherent absurdity of a man saying in all seriousness 'Judging from what I say, this is what I believe'.*

Of course, if belief and the other psychological attitudes share a certain epistemological property with pain and other mental occurrences, we should not minimise the differences between the two types of thing. Mental occurrences are introspectible processes or events; we have stressed here and in Chapter 1 that it is wrong to think of belief simply

* c.f. Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, p 192

in terms of discrete events, while in Chapter 5 we will show that we are not aware of our beliefs by passive introspection. Further there is no reason to think that we have public concepts for these various mental occurrences for the same reason that belief is a public concept. If Wittgenstein is right in thinking that pain, for example, is a public concept because of its connection with pain behaviour, we should not think that belief, being a public concept, must have a similar connection with behaviour. As we have seen in Chapter 2, the attempt to identify our beliefs solely through our external behaviour cannot be sustained. Having given an account of what it might mean to speak of a concept as mental, and what sort of mental concept belief is, we must now consider the epistemological problem which arises over belief - how it is that the privately apprehended mental attitude of belief is at the same time something public and common.

Part 2 - Analysis of Belief

To believe something is to see it sub specie veri. As Brentano puts it, 'everyone who believes or rejects something, believes of himself that he believes or rejects correctly; if he did not believe this of himself, he would not be judging at all'.* Moore's paradox, which originally referred to philosophers who believed one thing in their theories and another in ordinary life, was later given in a version relevant to our purposes:

'I went to the pictures last Tuesday, but I don't believe that I did' is a perfectly absurd thing to say, although what is asserted is something which is perfectly possible logically.**

The absurdity arises not because a man cannot believe something which is false, but because he cannot consistently believe something which he at the same time also thinks is false. As Wittgenstein remarks, apropos of

* The True and the Evident, edited by R. M. Chisholm, London, 1966, p 85

** From The Philosophy of G. E. Moore, edited by P. A. Schilpp, New York, 1952, p 543. More on the absurdity of this type of locution in Chapter 5 below.

Moore's paradox, if there was a verb 'to believe falsely', it would have no significant first person present indicative.* To put this another way, to believe something is to take it to be true. Therefore, we can say that belief is proper only when what is taken for true (believed) is in fact true. As Griffiths puts it:

The connection between belief and truth is that belief is appropriate to truth; it is proper only when it is of what is true, and only intelligible, therefore, when it is of what could be true. **

(As we shall see in Chapter 4, it is because of this last consideration that we shall insist that belief has as its object a truth bearer of some sort).

Griffiths goes on to show that people who 'believed' only what they took to be absurd could not be using the concept in the same way as us; either they would mean by 'I believe p' that they thought that p was ridiculous - in which case the meaning of the word would have changed - or, if they denied that they meant that p was ridiculous, we should have to conclude that their standards of appropriateness for the assertion of truth were simply different from ours:

And if so what are they standards of - are they standards of truth any more? To say such things makes it impossible for us to say not only that they accept the standards of appropriateness that we accept, but what it is that they are accepting or thinking. We certainly have no right to speak of belief in their case. The acceptance of such standards of appropriateness, then, by others, is a necessary condition of the propriety of our attributing the concept of belief - let alone belief itself - to them. ***

In other words, belief is possible as a concept at all only because we have a common understanding of the type of grounds that can be given for counting something true. Our framework of truth gives us an idea of what we are implying when we believe something. To believe something is to imply that the grounds we have for holding something true are, in

* Philosophical Investigations, p 190 An apparent refutation of this is given by Benson Mates in his Elementary Logic (London 1965, p8). But the 'belief' which the subject of the example admits to be false is not in fact sincere.

** loc cit., p 140

*** Griffiths, p 141

this case, in some way satisfied - though not necessarily that we can actually show how they are. The grounds may not in any particular case be satisfied, nor may we in fact have any good reason for supposing them to be, but this is what, from the nature of the concept, we imply when we say we believe something.

It is because of the connection between belief and truth, and because we have a common understanding of the fundamental criteria of truth, that belief is possible as a public concept. Both the connection and the common acceptance of the criteria are necessary to the use and application of the concept of belief. As far as cultures and groups which differ somewhat from our own in fundamental standards of truth are concerned, we do not say that in order to speak of belief in their case we need total agreement on these standards. With some common ground showing that their standards of truth are at least basically commensurate with and intelligible in terms of our own, it would still be possible to show that belief for them was at root the same attitude as it was for us.* But without the basic connection the attitude of belief has with criteria of truth held in common, even though not every belief by any means satisfies these criteria, there would be no means of knowing that the concept was being used in the same way when we applied it to others, or even to ourselves on different occasions. The concept would then become elusive in its applications, and ultimately, no doubt, would disappear altogether.

Griffiths' account of how belief is a public concept has been criticised by Bernard Mayo** on the grounds that it implies a conceptual gap between the same man thinking that something is true and his believing it. As Mayo correctly points out, to open a gap here is absurd, for when a man thinks something is true, he believes it by this very fact. (As a

* More on this, and also on whether it is possible to conceive a community with standards of truth totally different from ours, c.f. Chapter 7, esp pp 176-7

** in 'Belief and Constraint', PAS, Vol 64, 1963-4, pp 139-156; here quoted as reprinted in Knowledge and Belief, pp 147-161

matter of fact, Griffiths himself makes this point on p 134 of his article, where he says that 'there can be no distinction between believing something and believing it to be true'). However, Mayo takes exception to the following passage by Griffiths:

It is wrong to believe what is false and right to believe what is true. Whatever else one does with a truth, believing the proposition which expresses it is the first and most fitting thing to do with it - before we start deploring it or trying to alter it, for example. *

Mayo seems to take this to mean that a man can see a truth and then decide whether to believe it or not, but if 'what is true' and 'truth' are taken in an absolute sense, as referring to what actually is true, no such conclusion need follow, for then what the passage says is that belief is the attitude which should be taken up when and only when there is a truth, in the absolute sense of truth. The same man cannot think something is true and fail to believe it, but he ought not to think something true (i.e. believe it), except when it is true.

We do not in the end wish to quibble about what Griffiths actually meant, but the theory as outlined here implies no gap of the sort objected to by Mayo. What it says is that to believe p is necessarily to take p to be true, and because we have ^{an} area of agreement concerning the basic conditions within which something may be asserted to be true, so we have a common understanding of what it means to believe something. This is not to say that people, even from the same culture, always agree on these conditions or on their application in every detail,** but if they did not have a basic measure of agreement in their most central beliefs, 'belief' would start to mean different things for different people, and the concept disappear. If there had never been any agreement about truth, then it is difficult to see how the concept of belief, not being reducible to

* p 140

** In Chapter 6 Part 3, we will show that there are areas where the criteria for the assertion of truth are less fixed, and where there is more room for individual variation.

interpretation in terms of external behaviour or dispositions to such behaviour, could have arisen in the first place.

Mayo also criticises Griffiths' theory for saying that one ought to believe what is true because this seems to him to allow a man to be free to believe or not to believe as he chooses. Although, as we shall see in Chapter 6, the idea of freedom in belief is not to be rejected out of hand, it is clear that there is no possibility of someone having freedom to refuse assent to what he himself sees to be true, if only because there are not two distinguishable moments here. However to say with Griffiths that belief is appropriate to truth and that one ought to believe what is true certainly need not be interpreted in any such objectionably voluntaristic sense; what is meant here is simply that before making a judgment, one ought to make sure that one has all the necessary evidence. In fact, on this point, Mayo himself seems to be wrong when he says that to say 'I ought to believe p' is 'straightforwardly incompatible' with 'I do not believe p', because 'I ought to believe p' is sincerely assertable only when one actually does believe p.* It is possible to think of cases, particularly when people are perplexed and emotionally involved, when they admit that objectively the evidence goes against their belief that p, but that for largely emotional reasons, they cannot help still seeing p as true - i.e. believing p. Be this as it may, there is no need to derive the conclusion that one is free to believe whatever one likes from the premise that one ought to believe only what is true.

To sum up, we have attempted to show that belief is a public concept through its logical connection with taking something to be true, together with the fact that we have basic common standards for the assertion of truth. In saying that a believes p, we are saying that a does (or would, if he has not actually adverted to p) put p along with those propositions

* loc cit, p 160

which are publicly acceptable. The fact that a might have no right on occasion to do any such thing means that his belief is a bad belief - but this is still what is being implied when it is said that he believes p, unless 'belief' is being used in a quite idiosyncratic way.

Wittgenstein in an elusive but, at this stage, suggestive passage connects belief in a proposition with the search for public proof of that proposition:

Ask yourself: What does it mean to believe Goldbach's theorem? What does this belief consist in? In a feeling of certainty as we state, hear, or think the theorem? (That would not interest us). And what are the characteristics of this feeling? Why, I don't even know how far the feeling may be caused by the proposition itself... I should like to ask: how does the belief connect with this proposition? Let us look and see what are the consequences of this belief, where it takes us. "It makes me search for a proof of the proposition". - Very well; and now let us look and see what your searching really consists in. Then we shall know what belief in the proposition amounts to. *

Of course, we may have beliefs which we are unable or unwilling to produce any justification for, or to indicate in any way why we think they might be acceptable to others. But these 'bad' beliefs are possible only given that we have a foundation of 'good' beliefs to build on; suppose someone never believed things which were generally acceptable, and could never produce any grounds for his 'beliefs', would we not have to say finally that he did not know what belief was? This conclusion follows from belief being the attitude people take to what they think or would think of as true, and because it has to be grounded in a basic consensus about the criteria for thinking things true.

Perhaps we should stress here that our analysis is not intended to give a formal definition of belief; as such, it would be circular, in saying, among other things, that the man who believes p, takes (or would take) p to be true. In fact, given the failure of behaviouristic attempts to define belief in terms of action, we are doubtful that a non-circular

* op cit., p 152

definition of belief could be given. The analysis avoids total circularity, which it would not do were it to stop at saying that belief is the attitude a man has to what he takes to be true, because it goes on to show how belief is a public concept through its being rooted in the common standards of truth which prevail. This is illuminating as an answer to our original problem, which was to determine how a privately apprehended mental attitude could be something public and common. What we have tried to do is to show that individual belief is possible at all, only given the existence and use of publicly acceptable standards of appropriateness and evidence which link the mental attitude of belief with what is believed. In other words, the private mental attitude is identified not because it is a special sort of feeling which the believer has, but because it is grounded in acceptance of a common way of understanding and interpreting the world.

It might be objected here that in avoiding one possible circularity, we have fallen into a more damaging one. Have we not simply analysed private, individual beliefs in terms of public attitudes to truth - that is to say, in terms of public beliefs? We would reply that, while in one sense, as publicly acceptable, our public standards of evidence and common sense can be represented as being important because they are public beliefs, or beliefs held in common by many individuals, in another sense although products of human consciousness, through their being a part, as it were, of our language, they have an important degree of autonomy with which they transcend at any given time the mental states of the individuals who hold them at that time. This autonomy manifests itself both in the way in which many problems and discoveries undreamed of by the individuals who hold them arise from the theories common sense presents us with and, more importantly from our point of view, in the way in which our individual mental states of belief are in large part formed (and made

definition of belief could be given. The analysis avoids total circularity, which it would not do were it to stop at saying that belief is the attitude a man has to what he takes to be true, because it goes on to show how belief is a public concept through its being rooted in the common standards of truth which prevail. This is illuminating as an answer to our original problem, which was to determine how a privately apprehended mental attitude could be something public and common. What we have tried to do is to show that individual belief is possible at all, only given the existence and use of publicly acceptable standards of appropriateness and evidence which link the mental attitude of belief with what is believed. In other words, the private mental attitude is identified not because it is a special sort of feeling which the believer has, but because it is grounded in acceptance of a common way of understanding and interpreting the world.

It might be objected here that in avoiding one possible circularity, we have fallen into a more damaging one. Have we not simply analysed private, individual beliefs in terms of public attitudes to truth - that is to say, in terms of public beliefs? We would reply that, while in one sense, as publicly acceptable, our public standards of evidence and common sense can be represented as being important because they are public beliefs, or beliefs held in common by many individuals, in another sense although products of human consciousness, through their being a part, as it were, of our language, they have an important degree of autonomy with which they transcend at any given time the mental states of the individuals who hold them at that time. This autonomy manifests itself both in the way in which many problems and discoveries undreamed of by the individuals who hold them arise from the theories common sense presents us with and, more importantly from our point of view, in the way in which our individual mental states of belief are in large part formed (and made

definition of belief could be given. The analysis avoids total circularity, which it would not do were it to stop at saying that belief is the attitude a man has to what he takes to be true, because it goes on to show how belief is a public concept through its being rooted in the common standards of truth which prevail. This is illuminating as an answer to our original problem, which was to determine how a privately apprehended mental attitude could be something public and common. What we have tried to do is to show that individual belief is possible at all, only given the existence and use of publicly acceptable standards of appropriateness and evidence which link the mental attitude of belief with what is believed. In other words, the private mental attitude is identified not because it is a special sort of feeling which the believer has, but because it is grounded in acceptance of a common way of understanding and interpreting the world.

It might be objected here that in avoiding one possible circularity, we have fallen into a more damaging one. Have we not simply analysed private, individual beliefs in terms of public attitudes to truth - that is to say, in terms of public beliefs? We would reply that, while in one sense, as publicly acceptable, our public standards of evidence and common sense can be represented as being important because they are public beliefs, or beliefs held in common by many individuals, in another sense although products of human consciousness, through their being a part, as it were, of our language, they have an important degree of autonomy with which they transcend at any given time the mental states of the individuals who hold them at that time. This autonomy manifests itself both in the way in which many problems and discoveries undreamed of by the individuals who hold them arise from the theories common sense presents us with and, more importantly from our point of view, in the way in which our individual mental states of belief are in large part formed (and made

possible as beliefs) by the prior existence of what we have been calling publicly acceptable standards of truth and evidence. Writing of what he calls the 'third world' of objective knowledge - the system of ideas and rational standards and problems within which we work - Popper says:

It is to be stressed that this world exists to a large extent autonomously; that it generates its own problems, especially those connected with methods of growth; and that its impact on any one of us, even on the most original of creative thinkers, vastly exceeds the impact which any of us can make upon it. *

These remarks seem particularly true of the central core of fundamental standards and propositions we are suggesting that the very concept of belief is grounded in. Although in Chapter 7 Part 2 we will show how the system of beliefs of a community determine for that community the limits of the believable, we mention here the autonomy of the 'third world' in order to show that our attempt to root the inner process of the beliefs of individuals in the outward criteria of public standards of truth and evidence may avoid the imputation of circularity it would be open to if all it did was to say that the epistemological problem of the private beliefs of single individuals was soluble by an appeal to the private beliefs of many individuals.

In saying that belief is the attitude a man takes to what he thinks of or would think of as true, we are saying that a man may be taken to believe various assumptions which he has not explicitly adverted to. For, as J. N. Findlay shows in Values and Intentions, our explicit beliefs tend towards indefinite expansion, so that we have a general readiness to accept what fits in with them. As he puts it 'a belief-attitude may be overthrown by untoward experience, but it cannot qua the attitude it is, look forward to such an overthrow'.** So a man may be taken to believe the contrary of what he himself would take as immediately overthrowing his

* 'Epistemology without a Knowing Subject' in Philosophy Today No.2 ed. Jerry H. Gill, London and New York, 1969, (pp 225-277), p 272

** p 100

explicit beliefs, even though he himself has not adverted to the implication - in many cases these implications would be too obvious to reflect on. This is not to say that a man is to be taken to believe everything that is implied by his beliefs, which is clearly false, but only what he himself would take to be implied or assumed. The fact that we may not be able to say with certainty just what any particular person would take to be immediately implied or assumed by his explicit beliefs does not detract from the point that we all have many beliefs of this sort, which we would not think began as beliefs only when we did explicitly reflect on them for the first time. Moreover, to maintain that we have implicit unformulated beliefs of this sort is not to contradict the thesis that when we do advert to them, we may be said to be immediately aware of them, in that we do not have to examine our speech or behaviour in the way another person would, in order to see that they are part of our complex of beliefs about the world.

To think of belief as the mental attitude appropriate to what is true, finally, brings out the strengths of both the associationist and the behaviourist theories. The associationist accounts we have examined, among other faults, make some quite implausible claims about the mental occurrences involved in having beliefs and making judgments, as well as failing to account for many types of belief. Their plausibility arises from the fact that, although they overlook the role of the subject in forming his beliefs, it could be argued that because we are biologically constituted in certain ways, we cannot help finding certain types of basic experience compelling. These largely physical realities coerce our attention; however much we may try to avoid admitting them, they finally force our assent by a system of checks and pains, to use the Jamesian images. And so I come to believe those things which have immediate and continuous connections and associations in my life, precisely because of

the repeated hold they make on my attention, and because of the impossibility of avoiding them. It could have been these facts which led Hume to insist on the lack of freedom in belief. It is from this body of basic realities which are the most forceful as well as the most universally available truths, that we form the basis of our common stock of truths and on which we base the concept of belief. For here all men must by and large agree. Of our more sophisticated and less immediately physical ideas, we must in the end ask how much they measure up to the basic realities, whose compulsion we cannot avoid.

As far as dispositions to act are concerned, it has already been pointed out that the idea of intentional action makes sense only if we assume prior beliefs in the agent about the consequences of what he does. So intentional action must always take place in accordance with some belief or beliefs in order to qualify as more than mere physical movement. As Griffiths puts it:

if it is appropriate to believe p only when p , and if it is appropriate to do x when p , then it is appropriate to do x when believing p . This explains the connection between belief and action, and also the direction we normally think the dependence takes: action waits on belief, and belief awaits on evidence.*

So the behaviourist theory is correct in postulating a general connection between action and belief, as well as in stressing that belief is not definable solely in terms of occurrent acts, but in Chapter 2 we showed that it does not follow that we believe only what we are prepared to act on. To say this not only reverses the normal order of dependence, and so produces circularities of one sort and another in the behaviourist account, but also entails the controversial conclusion that speculative concerns are always identical with practical ones.

What we have tried to do in this chapter is to show what is being implied when someone believes some proposition, p , there being no external

* op cit., p 140

object to point to with belief. We have suggested that when a believes *p*, even though he may have no right to do this, he is treating *p* in the same sort of way as one treats what is publicly acceptable as true, belief being the attitude appropriate to and identified through truth. Believing *p* may not involve the believer in actually entertaining *p*, as *p* may be only a tacit or implicit premise or assumption in his thoughts and actions. The connection between explicit and implicit beliefs will be further examined in Chapter 5. But before this, we will look in Chapter 4 at the various possible ways of thinking of the object of belief.

CHAPTER 4Belief as a Propositional AttitudeIntroduction

This chapter will be divided into three parts. Having decided that belief is intelligible only of what can be true or false, its object must be a truth-bearer of some sort. In the first and major part of the chapter, we will consider ways of thinking of these truth-bearers, and show why we think of them as propositions rather than as sentences or statements. The other two parts of this chapter consider attitudes which may contain elements of cognitive belief, but which also involve in some part non-cognitive attitudes. In the second part of the chapter we look at moral beliefs from the point of view of non-cognitive theories of ethics, and this leads us to point to an element in moral belief which transcends the cognitive belief we are dealing with in this thesis, while in Chapter 3 we comment on a distinction drawn by Professor Price between 'belief in' and 'belief that', according to which some beliefs seem to have persons or things as their objects, rather than propositions or sentences. Here we will look at expressions of the form 'Tom believes in Tim' and show that sometimes they may be reduced to cases of ordinary propositional belief, while at other times, they refer rather to an attitude of trust or affection. With the former type of case, as when in saying 'Tom believes Tim' one means that one believes what Tim says is true, the belief object is the same type of thing as that discussed in the first part of the chapter, while when belief in refers to trust or affection, we have - as with moral beliefs - an attitude somewhat different from the belief dealt with here.

Part 1 - Propositions as the Objects of Belief

We have attempted to show in the previous chapter that belief can be identified as the attitude which ought to be taken to what is true. It

is, therefore, intelligible only of what could be true or false, and so its object* must be thought of as a truth-bearer of some sort. In this section, we will examine the ways in which we might think of the objects of people's beliefs. Although most of what is discussed here may seem of primarily formal interest, our conclusions in fact give some quite important pointers as to how we should think of people's beliefs.

Given that the objects of belief must be truth-bearers of some sort, there seem to be two main possibilities as to how we might think of them. We might think of them primarily in terms of the concrete sentences or statements a man might utter or assent to, or we might think of them in terms of some more abstract intensional or mental entities, which, for want of a better word, we may call propositions. Neither proposal is without its problems: the concrete sentences or statements a man utters or might assent to will, as we hope to show, often give a misleading impression of what precisely a man believes, while propositions are obscure both in ontological status and in definition. We will begin this section by examining some classical accounts of propositions, in order to show how what we understand by the term is rather different; then we will show the drawbacks involved in thinking of the objects of belief as concrete sentences or statements, and, finally we will suggest why we think that the objects of belief must be thought of as propositions. Perhaps at the outset it should be stressed that we are not asserting that beliefs cannot be expressed in concrete sentences;

* In this chapter, we follow normal philosophical practice in speaking of the expression which follows words of the form 'x believes that...' as the 'object' of belief. Mr. Robin Haack, who has kindly improved this chapter in several places, points out that if Tom believes, for example, that the moon is round, it might be more plausible to speak of the moon itself as the object of Tom's belief, although of course he needs to use a sentence or a proposition to express his belief. So it might be better for us to speak here of the 'expression' of belief rather than of the 'object'. If this is so, 'expression' can be read, where appropriate, for 'object' throughout this chapter.

indeed the fact that they must be true or false suggests that all our beliefs can be so expressed. What we are saying is rather that to think of the sentences a man assents to independently of his own understanding of them may lead us to false conclusions about his beliefs. By thinking of the objects of belief as propositions, we are trying to preserve this irreducibly intensional element in belief.

Propositions - Classical Accounts

The sense of 'proposition' that we are arguing for is not the sense that has always been given to the term. What we are saying seems to be demanded by an analysis of belief, and has nothing to do with timeless, abstract entities which uniquely and non-ambiguously represent facts or states of affairs. (As will emerge, in our sense, propositions are subject to both time and ambiguity). As a prelude to our use of the term, however, it would be as well to say a little about the use previously made of the term in order to give a clearer idea of what is meant here.

At about the turn of the century, there was much discussion as to the ontological status of the objects of thought. Meinong, for example, thought that every expression had to stand for an object. It is well known that he was content to have negative facts, objective falsehoods, contradictions and the like as part of his universe. Moore, though perhaps endowed with a more robust sense of reality, seems to have thought of beliefs naming the facts they refer to, and of the believer standing in some relation to what he believes. But what does a false ^{belief} ~~that~~ name? What is the believer related to in this case? It cannot be the object or state of affairs named by the proposition he believes in, because there is no such thing. But in that case, how can we say that true beliefs name anything either 'since there seems plainly no difference in mere analysis between false belief and true belief'? He concludes that though we have to talk of propositions in order to analyse beliefs, the status

indeed the fact that they must be true or false suggests that all our beliefs can be so expressed. What we are saying is rather that to think of the sentences a man assents to independently of his own understanding of them may lead us to false conclusions about his beliefs. By thinking of the objects of belief as propositions, we are trying to preserve this irreducibly intensional element in belief.

Propositions - Classical Accounts

The sense of 'proposition' that we are arguing for is not the sense that has always been given to the term. What we are saying seems to be demanded by an analysis of belief, and has nothing to do with timeless, abstract entities which uniquely and non-ambiguously represent facts or states of affairs. (As will emerge, in our sense, propositions are subject to both time and ambiguity). As a prelude to our use of the term, however, it would be as well to say a little about the use previously made of the term in order to give a clearer idea of what is meant here.

At about the turn of the century, there was much discussion as to the ontological status of the objects of thought. Meinong, for example, thought that every expression had to stand for an object. It is well known that he was content to have negative facts, objective falsehoods, contradictions and the like as part of his universe. Moore, though perhaps endowed with a more robust sense of reality, seems to have thought of beliefs naming the facts they refer to, and of the believer standing in some relation to what he believes. But what does a false ^{belief}~~fact~~ name? What is the believer related to in this case? It cannot be the object or state of affairs named by the proposition he believes in, because there is no such thing. But in that case, how can we say that true beliefs name anything either 'since there seems plainly no difference in mere analysis between false belief and true belief'? He concludes that though we have to talk of propositions in order to analyse beliefs, the status

of propositions is totally obscure; in fact, they do not exist at all:

All that our theory compels us to say is that one part of this expression, namely, the words 'The proposition that 2 plus 2 equals 4', though it seems to be the name of something, is not really the name for anything at all, whereas the whole expression 'The proposition that 2 plus 2 equals 4 is true' is a name for a fact and a most important fact; and all that our theory says is that we must not suppose that this fact can be analysed into a fact called 'the proposition that twice two are four' and a relation between this fact on the one hand and truth on the other. This is all that the theory requires. It does not require that we should discontinue the use of these expressions, which are not names for anything; or that we should suppose that sentences in which they occur can't be true.*

The surprising thing is that Moore thought that propositions were the names of facts at all. Russell, who criticised Moore for this, points out that propositions could not name facts, because for each fact there must be two propositions, one which corresponded to the fact (and was true), and one which denied the fact (and was false).**

This is not the place to discuss Russell's various theories of propositions in any detail, but it should be noted that the idea of every fact having a pair of propositions corresponding to it is not the same as our idea of propositions. Presumably, these propositions, if true, would completely and unambiguously represent the fact, and so would not suffer from the vagueness and indeterminacy characteristic of many of our beliefs. Moreover, the notion of a fact is by no means clear - how are facts separated off, one from another? How do we know when we have one fact (and so two propositions) or two facts (and so four propositions) and so on? The notion of a proposition proposed here is not tied down to the notion of a fact, but arises through analysis of the content of beliefs. Nevertheless, Russell's argument is conclusive enough against thinking of propositions as the names of facts. It is interesting to note that in his 1919 article 'On Propositions',*** Russell himself defines a

* Some Main Problems of Philosophy, London 1953, p 266

** c.f. 'The Philosophy of Logical Atomism', in Logic and Knowledge, London, 1956, esp pp 187 and 209

*** Logic and Knowledge, pp 285-320

proposition as the content of a belief. This would seem to avoid the difficulty of defining the notion through relationships to facts.

However, although in 'On Propositions', Russell is adamant that 'propositions are facts in exactly the same sense in which their objectives are facts', questions might still be asked about their ontological status. If they are thought of in terms of the beliefs people have, their status must be one of dependence on believers. Brentano says many times in the posthumous supplements to the 1924 edition of his Psychologie, when we talk of an object of thought, we should take it as a kind of convenient shorthand for talk of a thinking subject. Certainly, to avoid a universe as overcrowded as Meinong's, we must maintain that the contents of our individual beliefs or emotions depend for their existence on the person having the belief or the emotion. If this way of putting the matter has an old-fashioned ring, Quine seems to be making a similar point when he writes:

A final alternative that I find as appealing as any is simply to dispense with the objects of the propositional attitudes. We can continue to formulate the propositional attitudes with the help of the notations of intensional abstraction... but just cease to view these notations as singular terms referring to objects. This means viewing 'Tom believes (Cicero denounced Catiline)' no longer as of the form 'Fab' with a = Tom and b = (Cicero denounced Catiline), but rather of the form 'Fa' with a = Tom and complex 'F'. The verb 'believes' here ceases to be a term and becomes part of an operator 'believes that' or 'believes ()', which, applied to a sentence, produces a composite absolute general term whereof the sentence is counted an immediate constituent. **

Bruce Aune in Chapter 8 of his Knowledge, Mind and Nature, *** suggests on similar lines that we can think of assertions, beliefs etc. not as putting the subject in relation with some Platonic object, but rather as complex activities of the subject; in his account we reduce 'Tom asserted that snow is white' to something like 'Tom snow-is-whited assertingly'.

* p 315

** Word and Object, Cambridge, Mass. 1964, p 216

Elsewhere^{*} Aune had suggested that the objects of mental acts are purely nominal, having no more substantial reality than the objects of other activities such as skating, smiling or handshaking.

The trouble with proposals such as Quine's if - as they surely are - they are offered as analyses of the logical form of belief attitudes (rather than solely as indications of the subordinate status of the objects of propositional attitudes), is that they conceal what may be an important aspect of the structure of belief, because each different belief will have to be represented by a different operator, it will not be clear that all the attitudes in question are attitudes of belief. Such an analysis would not show how we could understand any sentence of the form 'a believes p' provided only we understand 'a believes (that)...' and any sentence represented by 'b' - not an unreasonable requirement for any analysis of belief.**

Aune's proposal might escape the above objection but both it and Quine's can be criticised on the following grounds, developed by Davidson.*** In introducing semantically unstructured one-place predicates or operators as the objects of propositional attitudes, certain problems regarding these objects may be solved, but only at the expense of the theory of truth. If language, though consisting in an indefinitely large number of sentences, is comprehended by creatures with finite powers, we must be able to show how the semantic character (its truth/falsity) of each sentence is composed by a finite number of applications of a finite number of devices on a finite vocabulary. Davidson argues that this can be done by recursively characterising the truth predicate à la Tarski:

* 'Statements and Propositions', Nous, Vol.1, 1967, pp 215-229

** c.f. Geach, Mental Acts, pp 7-10 and 49

*** c.f. 'On Saying That' in Words and Objections, edited by D. Davidson and J. Hintikka, Dordrecht, 1969, pp 158-174

For each sentence s , s is true, if and only if..... The blank is filled by the sentence in the metalanguage that is true if and only if s is true in the object language. In so far as proposals such as those offered by Quine and Aune give us an indefinite number of primitive terms they do not permit natural languages to be described by a finite theory; they obliterate rather than reveal the structure needed by the theory of truth. Tarski's convention barring any theory containing an infinite number of primitive terms, which is clearly broken in these cases was intended to prevent such abolition of structure.

Although there are formal reasons for rejecting the belief-constructions proposed by Quine and Aune, we can agree with the intuition that prompted them - that the objects of belief are dependent for their existence on believers. We shall attempt to show further that their interpretation has to be linked to the understanding of the believers. Nonetheless their interpretation is still based on the normal semantic structure of the sentences in which they are expressed. In fact, our insistence on saying that propositions rather than the concrete sentences or statements a man assents to are the objects of belief is not a claim that such sentences or statements do not have their normal semantic structure. It is, rather, a warning against drawing the normal extensional conclusions from this structure independently of whether the believer could or would do this himself, and thinking that we still thereby give a true account of his belief, as well as a reminder not to interpret the meanings of a man's beliefs independently of his conceptual background. But this is to anticipate; we must now show why we cannot think of the concrete sentences or statements a man assents to as the objects of his belief.

Sentences and Statements as the Objects of Belief

At first sight, it would seem a good deal more attractive to think

of the objects of belief as sentences in direct speech. Even though we would have to introduce a dispositional account of the sentences concerned, because a man does not actually utter all he believes, a sentential account of belief would avoid the problems raised by the elusiveness of propositions - for which there is no very clear criterion of identity. The notion of a proposition is presumably based on a putative abstraction of a 'meaning element' from the sentences of direct speech (which is perhaps why Wittgenstein says that to assume a pure intermediary between the propositional signs and the facts is to set off on the pursuit of a chimera).*

We might make a start by saying that what a man believes are those sentences which he does actually sincerely assent to, or would sincerely assent to if asked.** A problem arises immediately because a sentence sincerely uttered by someone may not include any mention of factors such as the time or place of utterance, the person being spoken to and so on, and these factors are often integral to the belief. A man may assent to a particular sentence-token on one occasion of its utterance, and, without either changing his mind or being in any way inconsistent dissent from the same sentence-token on another occasion. In order to meet this difficulty, W. V. O. Quine once considered taking as the objects of belief eternal sentences 'whose truth value stays fixed through time and from speaker to speaker'; these sentences could include reports and predictions of single specific events where these events are 'objectively indicated rather than left to vary with the references of first names, incomplete descriptions, and indicator words'.*** The trouble with treating such sentences as the objects of belief is that as they give a complete, observer-independent account of the event or state of affairs believed in, they would leave no

* Philosophical Investigations, p 44

** though there may be problems in knowing just what a man would be disposed to assent to, c.f. below p 80

*** Word and Object, pp 193-4.

room for many belief situations, where a man assents to something quite vague and indeterminate (and perhaps even fails to assent to it when a completer description is suggested). Thus I might believe that I saw a man who looked like the suspect leave the bank at some time yesterday afternoon, but be unable to say at precisely what time I thought I saw him. If one were to change the concept of an eternal sentence from that which gives an objectively complete specification of what is believed, to that which represents completely what is in the mind of the believer, there would be no difference between them and what we call propositions. But as Quine's eternal sentences transcend what is in the mind of the believer, they cannot be regarded as the objects of actual beliefs, though they might be taken to be the objects of ideally specified and qualified beliefs.

Presumably, the objection to propositions that tells us not to look for some abstract meaning behind the spoken words applies to eternal sentences as well. It is obvious, however, that some means of including a reference to the context of the words must be devised in order that one should be able to think of the objects of beliefs as sentences the believer would be disposed sincerely to assent to. A move is made in this direction by P. F. Strawson's theory of statements. In Introduction to Logical Theory*, Strawson points out that the same sentence token may be used at different times and places and by different people to express quite different states of affairs. The truth value of the sentence often depends on the circumstances of its utterance. He thus suggests that we think of truth-bearers as sentences actually in use, whose truth value depends on the context of utterance (person, time and place of utterance) as well as on the actual words used. These truth-bearers he calls statements: 'a particular statement is identified, not only by reference to the words used, but also by reference to the

* London 1952

circumstances in which they are used, and, sometimes, to the identity of the person using them'. * We might then think of the objects of a man's beliefs as statements he is disposed to assent to, interpreting the context of utterance to be added to the actual words as strictly or as loosely as he himself would do. Assuming that this could be done (though delineating the context thought by the believer to be relevant might obviously involve us in intensional manoeuvres, which would defeat our present object, which is to give a purely extensional account of the objects of beliefs), there are still difficulties in thinking of the objects of a man's beliefs in terms of the sentences or statements he is disposed to assent to. For his own understanding and interpretation of the sentences or statements he is disposed to assent to are relevant to his beliefs in two crucial respects.

In the first place, suppose that we find that a man is disposed to assent to a certain sentence or statement, *p*. How are we to think of the words of *p*? What we will now show is that even if the believer is consistent in his beliefs, we cannot think of the words of *p* obeying the normal rules of quantificational logic and undergoing the permitted transformations and yet continuing necessarily to give a true account of the man's belief. Certain logical consequences of the sentences a man believes are blocked by his understanding of his beliefs, but short of knowing everything that he thinks, there is no systematic way of knowing which consequences are permitted and which blocked. In particular, substitution of identicals may fail to preserve truth value of belief reports. The classic instance here is when Tom believes that Cicero denounced Catiline, he fails to believe that Tully denounced Catiline. If normal substitution of identicals held here we should have to say that Tom was contradicting himself. But, as he is ignorant of the identity,

* p 4, c.f. also, pp 174-6

there are no good grounds for saying this. All we can say here is that Tom believes that Cicero did denounce Catiline and that he believes that Tully did not; but that, though he does not realise it, the two are the same person. This is one way of bringing out what is called the referential opacity which attends belief statements.

Contexts are generally declared referentially opaque within which normal existential generalisation and substitution of identicals fail to preserve truth value. Belief sentences, as we have just shown, provide such contexts. However, as Quine shows in 'Quantifiers and Propositional Attitudes', totally to reject quantification in such contexts makes it impossible to distinguish between two sentences which are distinct in meaning in important ways:

(1) ϕ (Ex) (Ralph believes x is a spy)

(2) Ralph believes (Ex) (x is a spy)

(2) is innocuous from a quantificational point of view, but is hardly urgent enough if it is intended to tell us that Ralph actually has someone in mind as a spy - for example, a suspicious type in a brown hat, whose name, unknown to Ralph, is Ortcutt. Ralph in fact knows this Ortcutt in other circumstances as a respectable man. (2) would be true of any one who believed that there were some spies in the world. (1) ϕ preserves the required sense of urgency, but must be considered as ill formed (hence the ϕ), because it fails to preserve truth value if we substitute as a value of x 'Ortcutt' (whom Ralph does not believe to be a spy) for 'the man in the brown hat'.

In order to salvage the sense of (1) ϕ , which he calls the 'relational' sense of belief, Quine proposes that we think of this type of belief as involving a triadic relationship between the believer, the object and an intension. (1) ϕ then becomes:

(3) (Ex) (Ralph believes y (y is a spy) of x)

Quine thought that an idiom such as (3) would save the relational sense

* The Ways of Paradox, New York, 1966, pp 183-194

of belief because the crucial term is put in a purely referential position, but that it would avoid the problems raised by quantification because the intention was to be regarded as opaque - that is, there was a rule against quantifying into it.

However, in addition to leaving us with ontologically obscure intensions, as Quine admitted*, this construction is open to the following type of objection, first proposed by R. Sleigh in 'On Quantifying into Epistemic Contexts',** that in Quine's system (3) could be derived from

(4) Ralph believes that the oldest spy is a spy
even though in this case, Ralph has no one under suspicion. For (4) to be true, it is necessary only that Ralph believes that there are spies and that no two births are quite simultaneous. If (3) can be derived from (4), and Quine admits that it can***, given that the intermediary

(5) Ralph believes of the oldest spy that he is a spy
follows from (4), then the difference in sense between (1) ϕ and (2) - just what our (3)-type construction was designed to preserve - is glossed over once more. One could of course block the move from (4) to (5), but if one does, then (3) will not follow from the sentence that Ralph believes some definite person is a spy.

David Kaplan**** attempts to solve this problem by means of a construction which will block the type of inference from (4) to (3) via (5) in cases where the believer has in mind no particular individual he can specify as the object of his belief. His idea is that as Quine's proposal puts Ralph 'en rapport with an excess of individuals'**** we must limit the names of persons on which we are allowed to base (3)-type

* op cit., p 191

** Nous, Vol I, 1967, pp 23-31

*** c.f. Words and Objections, pp 337-8

**** in 'Quantifying In', in Words and Objections, pp 206-242

***** p 222

constructions to those with which the believer is genuinely en rapport. Kaplan diagnoses the fundamental weakness of Quine's proposal as lying in its failure to allot to Ralph's understanding and beliefs any significant role in establishing the relation between the name and the object or person named. His solution in essence is to allow us to export as in (3) only when the name of the person or object named is a name of that object or person in some significant sense for the believer.

Kaplan turns his attention to restricting the sort of name on the basis of which we might export as in (3) so that we might derive a (3)-type construction from 'the suspicious man in the brown hat', but not from 'the oldest spy', assuming of course that the believer has no one in mind as being the oldest spy. Kaplan's proposal is to allow exportation just in case

(6) $\exists \alpha (R(\alpha, \text{Ortcutt}, \text{Ralph}) \ \& \ \text{Ralph believes } \alpha \text{ is a spy})$

' $R(\alpha, \text{Ortcutt}, \text{Ralph})$ ' symbolises ' α represents Orcutt to Ralph'.

The name α represents x to Ralph if and only if (i) α denotes x ,

(ii) α is a name of x for Ralph and, (iii) α is sufficiently vivid for

Ralph.* In our story, α would be 'the suspicious man in the brown hat'.

Condition (i) ensures that there is such a person, while conditions (ii)

and (iii) ensure that he has made some mark on Ralph and that the mark he

has made has given Ralph some quite solid conception of him. Whether or

not these conditions can be made sufficiently exact, they are certainly

quite reasonable requirements to make before we can say that there is

someone whom Ralph believes to be a spy.

Kaplan's device of vivid names is of interest for us as it points to an irreducibly intensional element in belief statements. If it were possible to develop the device in any systematic way, it might be possible to say that in a system of consistent and rational beliefs if a believed phi of x , where x was for a a vivid name of someone or something (who in this case need not actually exist), and if y was for a a vivid name of

* c.f. op cit, p 231

the same person or object, then a would, at least if asked, assent to phi of y. But though of interest, such a solution would hardly help an extensional account of the objects of belief, as to know if α is a vivid name of x for a believer we will have to know what is in the mind of the believer concerning x and α .

It should hardly need pointing out that even if we can develop some sort of system for deciding what substitutions of singular terms are permissible in belief statements - given that this is possible by using some intensional notion like that of vivid names - this system would preserve the truth value of these statements only given that the believer was consistent and within the necessary limits, perspicuous. As regards what is psychologically possible, and what therefore might be true of a believer, a, Israel Scheffler is surely right when he points out that any suggestion that a must believe some sentence other than p , which he assents to, would be too wide for some cases, even though the new sentence $p+i$ was clearly synonymous with or easily derivable in a small number of steps from p .*

Of course, we might want to show a that his belief that p is in fact equivalent to a belief that $p+i$, and that there was thus a sense in which he did indeed believe $p+i$, in order to get him to develop a better system of beliefs.** However, the considerations outlined above should make us careful of attributing beliefs to a man and of assessing the truth value of reports of his beliefs without knowing what he actually thinks. We cannot assume that a man holds what follows even by relations of synonymy or strict logical implication or substitution of identicals from sentences he is actually disposed to assent to. At the same time, he would take us to be very obtuse if we failed to attribute to him belief in sentences which seemed to him to follow from or to be reasonably

* c.f. 'On Synonymy and Indirect Discourse', Philosophy of Science, Vol.22, 1955, pp 39-44

** c.f. Chapter 7 below

equivalent to what he assented to. It would be wrong to think of the content of a belief statement as 'semantically inert' (to use a phrase of Davidson) and unrelated to any other sentence. We expect a man to assent to some of the consequences of the sentences he actually assents to, but there seems to be no logically rigorous way of predicting just which ones he will assent to. Given this and given that it is not possible for an individual to make explicit everything he believes, a certain indeterminacy enters the notion of those sentences or statements a man is disposed to assent to. We may discover some of those he actually assents to and build hypotheses about what he would be disposed to assent to on the basis of these and what we know of his rationality, and other relevant factors, but unless we could read his mind, or check on his view at every point, which would not be even logically possible if he were dead, for example, we could not be certain what he would be disposed to assent to.

Referential opacity and the failure of the ordinary logical relationships between sentences in belief contexts suggests that the objects of a man's beliefs are best thought of not simply in terms of sentences and their implications, but also in terms of the sense the believer reads into the sentences he uses and assents to because this sense does not follow necessarily the ordinary logical sense of these sentences. This is the first main reason why we wish to speak of propositions as the objects of belief, to focus concentration of the meaning intended by the believer over and above his actual words. Before giving an account of these 'propositions' we will turn to the second reason against thinking of the objects of a man's beliefs as the sentences he assents to. This is basically because there are many cases where giving the same words or agreed translations of the words used by the believer might to someone else at a different time and place actually distort the belief, if for

the second person the words have different implications.

In order to give the true sense of what a man believes, it could be necessary actually to depart from his words. This explains why there will often be a certain indeterminacy in assessing the truth of reports of beliefs, which will not necessarily be resolved by insisting on a slavish adherence to the words that were or which might have been used. As Quine says, to give a report of what a man believes, as opposed to quoting or translating his actual words (which can be done automatically and without understanding them), involves an essentially dramatic act.*

To a large extent, the value of reports about people's beliefs will depend on how successfully they manage to reconstruct the believer's state of mind. In the case of distant peoples, to repeat, even in accurate translation, the words they use may convey little or nothing of the sense of their beliefs, or may even be misleading about them. One does not need to delve very deeply into anthropology to see this. To take a case, well known to philosophers, Seneca is said to have believed a sentence which translates into English as 'man is a rational animal'. A modern understanding of these words would almost certainly take them to imply some thesis to the effect that we can regulate our behaviour according to rational norms. For Seneca, however, human activity was determined, and rationality seems to involve simply adopting the right interior attitude to what has to be; Seneca may have been basing his belief on the common classical conception of rationality as consisting largely in ^{the} ~~time~~ human ability ^{to} engage in argument and make speeches. So here we have three different ideas, all conveyed by the same words. Concentration on what might be called the proposition intended by Seneca rather than on the dictionary equivalent of his words will enable us to avoid many possible errors in this area.

T. S. Kuhn in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions** gives an

* c.f. Word and Object, p 219

** Chicago, 1962

interesting example of how a scientific concept, that of an element, despite being defined in the same terms, has had different meanings in different systems. Kuhn says that the definition found in contemporary textbooks is found in Boyle's Sceptical Chymist, where in fact it was presented, correctly, as a paraphrase of the traditional concept, in order to argue that no such thing existed.

Boyle's definition, in particular, can be traced back at least to Aristotle and forward through Lavoisier into modern texts. Yet that is not to say that science has possessed the modern concept of an element since antiquity.

Kuhn goes on to show that verbal definitions in science are little more than pedagogic aids, and have no significance outside the scientific context in which they play a part. Boyle

by changing the relation of 'element' to chemical manipulation and chemical theory, transformed the notion into a tool quite different from what it had been before and transformed both chemistry and the chemist's world in the process. Other revolutions, including the one that centres around Lavoisier, were required to give the concept its modern form and function.*

Of course, it is, according to Kuhn, the fact that the verbal form of the definition has remained pretty constant through these changes that the misleading impression can be given in scientific textbooks that chemistry has constantly worked with the same concept, when in fact the concept has undergone several radical changes.

It is commonplace that in interpreting literary passages too 'we may discover that in the context in question the words have an unusual and even a new meaning'.** As we shall show when we give a positive account of what we mean by 'proposition' we need here too to concentrate on the meaning rather than the actual words assented to. In suggesting that strict adherence to the words used to express beliefs may often give quite a misleading impression as to the content of the belief, we feel we have stronger reason for looking for a proposition or 'meaning' element

* pp 141-2

** Quotation from Popper, Conjectures and Refutations, p 379

behind the sentence or statement assented to than the somewhat contrived argument of Church to the same effect.* He says that we should not think of concrete sentences as the objects of belief statements because of the theoretical possibility that any quoted expression in one language might be of the same form as an expression in another language which meant something different. Thus we could not conclude that because Seneca wrote with assertive intent the words 'Rationale enim animal est homo' that he believed that man is a rational animal unless we had some additional information about the languages being used. We might then offer an analysis of 'Seneca said that man is a rational animal', (7) : 'There is a language S' such that Seneca wrote as a sentence of S' words whose translation from S' into English is 'Man is a rational animal' '.

But, according to Church, even this is inadequate as the proposed analysis because to conclude from it that Seneca thought that man was a rational animal, we have to make use of

the item of factual information, not contained in (it), that 'Man is a rational animal' means in English that man is a rational animal.**

This inadequacy is highlighted if we translate (7) into German, for according to the convention whereby occurrences of quoted expressions in texts remain untranslated in translations of those texts, the quotation 'Man is a rational animal' will stay in English, and the information given to a German who knows no English will not be the same as by the German translation of the original sentence of which (7) was offered as an analysis. So even if we were able to give an adequate characterisation of a language without covertly using notions such as the meaning of sentences, and so satisfy the implicit requirements of the first part of the argument, (as the general aim is to give a non-intensional account of

* A. Church, 'On Carnap's Analysis of Statements of Assertion and Belief', *Essays in Philosophy and Analysis*, ed. M. Macdonald, Oxford, 1954, pp 125-8

** p 126

belief) the logical conventions relating to quotation would, in the second part of the argument block the attempt to analyse belief objects in terms of concrete sentences rather than in terms of propositions.

Two of the cornerstones of Church's argument have been challenged by Geach.* First, once Church has admitted the possibility of the same words having different meanings in English and in some hypothetical other language, no means to eradicate such possible ambiguity could be theoretically sufficient, as all the expressions we may use to specify the languages concerned could themselves occur in another language with a different meaning, and so on in infinitum. So, as a theoretical objection, there is no answer to it; it need hardly be said that the danger of such ambiguity over very long expressions at least is not a very real one as far as actual spoken languages are concerned. Hence Geach's conclusion, that to this alleged ambiguity, no provision is theoretically sufficient, nor any practically necessary. Geach's second point is to question the refusal to translate quoted utterances. Certainly, if such quotation were permitted, Church's argument would lose its force.

Church's arguments have been discussed here at some length, because it is important to realise that the reasons advanced here against treating concrete sentences or statements as the objects of belief, although in part connected with problems of translation of beliefs are essentially different from his (and so are not touched by Geach's counter-arguments). In Church's article, it is taken for granted that there is a reasonable equivalence between what we mean by 'Man is a rational animal' and Seneca's 'Rationale enim animal est homo', and it is because of this that the discussion gets underway. What is being stressed here is that such an assumption is premature, even though by any ordinary theory of sentence translation, the two sentences are equivalent. For in order to understand

* Mental Acts, pp 87-92

Seneca's belief, we will have to get behind his actual words to discover just what he meant by the idea of a rational animal, and, in all probability, this will not be possible by simple comparison of lexical entries.

The fact that the words used in expressions of belief may give a false impression of the sense of a belief, together with the failure of ordinary logical relationships in belief statements, which we have examined in detail in the case of failure of substitution of identicals, but which applies equally to substitution of synonymous sentences for the actual sentences used, seem to us conclusive against thinking of the objects of belief simply in terms of sentences or statements people utter sincerely or are disposed to assent to. Indeed, it could be argued that, failing a definite interpretation of the sentences actually assented to, which does not seem possible without bringing in the thoughts as well as the words of the believer, we can have no precise idea of what sentences or statements a man would be disposed to assent to. We will now make our suggestions as to how one should think of the objects of belief.

A Regulative Role for Propositions

The problem is, as Kaplan hinted, to relate the objects of belief to the believer's understanding. Of course, when a man says that he believes that....., what follows 'that' will be a sentence, and our interpretation of the sentence will be the one demanded by our normal syntactic and semantic rules. The difficulties arise because application of these rules may not, in many cases, give a completely correct impression of what the speaker is attempting to express by his words, even though he does not use the words in a bizarre or deviant fashion. We have already seen two important ways in which the words of a belief expression although used and interpreted quite correctly, may fail to convey the sense of the belief. This is obviously a problem for the understanding of beliefs rather than that of language.

What we are suggesting in speaking of propositions rather than sentences or statements as the objects of belief is first, that whatever extra-linguistic information about the context of utterance is relevant to the belief should be added to the sentence or statement assented to. (This is probably already contained in the notion of a statement). But then, further, we invoke the notion of a proposition here to remind hearers that they should attempt to place same interpretation on the actual words assented to that the believer is giving to those words. We have seen how this interpretation can be something behind the words - that is, not made clear explicitly or even implicitly in the words. To think in this sense of the proposition that a believes rather than his actual words will act as a kind of regulative notion, particularly in giving reports of a's belief in times and in languages vastly different from his own.

Of course, there may be many purely factual beliefs which can easily be translated straight from one language or culture to another, but concentration on the sense and content of distant beliefs, rather than on their expression, may help to avoid gross misunderstandings of the sort perpetrated by some nineteenth century colonial administrators and missionaries. How successful one is in getting at the sense of the beliefs of other cultures will depend ultimately on one's ability to reconstruct a foreign state of mind. As Quine says of indirect quotation, where one attempts to give the sense rather than the exact words of another person's utterance

we project ourselves into what, from his remarks and other indications, we imagine the speaker's state of mind to have been, and then we say what, in our language, is natural and relevant for us in the state thus feigned... Casting our real selves thus in unreal roles, we do not generally know how much reality to hold constant. Quandries arise. *

And we have no exact means of determining the exact solution to these quandries. Unlike the giving of direct quotation, there is in saying

* Word and Object, p 219

what a man believes or thinks, no determinate standard which can be appealed to to settle ambiguities and doubts.

We have been appealing to 'propositions' precisely to keep a place for ambiguities of interpretation behind actual speech dispositions. It should not need saying that this is just about the reverse of the classical sense of 'proposition', which looked for an impersonal determinate meaning, rather than the possibility of an indeterminable or, at least, believer-dependent interpretation behind the words a man used. (We use the same term because of the importance of going behind the words). Propositions in our sense thus play a regulative rather than a constitutive role in translation and interpretation of beliefs. We are not suggesting that they are linguistically neutral, or fixed and timelessly non-ambiguous, expressible equally well in any language. Propositions in our sense are quite neutral as far as Quine's thesis of indeterminacy of translation is concerned, as we are not suggesting that meaning itself is non-linguistic, but only that the content of a man's beliefs cannot always be fully determined by the meaning of the words he uses to express his beliefs.

In fact, even though we are suggesting that we must attempt to go behind a man's words in order to understand his beliefs, we do not mean to imply that it will always be possible, even in theory, to give a final and determinate account of just what it is that a man believes in any particular case. This follows from taking the man's understanding of his words into account, - as the believer himself may have no very clear idea of what it is that he is assenting to. Indeed, as James F. Thomson points out* in the event of an ambiguity in the sentence assented to being noticed only afterwards by the person who assented to it, there is no reason to suppose that the person in question must be able to look back and say which part of the ambiguity he was intending to assent to. Someone

* in 'Truth-bearers and the Trouble about Propositions', Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 66, 1969, pp 737-747

who believes that propositions are timeless and non-ambiguous truth-bearers will have to say that the man in the example assented to one of two propositions, P_i and P_{ii} , though admitting that there is no way of ensuring which it was. But, as Thomson argues, there is no need to accept this description; there was nothing in or about the situation to make it the case that either P_i or P_{ii} was asserted.

Such indeterminacy in a man's beliefs does not argue against our theory of propositions. Indeed, it is quite compatible with what we have been saying, which amounts to saying that we should try to understand a man's beliefs just as he understands them, because his own understanding may be quite indeterminate between two possible understandings of his words. Our report of his belief in this case, far from saying that he must have believed one thing or the other, should try to reproduce the ambiguity.

In future, then, when we say that a believes p , ' p ' must be taken to stand for the proposition intended by a . This is because, although p will always be expressed in a concrete sentence or statement and be based on the actual words, it does not always seem possible to give a fair or accurate account of a belief simply in terms of the concrete sentences or statements the believer actually used or might have used, had he expressed his belief in words. In particular, the phenomena of referential opacity and the subtleties required to give reports and translations of beliefs underline the need to base accounts of a man's beliefs on what he himself takes the words he uses to signify, over and above the standard interpretation and logical consequences of those words. It is this need which we hope to underline in saying that the objects of belief must be thought of as propositions.

Finally, in tying down the idea of propositions to actual beliefs, we at least put the problem about the criterion of identity of propositions

one stage further back, for we can simply say that there are as many propositions as there are beliefs, and that two people believe the same proposition when they have the same belief. Whether two people in fact have the same belief can often be determined by seeing whether they assent to the same sentence or statement, but what we have tried to show here is that such a test is not infallible, because there is frequently some particular sense or implication behind the words in which a man might express his beliefs, which is not revealed by the words themselves, such that assent by two people to the same sentence or statement might not entail that they had the same belief.

Part 2 - Moral Beliefs

People often speak of their beliefs not permitting them to do certain actions, or of inducing them to think of certain acts as duties and so on. They say that they believe that it is right or good to do certain actions, wrong or immoral to do others. Probably together with religious belief, with which such attitudes are often closely connected, a man will think of his moral views as constituting his 'beliefs'. In a pre-reflective use of the term, there can be no objection to this. These attitudes are among the most cherished a man has, as well as the most personal. They are what he feels most responsibility for himself. Compared to factual beliefs, which are often mundane and taken for granted, moral and religious attitudes alone qualify as Beliefs with a large 'B'.

The epistemological status of moral judgments is, of course, a subject of considerable controversy. If, however, moral judgments are neither true nor false, as is asserted by non-cognitive theories of ethics, it is clear that we cannot speak of moral beliefs, in the sense in which we have been discussing belief, as the attitude appropriate to what is true. We will now look briefly at some non-cognitivist theories of ethics to see what becomes of the concept of a moral belief or of an

ethical proposition, and then go on to suggest that even if there may be a factual basis to value systems (including religion), non-cognitivist theories of ethics are correct to point to the fact that to adopt a certain system of values is to do something more than to assent to a number of factual propositions.

As we have seen in the first part of this chapter propositions are considered to be truth-bearers of some sort, such that if they are true, they describe what is empirically so. If we do not think that ethical principles are assertions of fact, then perhaps we should try to develop a theory similar to that proposed by W. H. F. Barnes in an article entitled 'Ethics Without Propositions'.* Barnes thinks of ethical principles as affirmations of attitude, attempting to show that as they are arrived at neither by deduction nor induction, they cannot be factual assertions. (In fact, of course, a plausible argument can be given to show that it is impossible for any factual assertion to be arrived at by either induction or deduction). Barnes regards ethical attitudes as provisional and corrigible, but, perhaps perversely from our point of view, tries to make out a sense in which ethical statements can be called true or false. His point here is that in making a moral judgment, we claim that our decision will commend itself to anyone who considers all the relevant facts from a moral point of view, and allows them to register on his moral sensibility. So

In a somewhat special sense of verifiable or unverifiable, I could hold that the (ethical) statement was verified or falsified according as this claim was verified or falsified. **

Assuming that it is possible to determine the demands of moral sensibility, it would be ultimately a matter of fact as to whether an action was good or bad, and so ethics would not really be non-cognitivist; but the

* SPAS, Vol. 22, 1948, pp 1-30

** p 27

problem is to determine the demands of moral sensibility, as not all people's moral sensibilities agree. But Barnes does not accept that mere disagreement must necessarily falsify the claim he makes when expressing a moral judgment, for the sensibility of his critic might be undeveloped. But what is the criterion of a developed moral sensibility? Either there is one, in which case, morality is ultimately heteronomous and factual, as its task consists in seeing whether moral judgments correspond to what the developed sensibility demands at the time in question, or there is no such criterion, in which case, Barnes has no grounds for talking about the truth or falsity of ethical judgments, even in a 'somewhat special sense'."

Another non-cognitivist approach to ethics rules out talk of moral beliefs altogether. It is that proposed by C. L. Stevenson in his book Ethics and Language.** In the first chapter, Stevenson actually discusses the nature of ethical agreement and disagreement by asking whether ethical disagreements should be thought of as disagreements in belief. Although he concedes that many cognitive matters - the proper objects of belief - are relevant to ethical decisions, he thinks that fundamentally disagreements in ethics are not disagreements in belief:

In normative ethics, any description of what is the case is attended by considerations of what is to be felt and done about it; the beliefs that are in question are preparatory to guiding or redirecting attitudes. Moral judgments are concerned with recommending something for approval or disapproval... In this way, moral judgments go beyond cognition, speaking to the conative-affective natures of men.***

Thus, despite a practical interdependence between cognitive beliefs and ethical attitudes, in theory it is possible for two people to agree on all relevant beliefs and yet to have a major difference on the ethics of the situation. So Stevenson, accepting that beliefs always involve us in taking

* For another, though somewhat different, reason for not talking about 'propositions' of ethics, c.f. L. Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, London, 1963, Section 6.42.

** New Haven, 1944

*** p 13

something to be true, is prepared to rule out talk of ethical beliefs. This is consistent with, and required by his theory, which maintains that ethical discourse is emotive, not cognitive.

One of the most highly developed accounts of moral discourse recently to appear is that given by R. M. Hare*. Hare does not explicitly discuss the question of moral beliefs, but we can infer that he would rule out the notion, because he holds that moral terms are characteristically 'prescriptive'. Although this does not mean that moral language can be reduced to simple imperatives, it does mean that moral judgments entail imperatives, on which the holder of the judgment, if sincere, must in appropriate circumstances, act. His stress on the essence of moral judgments being to commit the holder to certain actions presents him with difficulties when faced with the problem of weakness of will, while his system seems to provide no possibility of refuting the fanatic who is prepared to act on his values, even when it goes radically against his own interests. Accepting or rejecting a moral judgment is, for Hare, being prepared to act on it or against it in relevant circumstances, and to require that any person in similar circumstances should do the same. Even though my prescription may be formally inconsistent with yours, there is no sense for Hare in which one is true and the other false. Hare holds this because he thinks that the realm of morals and values is ultimately divorced from the realm of facts, and that two different types of judgment are at stake here. Hence his attempt to give a completely abstract characterisation of the moral judgment, in terms of its structure and logical properties, without regard for its content. Clearly talk of moral beliefs, in our sense of the word 'belief', is once more ruled out.

An interesting sidelight on Hare's ideas on ethics, which is relevant to this discussion of moral beliefs, and which will allow us to

* c.f. his Language of Morals, Oxford, 1952 and Freedom and Reason, Oxford, 1963

consider value systems generally, is to be found in his contribution to the University discussion in the symposium New Essays in Philosophical Theology.* There Hare introduces the notion of a blik to explain how it is that people can agree on the relevant facts in a given case, and yet differ in their general beliefs about it. This is intended as a reply to Flew's challenge in the same discussion, in which he asks the religious believer to produce some fact which is entailed by belief in God and denied by disbelief.

Hare selects three beliefs as examples of bliks: 1) a madman's idea that all Oxford dons are out to murder him, 2) Hare's own belief in the reliability of his steering wheel, and 3) a general religious belief. Although Hare subsumes all three examples under the general concept of blik, all this does is to obscure some rather important differences between the first two cases and the third. He seems to imply that in the first two cases, it is open logically to a man to choose the attitude he takes up to dons and steering wheels, and that abnormal attitudes are permitted because they may be compatible with any finite number of tests. Of the steering wheel, he says:

I just have a blik about steel and its properties, so that normally I trust the steering of my car; but I find it not at all difficult to imagine what it would be like to lose this blik and acquire the opposite one. **

The reason for this is that one can never be certain the steel is all right. But Hare cannot conclude from this that it is just as rational to believe that steel is a safe component of steering wheels, as to disbelieve it. He is playing on the idea that the hypothesis about the reliability of steel can never be conclusively verified (and may occasionally actually be falsified); but we can still take it as being rationally and empirically more acceptable than mistrust of steel because

* edited by A. Flew and A. MacIntyre, London 1955, pp 99-103

** p 100

it is better corroborated and has survived a greater number of possible falsifications.

This being so, the bliks of both the madman and the man who does not believe in his steering wheel can be rejected on rational grounds, however strongly and consistently some individuals may hang on to them. Hare cannot conclude that adoption of these beliefs about the ordinary world is ultimately a matter of arbitrary choice, governed by no rational considerations, just because a complete justification of them is not possible. (In fact, as we show in Chapter 7, no factual belief can be completely justified; we attempt to show there that this need not lead to despair about rationality).

Hare's examples of bliks are supposed to concern cases where some sort of evaluation is concerned (though the sort of evaluation Hare has in mind does not seem to be involved in his first two cases). What he seems to be suggesting is that bliks - value judgments, by which he includes religion - cannot be discussed in cognitive terms, because they are compatible with any empirical state of affairs. The religious hypothesis that everything has a reason, like its contradictory, belief in pure chance, are beliefs with no assertions; not only do they not forbid anything, but they do not enable us to 'explain or predict or plan anything'.* What religious beliefs do, according to Hare, is not to say anything factual or empirical, but to produce an attitude or frame of mind in their holders. If there is no chance of them being true or false, clearly they are not beliefs in the sense we suggested in Chapter 3. To have a certain religious viewpoint (including, presumably atheism) is to take up a certain attitude to the world. Instead of believing that certain historical or cosmological facts are the case, what for Hare differentiates religious people from non-religious people

* p 102

is basically a difference of attitude to the world; there are two different systems of value here.

Although we do not share Hare's complete separation of values and attitudes from facts in either moral or religious systems, and although it might be possible to hold individual moral beliefs in isolation from a complete way of looking at the world, Hare's theory of bliks does suggest an important aspect of belief in such systems or ideologies; for to believe in Christianity or Marxism or utilitarianism, for example, cannot be reduced simply to the acceptance of a number of discrete propositions or elements. Over and above the doctrinal core (whether or not this is factual), holding such systems involves accepting certain methods of looking at problems and criteria for judging and acting, a combination of thinking and active intervention as a means of shaping reality. Even though factual beliefs can be thought of as forming a system or even as a Weltanschauung^{*}, which may pervade all our thinking, purely factual belief systems do not entail moral responses, in the way that accepting a system of values does. The reasons for accepting an ideology, which involve a personal moral decision, cannot be seen when we are making such a decision in a totally non-subjective way, as we might wish to see the reasons for adopting factual beliefs. In a way, acceptance of an ideology is more like trust in a person than belief in certain empirical facts^{**}; to think of the adoption of such systems in the same sort of way as we arrive at ordinary factual beliefs is to trivialise the part they play in many people's lives. Part of the strength of non-cognitive theories of ethics arises from the stress they place on the elements of personal evaluation and commitment involved in ethical decisions. For our part, we can certainly admit that there is this additional element involved in accepting an ideology, or perhaps even a single moral attitude, even if

* c.f. Chapter 7

** c.f. p 99 below

we would not want to rule out a factual basis completely; but a full discussion of this additional element of personal involvement would take us too far away from our analysis of belief as a cognitive attitude.

Part 3 - Belief in People and Things

In this chapter, we have suggested that belief, as we have analysed it as the attitude appropriate to what is true, takes as its object a proposition. This fits in well with the cases where a man says that he believes that such and such is the case; what we now wish to examine is the extent to which the cases in which a man says that he believes in something (God, a friend, Ford cars, etc.) can be analysed in this way. As H. H. Price has a chapter on this point; we will use his remarks as our starting point.

Price begins by distinguishing between 'belief-in' and 'belief-that', more or less on the lines of ordinary speech. That is to say, 'belief-that' comes to mean what we would describe as believing a proposition, while 'belief-in' covers all the cases where people say that they believe in something. As we shall see, several different things can be meant by this mode of speech.

Price first shows that belief-in x is often reducible to belief that the x in question exists. This would be so where somebody said that he believed in King Arthur, fairies or the Loch Ness monster. Even if people say that they do or do not believe in some general concept, like the supernatural, what they mean is that they do or do not believe that supernatural events occur or that supernatural beings exist. This type of reduction of what may be called existential belief-in statements is in line with what we said about judgments of existence in discussing Hume,* namely, that they are to be analysed as asserting the truth of

* Belief. pp 426-454.

** p 3 above

existential propositions.

Another type of belief-in expression is where someone says that he believes in an ideal, which has not yet been attained. (For example, I might believe in equal pay for equal work, regardless of sex). Here, Price points out that the belief cannot be reduced to belief that such a state of affairs obtains, because ex hypothesi, it does not. He goes on to say that anyone who sincerely believes in an ideal must believe at least that it is practicable, and that there is in this way an element of belief-that in his belief. This seems debatable. An idealist may be uncertain as to whether his ideal is practicable. He may simply hope that it is. In any case, there is no need to analyse the expression in this way in order to get a belief-that sense out of it, for we can simply say that the proposition the idealist believes is that which gives the sense of his ideal. (In the example, I believe that equal pay for equal work, regardless of sex, is demanded by considerations of justice).

Having shown that two types of occasion in which people speak of believing in something can be expressed in terms of belief that + a proposition, we now come to the cases where belief in something or someone indicates that we esteem, trust or rely on the object of our belief. Here, it may be thought, we have a different type of attitude from propositional belief that. Certainly, there is no necessary connection between believing in the existence of someone and believing in his worth or reliability. Price says that the type of belief that one has in one's doctor, or its converse 'the disbelief in Mr. Gladstone which most contemporary British Tories had.... does seem to be a quite different attitude from belief-that and irreducible to it'.* Price speaks of this sense of belief-in as the 'evaluative' sense, and he is clearly right in saying that it is not reducible to belief-that the person or thing in question exists.

* p 436

However, he goes on to suggest that it might be possible to reduce even this sort of belief-in to belief-that, provided that the relevant value concepts were introduced into the proposition believed, and assuming that we approved of the sort of activity which we say the person is good at. Thus we might say that we believed in our doctor, because he is good at curing people, and we approve of curing people, but we would not say that we believed in the chief of the secret police because, although we think he is good at extracting information from prisoners by torture, we do not approve of this. Price also maintains that one of the virtues of analysing my belief in my doctor as belief that he is good at curing people, plus my approval of this activity, is that it brings out the 'prospective' character of the belief:

If I believe in my doctor, I believe not only that it is and has been a good thing that he is good at curing my diseases, but that it will continue to be a good thing and that he will continue to be good at curing them.*

In fact, this hardly serves to distinguish evaluative from factual beliefs. Price is prepared to say that belief in Tacitus as a historian means that we expect that future archaeological evidence will confirm what he says, whereas the simple factual belief in the existence of King Arthur is 'concerned entirely with the past'.** But surely I can equally well say that my belief in the existence of King Arthur means that I expect future research to back up my belief, just as much as I do in the case of my belief in Tacitus as a historian.

But certainly my belief in my doctor may include attitudes which are not necessarily present in many factual beliefs; there is something personal and committed about this belief that is not present in my belief that the doctor exists, for example. However, on analysing just what this belief-in consists in, it does seem to be possible to analyse it at least as based on propositional beliefs-that. This becomes clear

* p445

** p 445

when I say just what it is that I mean by belief-in him. I believe that he is compassionate, but firm; I believe that he makes himself readily available; I believe that he is well abreast of recent medical developments and that he is not reluctant to consult specialists. The list can be extended, but my reliance on him appears to result from a number of factual beliefs, and if they proved to be untrue, I would lose my belief in him. If it is said that the trust I give him is something over and above these factual beliefs, and that this is what the belief-in essentially consists in, I would reply that my trust is itself a belief in the trustworthiness of the doctor, and to be reasonable must itself be backed up by reasons and evidence, like any other belief. Moreover, the reasons I give will be of the sort that led me to the trust in the first place. Thus my belief in my doctor appears to be the cumulative effect of my belief that the doctor is good at fulfilling a certain role, together with my approval of the role. The attitude may seem different from factual belief because it is both immediately practical and personal, but it certainly is based on factual beliefs and would be renounced if the beliefs proved false. This is why we talk of an attitude of belief here, even if the element of trust could be, in this case where a man is concerned, partly a matter of affection too. But if I say that I believe in Ford cars, do I mean any more than that because I believe that a good service is provided by Fords, that their cars are well tested and well designed, etc., I therefore believe that they are reliable? There seems to be little more to my attitude than this: I do not love or esteem my Ford car, I simply rely on my (hopefully) well founded beliefs, just as I rely on any other factual beliefs.

So where belief-in refers to the belief we have that a person or a thing fulfills some role we approve of can, in the case of things totally, and in the case of people, at least to a large degree be

analysed in terms of propositional beliefs-that. But what about the affection or esteem that is part of our belief in the doctor? Although based on factual beliefs, it seems to transcend them. It is, in fact, like the belief Tom has in Tim, which might mean that Tom believes what Tim says (and can be therefore reduced to the propositional belief discussed in Part 1 of this chapter), but, more likely, it means that Tom is friendly with Tim, and feels he can trust him. Price discusses this sort of belief in friends as an attitude which expects nothing from them in the way of role-fulfilment.* Belief-in a friend is simply a regard for his individual personality, perhaps rather like the non-cognitive 'assent to Jesus' spoken of by Barth. This assent to Jesus is clearly non-cognitive, as it seems to be consistent with flexible and even contradictory factual beliefs; in this and in its entailing of a whole moral attitude, it is rather like one of Hare's bliks.**

Price is clearly correct in thinking that this type of belief-in is not reducible to belief-that. No doubt it is linked to belief-that, as we can think of both attitudes in terms of trust - trust in a person, and trust in a proposition - while it is also quite common to think of friends as 'true'. It is presumably because something of this type of belief-in enters into our attitude to our doctor that we are reluctant to think of the attitude as simple belief-that. From our point of view, the simplest thing to say about belief-in a friend is that we have here a different attitude from the cognitive belief we are dealing with. It is an affective attitude, something between love and trust, no doubt with its own logic. All we can do here is to note its existence as a fact of language, and to resume our analysis of cognitive belief.

* op cit, pp 447-450

** On the Barthian assent to Jesus, and its lack of cognitive content, c.f. W. W. Bartley III, The Retreat to Commitment, London, 1964

CHAPTER 5How Do I Know What I Believe?Introduction

We have emphasised that belief must be regarded as an attitude which usually extends over a period of time, sometimes over years or even a lifetime. Compared to the time span of the belief itself, the moments spent in thinking of it may be brief and infrequent. Indeed, it may be said that we can attribute some beliefs to a man, who has never explicitly adverted to the fact he has the attitudes. The question now arises as to the connection between what we have so far called 'adverting' to a belief and the long term attitude. What is the nature of this act of adverting? As we shall see, the two questions are closely connected. We shall argue as promised in Chapter 3 when distinguishing beliefs from occurrent mental states that when I advert to my own beliefs, I am not performing an act of passive introspection, but that in so doing I am actively committing or re-committing myself to a belief I already have, or initiating a new belief. We will bring out the active aspect of adverting to a belief partly by an examination of the act itself, partly by comparing it to the explicit formulation of an intention in an intentional act, and partly by showing the difficulties involved in thinking of it as purely passive. What we say will lead us to the conclusion that it is not possible for a man to be mistaken about his own current beliefs, but we will show that he may still unwittingly give mistaken accounts of his beliefs and stress that this possibility is not to be overlooked. The chapter will close with replies to two possible objections to the view here proposed.

In Chapter 1,* we stressed that it was not possible to analyse belief simply in terms of occurrent mental acts of assent; in the first place,

* pp 23-6

we have beliefs we never advert to, let alone assent to. Even when we do actually think that something is the case, analysis of what happens at the actual moment when we would say that we had the thought, reveals that it requires in many cases a whole context of meaning and dispositions, not present at that moment, to fill out what we would say the thought is about. That is to say, the mental event in abstraction might well not make plain what the belief was. All this argues against making a mental event a necessary condition of belief, as well as against thinking that when we do advert to a belief, its whole content is encapsulated by what is going on in my head at that moment.

However, it is quite clear that there are moments when I think or say that something is the case, even if the whole thought is not present in what crosses my mind at that moment. I might have believed the matter for a long time, and simply advert to its being the case, or a new solution to a problem might suddenly strike me, and I think to myself 'Yes, that's it'. There need be nothing dramatic about these events: I could simply be aware that it is raining or think that it is snowing. Or I might be asked 'What do you think of him?' and run through my answer in my mind. Before saying how these events are to be thought of, let us be clear that they do take place. Price, for example, writes

There certainly is a mental event which can be quite naturally described as assenting to a proposition. Moreover, it is often a purely inward event. It need not necessarily be expressed by means of bodily behaviour, for instance by saying 'Yes, I think so' or 'I am sure it is so', or writing a sentence down on paper and underlining it in green ink. *

Geach, in Mental Acts ** says that

Anybody performs an act of judgment at least as often as he makes up his mind how to answer a question; and acts of judgment in this sense are plainly episodic - have a position in a time series.

We will follow these terminologies in speaking of these events as acts

* Belief, p 296

** London, 1957, p 9

of assent or judgment, though in so doing, we do not wish to imply that there need be any special feeling or act above the simple thought or awareness that something is the case. Their role, at first sight, seems to be that of manifesting beliefs I already have, and of marking the start of new beliefs. This is how Price thinks of them, and although he takes them as very important symptoms of belief, he does think that a man can sometimes attend to a proposition and not assent to it - i.e. not to think it is true, and yet be said to believe it. * We will argue against Price that a necessary condition of believing p is to assent to it when p is entertained and that this follows from taking seriously the idea that when I think of or verbally make a judgment, I am not simply observing my inner state, but rather performing an act in which I commit or re-commit myself to a belief.

Undoubtedly a source of confusion here is the tendency to see my own words or thoughts on analogy with the way I look at the words or thoughts of somebody else. To find out what someone else believes, I observe his behaviour, physical and verbal, and draw the appropriate conclusions. But is there anything like this in the way I come to a knowledge of my own beliefs? How do I find out what things I myself take to be true? Braithwaite thinks that I come to a knowledge of my own beliefs inductively, and that one of the means of doing this is to make a 'direct induction from my knowledge of my behaviour in the past to knowledge of my behaviour in the future'.** But there is something very strange about this, as if a man were to look over his own actions and to say 'From the way this person has been going on, it must be that he - that is to say, I - believes that p; therefore I do believe p'. Surely I come to a knowledge of my own current beliefs by asking myself whether some proposition, p is true, or by simply thinking that p is

* p 300

** 'The Nature of Believing' loc cit. p 37

true, and this, as we shall see, is a different sort of thing from analysing my words or my behaviour from what might be called a third person point of view. It is true that I might discover that I have been acting as if I thought that *p* were true, but the question still has to be decided as to whether I think here and now that *p* is true, and this is the moment at which I give or withhold assent from *p*.

Ryle* writes that beliefs 'like aversions and phobias... can be unacknowledged'. Certainly a sense can be made out in which I can be said to have beliefs that I have not adverted to, which I do not think of as beginning as beliefs only when I actually do advert to them for the first time. If I am told that I have an unacknowledged belief that they do not keep elephants next door, and this (that they do not keep elephants) is in fact what I think about the people next door, I would not want to say that the belief began only when my attention was drawn to it. Some proof of this would be given by the surprise I would have felt if I had at some previous time discovered elephants in a small suburban bungalow. In this sense, I can say that I had a belief that I did not acknowledge, until I actually thought about it.

But a lot hangs on how we think of 'unacknowledged' here. I might have a mole on my back, which I did not know about. When it is pointed out to me for the first time, I acknowledge its presence; there is nothing else I can reasonably do. But when I am told that I have a belief, which I have never adverted to, the process of acknowledgement is not a simple matter of recognising the fact and accepting it as beyond my powers to change, at least without resorting to surgery. There is a difference between my reaction to a man saying to me 'Although you don't know it, you've always had a mole in the small of your back' and my reaction to a man saying to me 'Although you've never said it to yourself in these words, you've always believed in a communist conspiracy to disrupt industry';

* The Concept of Mind, p 134

in the first case, my acknowledgement or otherwise of the unacknowledged mole will make no immediate difference to its continued existence, but with the belief, saying sincerely 'Yes, I have this belief' or 'No, it might have seemed as if I believed this, but in fact I don't now', makes all the difference in the world to the continued existence of the supposed belief. In the one case, the belief continues, while in the other case, it does not even if it did exist in the past. My words, if they are sincere, or at least my inward thoughts on the matter are constitutive of the belief, in a way that my words or thoughts, however sincere, can never be constitutive of the existence of the mole at the parallel moment of acknowledgement.

In other words, adverting to the fact and sincerely acknowledging it are irrelevant to the existence of the mole, but when I advert to the possibility of my having a belief, whether I acknowledge it or not at least to myself is essential to it. There can be no question of a belief being unacknowledged after I have thought about it. So the possibility that I have a belief and simply not agree that I have it, which is possible in the case of the mole, cannot arise. We thus rule out talk of beliefs which are essentially unconscious or unacknowledged, such as a psychiatrist might wish to speak of. He might say of a man, that he really believes *p*, but that his psyche makes it impossible for him to admit it, even to himself. However, one wonders what is meant by saying that a man unconsciously believes *p*, when the man himself thinks that he believes not - *p*, particularly if we are right in thinking that a man's explicit thoughts about a subject are constitutive of his belief on that subject. To put this in more concrete terms, the psychiatrist might tell the man 'You believe your father is a threat and a rival', and the man might reply that he believes no such thing, as his father has always behaved very well towards him. It may still be open to the psychiatrist to say that an

unconscious fear of his father is at the root of the man's actions, but can he say any more about the man's beliefs than that he has been acting as if he believed that his father is a threat and a rival?

Just what is involved in talk of essentially unconscious beliefs is brought out clearly in a recent article by Arthur W. Collins.* Collins points out that for me to say that I have an unconscious belief is to use evidence I would use in ascribing a belief to others to ascribe a belief to myself. In doing this, I will not be saying that I actually accept the belief. Indeed, to say this will be to make the belief conscious; in the end then, an unconscious belief must be one which, when I reflect on it, I deny having, but which is ascribed to me, either by myself or by someone else, through psycho-analytic inference. Unconscious beliefs are thus clearly distinguished from implicit or unformulated beliefs, whose existence depends on the fact that I would accept them were I to think of them.

We argued in Chapter 3 that there is a sense in which saying sincerely 'I believe p' throws light on my state. However, it does this not because it reports on some occurrence or process I am currently undergoing, but because it is itself constitutive of my attitude to p. The normal logical order of things here is that I look at p, rather than at myself, or at myself only in so far as my own state provides evidence for p, in deciding that I believe p. This order is clearly reversed in the case of unconscious beliefs. Collins himself explicitly denies that in saying 'I believe that p' one is stating a belief about one's state as well as about p. This would of course involve an infinite regress of beliefs**, as well as entailing that one could still perversely claim a measure of success in one's belief if it turned out that p was false.***

* 'Unconscious Beliefs', Journal of Philosophy, Vol.66) 1969, pp 667-680

** c.f. below, pp 111-115

*** Collins, loc cit. p 679

Despite the fact that in saying that I unconsciously believe p, I am commenting directly on my own state, and in so far as I am speaking about p at all, actually denying it, Collins still thinks that it is sometimes legitimate to predicate such unconscious beliefs of myself and others. Whether or not such talk is helpful in psycho-analysis, it does seem a most implausible use of 'belief'.

Price, too, accepts such talk, saying that sometimes 'A believes that p' can still be true, even though A does not assent to the proposition p when he entertains it and attends to it'.* We wish to rule out talk of unconscious beliefs not because of what Price calls a narrow insistence on terminological rules, but because of what we are doing when we think about our own current beliefs, and reach a conclusion about something. In doing this, we actually form our beliefs, or expressly re-commit ourselves to them, if we reach the same conclusion as we have done before. In order to prevent misunderstanding here, we must stress that we are not saying that either belief itself or the act of assent are performatives in the sense that term has been used of promises. For when I verbally make a free promise, I am morally bound by what I have promised, even if I am thinking all the time that I do not really mean it and have no intention of honouring it. Making the appropriate verbal or other external responses is what constitutes my promise, but with belief it is not the external enaction of any words or signs that is constitutive of the belief, but the inner assent that I give to the proposition. So although we might say that there is a performative element in belief in that in thinking about our beliefs we are also doing something about them, belief cannot be considered to be a performative concept in itself.

In fact, there are close parallels between my knowledge of my beliefs and my knowledge of my intentions, a discussion of which may help to make clearer what we are trying to say about belief. When we act

* Belief, p 300

intentionally, we always act under some aspect; we know what we are doing because we decide the aspect under which we are acting, while observers can see only our physical movements, and have to infer from them what our intention is. Given that two possible intentions could both be served by the same set of physical movements, the agent is the final authority on what he is actually doing. Of course, there are certain restrictions on what intentions can be effected by a given set of physical movements, and the intentional description of the act can be given only within those limits. How far the agent knows what physical movements he is making without recourse to some sort of observation is a matter of dispute, but even if descriptions of actions are dependent on observation in this respect, there is no parallel need for a similar observational limitation on beliefs, where, as we have seen in Chapter 2, there is no necessary connection between what a man believes and what he does. (This is not to deny that a man's profession of belief can be questioned in terms of his sincerity in making it, if his actions seem wildly divergent from the implications of the profession).

Given that there are certain limits on the intention with which I can be said to be doing a given set of physical movements, how do I know what the intention is? It should be clear that I do not discover this by passive introspection, or by a retrospective examination of the physical movements, because if I ask myself whether in doing an act I have such and such an intention, I will be able truthfully to answer that I have only if I am currently intending in the appropriate way. In other words, to know that I currently have an intention cannot be separated from an explicit committing of myself to it. I cannot passively look and see whether I am actually having it now, because to be passive about it is not to have it.

The point here is not that a man cannot be said to be doing an

intentional action without adverting to his intention, even inwardly. Just as unformulated beliefs, we can have unformulated intentions; this is particularly apparent in the case of habitual actions, like driving to work. My intention to drive to work does not begin when someone asks me what I am doing, and I reply that I am driving to work; it could be said that I was (intentionally) driving to work even if I never adverted to the fact that this is what I was doing, providing that this is what I would count as a correct description of what I was doing if I were asked about it. The point is that once a man does advert to what he is doing, providing he is not under some internal or external compulsion, he has to make an explicit recognition of his intention concerning his action, or refrain from doing the action, and so perform a contrary intention. If someone asks me what I am doing, in my reply I do not simply report on my intention as if it were something I undergo like a pain, but I assent to the fact that this continues to be my intention, thereby renewing the intention. It is because we ourselves are responsible for our intentions that it would be inappropriate for a man, on being asked to say what he was doing, to reply 'Let me see, what is this body bringing about?*' In the end, I say what I am doing without looking to see, because I am doing it.

What is to be taken from this comparison with our knowledge of our intentions in our intentional actions is that in saying what he believes, a man is not giving a report on something he is undergoing either. In both cases there is an element of present commitment which I am conscious of. To return to belief, if I ask someone what he believes about p, if he is sensible he will consider the relevant evidence and come to a conclusion. Even if he does not proceed in this rational way, his answer,

* Example from Miss G. W. M. Anscombe, Intention, Oxford, 1957, p 51. Note that in taking the intention to be the way the agent would describe what he is doing, we avoid talking of it as something existing apart from the physical movements.

provided it is sincere, will be taken as a present assent to or dissent from p. If he answered that he did believe p, and on being asked why, said that he had examined his mind and found that he had often assented to p in the past, we would not take this as an excuse for his unjustifiably committing himself to p now. We would probably say to him, 'Yes, you may have done that in the past, but do you believe p now?'. We would thus be trying to show him that his present views on the matter are something he is now responsible for.

So to say outwardly or think to myself what I believe is not a matter of reporting on a mental state. Somebody who claimed that this was all he was doing when he spoke about his beliefs, and said that therefore he could not be held accountable for the truth or falsity of his beliefs would not have understood what belief was. When I say that I believe p, I am talking about myself only indirectly, only because I am committing myself to the truth of p. I have the belief because p seems true to me, not because I introspect a certain mental state or experience. Peirce, for example, is misleading when he says that in making a judgment we are giving 'a representation to ourselves that we have a specified habit of this kind', namely a belief.* He himself seems to realise the inadequacy of this account when he goes on in V.29 to talk of a judgment in terms of its being an assertion to myself, as indicated by the expression 'I says to myself'.

What is being suggested is that when I reflect on my belief on some matter, I actually make a judgment about that matter. In making the judgment or act of assent, I cannot but know what conclusion I come to. This follows from the fact that my own relation to my own words or thoughts is wholly different from other peoples. If proof of this is needed, consider the bizarre consequences that follow from the opposite assumption:

* Collected Papers. III.160

If I listened to the words of my mouth, I might say that someone else was speaking out of my mouth.

"Judging from what I say, this is what I believe." Now, it is possible to think out circumstances in which these words would make sense.

And then it would be possible for someone to say "It is raining and I don't believe it", or "It seems to me that my ego believes this, but it isn't true." One would have to fill out the picture with behaviour indicating that two people were speaking through my mouth.*

What Wittgenstein says about my words applies equally to my thoughts.

I know what I believe by believing it - that is to say, by expressing my belief verbally or mentally in a judgment; and to think that I could be mistaken about a current judgment about a proposition p would be to assume that I could at the same time, and under the same respect be ^{judging} thinking that p was true and that p was false or uncertain. For if I said that I judge that p, then I would be saying that p was true; if someone objected that I might not be right about my judging that p, I would reply that I could be wrong about judging that p only if in fact I was judging that p was false or uncertain. So the possibility of being wrong about my judgment arises only if I assume that I could believe p, and at the same time believe that this judgment was false - that is to say, to say seriously and sincerely of myself in the first person singular of the present tense, 'I am believing falsely that p', which is a contradiction in terms, as can easily be verified by asking what conditions could possibly make it true.

What we are saying amounts to this: that where 'a' is a knower or a believer, 'p' is a proposition known or believed, 'Bap' = 'a believes p' and 'Kap' = 'a knows that p', it is not the case that

(1) 'Bap \rightarrow KaBap'

because a might never have adverted to his belief that p. But, once a does advert to his belief, he must be aware of it. It would, as J. Hintikka points out, be self-defeating for a man to utter 'I believe

* Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, p 192

that p, but I don't know that I believe it', although no such frustration of purpose attaches to his utterance concerning some other person, that 'He believes p, but he does not know that he believes it'.* Following Wittgenstein, Hintikka finds a logical necessity in normal circumstances of being aware of what one is saying, and, by analogical extension, of what one is thinking too;** assuming this the absurdity of the person referred to by 'a' uttering of himself a schema such as

(2) 'Bap & -KaBap'

is due not to the form of (2), which might be perfectly acceptable when said of a third person, but to what is implied when it is uttered in the first person. Beliefs, then, are not necessarily transparent or self-intimating, but when I actually judge that p or assent to p, outwardly or inwardly, I must know what I believe that p; in denying that this was so, I would effectively be asserting (2) of myself.

We are maintaining that my knowledge of my beliefs arises because when I ask what my belief is on any subject, there is a sense in which I can be said then to initiate or re-commit myself to that belief. We reject accounts which would make knowledge of our beliefs similar to that knowledge of things or events, internal or external, which is gained by passive observation. Some of the difficulties involved in such accounts are brought out in considering the views of Gustav Bergmann, as expounded in The Metaphysics of Logical Positivism (Madison, 1967), in which Bergmann tries to admit mental acts into his positivistic universe. The

* c.f. J. Hintikka, Knowledge and Belief, Ithaca, New York, 1962, pp 84-8. Although we agree with Hintikka in his analysis of what sort of implication there is between 'Bap' and 'KaBap', we should point out that his reasons for rejecting the immediate implication of 'KaBap' by 'Bap' are not the same as ours. (c.f. his pp 51-5) Moreover, other conclusions of Hintikka in the same area are not consistent with ours. What he says about one's belief about one's knowledge and belief seems correct only if the knowledge and belief one is having beliefs about does not include any knowledge or belief that one is not conscious of. (c.f. his pp 50 and 123).

** c.f. op cit, p 95

problem which arises in this account is that if mental acts are admitted at all into the positivistic description of the world, as elements of that world, on a level with sense data, there is a danger of an infinite regress in order to explain how these mental phenomena are themselves encountered. Are further mental acts necessary to know that we are encountering a knowing, a believing or a willing? According to Bergmann, 'I do sometimes encounter knowings and, similarly, the other propositional attitudes, as the acts are now also called'.* He goes on to say that although these mental acts are part of what he encounters in the world, he finds no such thing as an agent, a knower or a believer. Two questions suggest themselves immediately: first, do accounts of first-person type agency depend on finding agents in the same way that one finds objects? Prima facie, agents which were reducible to third-person type descriptions would not seem to be agents in the sense required by those who wish to uphold some degree of first-person agency, so the fact that Bergmann cannot find any 'objective' agent is hardly surprising, nor does it argue against the first-person thesis. Secondly, is it true to say of ourselves that we encounter the various propositional attitudes as if they were physical objects? Is it not rather that we take up these attitudes? We don't find them as facts or experiences, which are out there, to be looked at. It is true that we are observers of other people's mental acts, but we are not observers of our own.

Bergmann, however, insists that he is not discussing the acts or states, as he calls them, of other people, when he tries to show what there is in such states which ~~are~~^{is} not reducible to behaviouristic analyses.** Where Bergmann finds such analyses inadequate is precisely in the fact that in willing, knowing, etc., one is aware of certain mental states; the important point is that

* op cit, p 149, our italics

** op cit, p 222

problem which arises in this account is that if mental acts are admitted at all into the positivistic description of the world, as elements of that world, on a level with sense data, there is a danger of an infinite regress in order to explain how these mental phenomena are themselves encountered. Are further mental acts necessary to know that we are encountering a knowing, a believing or a willing? According to Bergmann, 'I do sometimes encounter knowings and, similarly, the other propositional attitudes, as the acts are now also called'.* He goes on to say that although these mental acts are part of what he encounters in the world, he finds no such thing as an agent, a knower or a believer. Two questions suggest themselves immediately: first, do accounts of first-person type agency depend on finding agents in the same way that one finds objects? Prima facie, agents which were reducible to third-person type descriptions would not seem to be agents in the sense required by those who wish to uphold some degree of first-person agency, so the fact that Bergmann cannot find any 'objective' agent is hardly surprising, nor does it argue against the first-person thesis. Secondly, is it true to say of ourselves that we encounter the various propositional attitudes as if they were physical objects? Is it not rather that we take up these attitudes? We don't find them as facts or experiences, which are out there, to be looked at. It is true that we are observers of other people's mental acts, but we are not observers of our own.

Bergmann, however, insists that he is not discussing the acts or states, as he calls them, of other people, when he tries to show what there is in such states which ~~are~~^{is} not reducible to behaviouristic analyses.** Where Bergmann finds such analyses inadequate is precisely in the fact that in willing, knowing, etc., one is aware of certain mental states; the important point is that

* op cit., p 149, our italics

** op cit., p 222

... 'p is willed', 'p is doubted', 'p is remembered', can all be analysed into (states that have) texts of the form '... is known'. To give a schematic illustration, I propose to analyse 'p is willed' into 'it is known that p and it is known that q', where 'q' is the text of those muscular and feeling states that occur as partial states in the classical analysis. *

From the point of view of an observer, this might be what another man's willing looks like, but can we ever see our own willing in such a light as and at the time we are willing it? What we see as our willing is not a factual conjunction of a proposition with a bodily state, because we do not see that we will at all; we will. If willing were a matter of knowing p and q, even if q were the physical expression of our willing, it would still be open to us to refuse to want p and q, and so the spectre of an infinite regress looms.

Similarly with belief; if in order to know whether I believe something, I have to know whether p and q obtain, I can always ask whether I believe that this is the case. But when I am actually believing something, no such question can arise - I know what I am believing because I am assenting to it there and then. While it is possible that there is, in belief, something like an awareness of p and q, attempts to analyse my own states simply in terms of such awarenesses miss the central point about my own relationship to them; that these states are constituted by being taken up, and that I become aware of my beliefs, hopes, fears and intentions precisely in taking them up or accepting them. If belief does, as Bergmann suggests, consist partly in having certain muscular and feeling states, as far as my own beliefs are concerned, having the states must be dependent on my belief; I must accept the belief before I have the states, and so I know I have the belief before I know that I have the states. I do not learn about my beliefs as I might learn about mental or physical experiences I undergo; I am aware of my beliefs in so far as I explicitly assent to them.

* op cit, p 222

Cook Wilson seems to have implied that we could be wrong about knowing whether we had an attitude of belief on a given matter, because he thought that we should speak of belief only when certain psychic processes have taken place, which is a view somewhat similar to Bergmann's, at least in its presupposition, as we shall see. Writing of occasions when we simply accept a proposition without reflection or thought, he says 'I don't think about that (i.e. that there could be some alternative state of affairs) at all, and so the processes of judgment, belief and opinion are impossible'. This is a rather strange requirement, ruling out, as Cook Wilson admits, a common use of 'believe', that in which I make an assertion based immediately on some perception. He is anxious to give precise meanings to 'perception', 'opinion', 'belief', 'judgment', 'apprehension' and so on, but in making the use of 'believe' subject to an examination of one's internal state, he is laying himself open to similar objections to those we made against the account given by Bergmann.

Do I, on these accounts, need a further psychic act in order to know whether I have reached a state of opinion, or whether I actually know what I am asserting, or whether I am merely taking it for granted? Can I be certain that my evidence really counts as evidence, or is this a matter of belief as well? The difficulty with Cook Wilson's account is that he wants to say that we can say that we are believing something only when what he calls the thinking process is 'fully awakened'. Apart from the theoretical difficulty about how we are supposed to know this, we often attribute beliefs to other people without knowing whether any thinking processes have gone on in them, while when we speak of our own beliefs, we concentrate on looking at whether the matter in question is true rather than on the mental processes involved in coming to this conclusion. As Griffiths points out** we can (and do) identify a state

* Statement and Inference, Oxford, 1926, Vol.1, p 110

** 'On Belief', loc cit. p 133

of belief without knowing how it is acquired, whereas on Cook Wilson's account we could not say that we or someone else believed something without discovering how we or he came to be in this state.

A ~~conclusion~~^{corollary} to the view of belief being proposed in this chapter is that the believer is the final authority on what he believes. Although I can manifest tendencies in my speech and behaviour that could allow others to predict with considerable certainty what my beliefs would be in given circumstances, so that they can speak of my having beliefs that I am not aware of, when I am actually asked what I believe, and so advert to the matter in question, my word, if it is sincerely given, has a claim to be final. In fact, the truth of attributing to me beliefs I do not know about must be in terms of whether, at the time concerned, I would assent or would have assented to them. The reason for saying this should by now be familiar, that in bringing a matter to consciousness and precisely because it is brought to consciousness, I make up my mind (either for the first time or as a repetition of my previous judgments) what I am to think about it: I can accept it as true, I can reject it as false or I can suspend judgment on it. Even this last is to take up an attitude, namely that my response to the matter in question is not to think of it as positively true or false, but simply to leave it undecided owing to my lack of evidence or lack of interest. I cannot think about a proposition without making up my mind about its truth in one of these ways.

The occurrent act theory of belief as consisting essentially in thinking of a proposition as true at least has the virtue of making clear the connection between what a man believes and what he thinks. Although we have constantly said that a man must be taken to believe what he would take to be true as well as what he actually thinks of as true, when he is thinking about the truth or falsity of any matter, he must be aware of his

beliefs about it, because in so thinking about it, he is forming his beliefs on it. Though we might feel that a man's behaviour belies his professed beliefs, for example that the wicked will be punished, if he insists that this is his belief and he seems in other ways to use the concept in its usual connection with public standards of truth and evidence, short of openly accusing him of hypocrisy or insincerity, have we any right to say that this is not his belief?

Phillips Griffiths sums the matter up succinctly:

One knows what one believes in so far as one knows what one thinks...* No convincing case can be found of being mistaken about whether one here and now believes something that one is currently thinking. The cases all seem to be one(s) of mis-reporting beliefs, or of mistaking what one would believe on most occasions or in one's better moments; or of believing something at one time and not at others.**

It will be worth spending a little time on alleged counter-examples to the thesis that we cannot be wrong about our beliefs when we are actually thinking about them. To take the case of mistaken expressions of beliefs first: a man can give a false expression of what he thinks, but is this the same as being mistaken about what he thinks, as far as his knowledge of his belief is concerned? The very fact that he might admit that his expression was mistaken itself suggests that it is not. To take an example, Jones could most vehemently assert that he was an atheist, all the time thinking that this meant that he did not believe in the Christian God, but when asked if he did not believe in a transcendent world spirit replied that of course he did. Such would obviously be a case of a mistaken expression of a belief, as Jones was in no doubt as to what he believed, but he had confused the meaning of words in a rather confused area of discussion. The importance of errors like this is not to be minimised; the characteristic philosophical move of asking a man just

* Griffiths adds here that one believes only in so far as one thinks. We have often suggested reasons for thinking this to be false.

** loc cit., p 131

beliefs about it, because in so thinking about it, he is forming his beliefs on it. Though we might feel that a man's behaviour belies his professed beliefs, for example that the wicked will be punished, if he insists that this is his belief and he seems in other ways to use the concept in its usual connection with public standards of truth and evidence, short of openly accusing him of hypocrisy or insincerity, have we any right to say that this is not his belief?

Phillips Griffiths sums the matter up succinctly:

One knows what one believes in so far as one knows what one thinks...^{*} No convincing case can be found of being mistaken about whether one here and now believes something that one is currently thinking. The cases all seem to be one(s) of mis-reporting beliefs, or of mistaking what one would believe on most occasions or in one's better moments; or of believing something at one time and not at others.^{**}

It will be worth spending a little time on alleged counter-examples to the thesis that we cannot be wrong about our beliefs when we are actually thinking about them. To take the case of mistaken expressions of beliefs first: a man can give a false expression of what he thinks, but is this the same as being mistaken about what he thinks, as far as his knowledge of his belief is concerned? The very fact that he might admit that his expression was mistaken itself suggests that it is not. To take an example, Jones could most vehemently assert that he was an atheist, all the time thinking that this meant that he did not believe in the Christian God, but when asked if he did not believe in a transcendent world spirit replied that of course he did. Such would obviously be a case of a mistaken expression of a belief, as Jones was in no doubt as to what he believed, but he had confused the meaning of words in a rather confused area of discussion. The importance of errors like this is not to be minimised; the characteristic philosophical move of asking a man just

* Griffiths adds here that one believes only in so far as one thinks. We have often suggested reasons for thinking this to be false.

** loc cit., p 131

what he means when he says that he believes... has an important point to it.

An objection to the thesis that a man cannot be mistaken about his beliefs when he is currently thinking of them which seems prima facie more difficult to answer arises from occasions when a man thinks he believes something until he has to act on it, and then realises, the objection would have it, that he does not believe it after all; and thinking over the matter, he concludes that he would never have been prepared to act on it and hence, that he never really believed it. An example of this might be a teacher constantly telling people that x was the best student he ever had, until such time as he had to write a reference for x, when he realised that he did not, and perhaps never had, really thought of x in this way.

This objection implies that while previously I might have thought that I had a belief, I can later come to realise that there was something missing from my earlier assent. But, what could be missing in this way? The objection as here set up would suggest that what had been missing was that the teacher was not in the end prepared to act on his belief. But, as we have seen in Chapter 2, people can believe what they are not prepared to act on. In this case, the teacher had in fact acted on his belief up to a point: he had told people about it. We have already shown in our discussion of the assumption behind behaviouristic theories of belief that the fact people are not always willing to stake a lot on their beliefs does not mean that the beliefs in question are not really beliefs; even less can the fact that an acid test now makes someone revise an earlier belief imply that at some previous time he did not really have the belief.

What seems to be behind this objection is the idea that belief, properly speaking, is something peculiarly solemn and final. This

attitude is summed up quite well in an incident in The Autobiography of Malcolm X.^{*} Elijah Muhammad, the founder of the Nation of Islam, writes of a defector from the religion: 'If you once believed in the truth, and now you are beginning to doubt the truth, you didn't believe the truth in the first place'. Perhaps our own use of the term 'committing' oneself to a belief may have added to the impression of the finality of belief; all we intend to say, however, is that in thinking of something as true, one accepts it at least while one is so thinking, and that this acceptance is something for which the believer is ultimately responsible. As Griffiths remarks^{**}, one of the joys and dangers of drunkenness is that it makes it far easier to come to difficult decisions; one thus evades one's responsibility. Beliefs can be solemn or final, but they can also be weak, shallow, transient. We may regret beliefs of the latter sort, but we do not solve the difficulty of the teacher in the example by saying that what he had was not really a belief. What he should have said is that he ought not to have believed that x was the best student he ever had, not that he did not believe it. If that is what he thought at the time, then that is what he believed at the time, unless one wants to say that a man can, at one and the same time, think that p is so and yet not believe p. But what would be meant by 'believe' in that case? If we do not allow a man to say significantly and sincerely of himself 'p is so, but I do not believe that p', by what right are others to say of him 'he thinks (without doubting it) that p is true, but he does not believe that p is true'?

People who say things like 'I believe she's telling the truth whenever I see her, but when she goes away, I don't believe her any more' or 'I don't believe it when I'm sober, but I'm convinced of it when I'm drunk' or 'I believe it when Smith presses me about it, but afterwards I

^{*} Harmondsworth, 1968, p 283

^{**} loc cit, p 130

have my doubts' may, when they give their assents, be, as a result of drinking or being brow-beaten and so on, kidding themselves (or being kidded) about the evidence there is for what they assent to, but they are not wrong about their beliefs. As a matter of fact, even if we want to say that a man believes only what he is prepared to act on, these men, owing to their heightened emotional or alcoholic states, might very well, at the time of their beliefs, act on them.

A second objection which could be raised against the thesis that I cannot fail to know what I believe when I am advertent to the subject in question, refers not to the fact that my beliefs can be weak and inconstant, but to the heart-searching that some people undertake in order to find out what they believe. If belief is simply a matter of asking myself whether p or not - p , why can it be so agonising to decide what my beliefs are in some cases? Would people who spend a large part of their lives in finding out what they believe on a particular question agree that all they were really doing was asking whether p or not - p was the case?

The reply to this objection should by now be clear: that there is an equivalence between 'I do not know what I believe about p ' and 'I do not know whether p is true or false'. Normally speaking, people concentrate on the more direct approach of asking whether p is true or false, and this is how they come to realise what their belief on p is. Even if, as in some important and emotionally involved matters such as a mother refusing to believe her son is dead, what looms largest in the mind is one's personal commitment or emotional reaction to the belief, rather than the fact of p being true or false, the commitment is still dependent on one's seeing p as true or false. This is not to deny that what is at stake emotionally or personally can sway one's judgment, but in saying that one believes p , one is, as we have seen in Chapter 3, first and foremost asserting the truth of p . This is not to deny that particularly in

matters of religion and personal relationships, one's personal feelings and experiences might be counted as evidence for the truth of p; a man might say to himself 'Can I believe in God?' and mean by this 'Have I myself had any experience of the transcendent, such as believers speak of?' But even here, where what is apparently to count as evidence is of a personal, existential nature, the man is still in the end asking himself whether the proposition 'God exists' is true. The fact that my own state of mind could be part of the evidence which leads me to make up my mind on the truth of p, should not obscure the fact that logically it is the truth of p which is the end of my enquiry as to whether I believe p, and my own personal experience is important only in so far as I am treating it as part of the evidence for the truth of p.

Perhaps lurking behind both the objections here discussed is the view which we have come across and argued against in Chapters 1 and 3, that belief is some sort of special experience, and that without this particular mood or colouring of our thoughts, we cannot be said fully to believe:

Do you believe that you will die? Yes: man is mortal; I am a man: ergo... No, that's not it - I know that you know all that. But what I am asking is this: have you ever had occasion to believe in this, to believe it definitely, not with your mind but your body, to feel that the fingers holding this very page will one day be yellow, icy -

There, of course, you don't believe - and that is why up to now you haven't jumped out of the tenth floor window to the pavement, that is why, up to now, you keep on eating, turning pages, shaving, smiling, writing - *

This passage from Zamyatin's We brilliantly captures the notion of belief as a gut reaction. We do not deny that such intensity of feeling may accompany beliefs, particularly when they involve strong emotions, but such feeling is something pathological and, to a large extent, beyond our control. As such, it is clearly not necessary to judging or believing that one will die. Intense feelings can help to produce and

* Yevgeny Zamyatin, We, transl Michael Glenny, London 1970, p 228

sustain assent, but they are not strictly necessary to it qua assent, and indeed are absent from it in the vast majority of cases. Zamyatin makes it quite clear that what he is talking about is something beyond belief itself, and that, from our point of view, is the beauty of the passage.

In conclusion, then, we can say that explicitly to judge that p is so is sufficient, but not a necessary condition of believing p. When I ask myself whether I believe that p, my answer will be my judgment on the truth or falsity of p, even though I would often need more than the moment of assent or judgment to fill out the total meaning and implication of the belief. It follows from this analysis that although we can correctly predicate beliefs of people when they are not actually thinking about them, or even in cases where they have never thought about them, we do this only on the assumption that at the time in question were they to reflect or to have reflected on it. In other words, with subjects who, like adult people, can reflect and make judgments, the dispositional sense of belief is secondary.* It is thought of in terms of assents that would be given by the person the disposition is predicated of.

The actual assent or judgment can, of course, take many forms - internally agreeing with an argument of someone else, signing a declaration, nodding one's head and so on. All that is really essential to it is that the subject should think or be aware that something is the case. We are not trying to make belief dependent on some peculiar type of interior act or feeling; our talk of 'acts of assent' and judgments can perhaps be interpreted as stressing that there is no dispositional sense of 'believe' in the first person singular of the present tense

* We obviously predicate beliefs of animals, infants, etc. in an analogous way, inferring from their behaviour what they would assent to (if they could). There seems no question of them actually reflecting, assenting, etc. c.f. above, p. 9n on beliefs of animals.

indicative.* For in saying that I believe that p, I am not saying that, in some hypothetical circumstances I would act on p, nor am I commenting on my present, past or future mental states; I am simply judging that p is the case.

Of course, belief does not consist solely in such acts; it is an attitude which persists at times other than during the performance of these acts, and can also obtain without any such act ever having occurred. What we have tried to show is that when a man reflects on a topic, the judgment - or suspension of judgment - that he makes must be taken as constituting his belief on that topic. Beliefs that are purely dispositional and beliefs that have been made explicit at times when we are not actually thinking of them, are to be thought of in terms of the judgments that would be made, were the believer to think about them. It is because our present thoughts are constitutive of our beliefs in this way, that a man cannot be wrong about his beliefs when he is currently reflecting on them.

However, the emphasis we have laid on the activity involved in forming our beliefs may leave some readers uneasy. Does this mean that we can believe what we like? This might seem to follow if belief is tied down to mental acts of reflection and judgment, as here suggested, but surely we are constrained in our beliefs. If, as we showed in Chapter 3, belief is the attitude appropriate to what is true, we should believe only what is true; what is true is something largely outside our control, and so belief would seem to be ideally outside our control as well. Are we then justified in thinking of belief as dependent on what we do, in the important way we are here proposing? These questions will be taken up in the next two chapters, where we discuss the place of freedom and rational control in our beliefs.

* This thesis is also proposed by Urmson in 'Parenthetical Verbs', loc cit., p 489

CHAPTER 6Belief and the WillIntroduction

In this chapter, we will attempt to answer the questions raised at the end of the previous chapter concerning the sense in which we might be said to be ourselves active in forming our beliefs; in particular, we must ask to what extent we can be said to be free in believing what we want to believe. It is clear that we ought to believe only what is really so, at least in so far as it lies in our power to determine this, but reflection shows that, regrettably, we do not always believe only what we have evidence for, or always even in accordance with the evidence we do have. So, it is natural to conclude that non-intellectual factors may be at work here; such, at least, was the view of Descartes, who attributed our errors to the abuse of our will in leading us to assent to judgments which went beyond what was presented to it by the infallible intellect. This view has some initial plausibility when we think of cases where emotional considerations lead people to take up and genuinely believe things they have no evidence for, but it is not a view which has received much support from modern philosophers. So in Part 1 we will discuss the criticisms levelled against Descartes by J. L. Evans, and in Part 2 see how far Descartes can be defended. Our conclusions here will lead us to give in Part 3 a general account of the influence of the will in beliefs. This means at least that we are always responsible for our explicit beliefs, even though it is not true that we can simply believe what we like. Thus we will reject the idea that a man can consciously know something, and at the same time, by willpower, believe the opposite. Belief, then, is not totally free, in the sense that we can always believe what we like, but we will argue that sometimes people do form beliefs which go against what they should believe, and that this can in a way be put down to the influence of the will. We will finally try to suggest

some of the ways in which it is possible to influence our beliefs by willed acts over a long period of time, though this is not the way that we claim that the will can be said to play a part in every judgment we make.

Part 1 - Descartes and Evans: Error and the Will*

Descartes thinks of the intellect as infallible, in essence assuming the position of St. Augustine, who wrote:

Intellectualis autem visio non fallitur. Aut enim non intelligit qui aliud opinatur quam est; aut si intelligit continuo verum est.**

Error cannot, therefore, be attributed to the intellect, which cannot see what is not there. Although really accepting, with the scholastics, that the intellect is the 'facultas apprehensiva veri', Descartes introduces his malin génie in order to assure himself of metaphysical certainty here. Could it be that, although we cannot think that what the intellect clearly and distinctly perceives as true could be false, in reality it is false?*** Assuring himself of the goodness of God, Descartes reasons that the Creator could not be a deceiver (could not be the malin génie, in other words), and so the infallibility of the intellect receives its metaphysical guarantee. But, given this, Descartes is left with a problem concerning the source of error. Unlike Spinoza, he regards error as a positive phenomenon and not simply as an absence of knowledge. But if God is good, and our intellect cannot be deceived, how does it come about that we can be in error?

The solution is stated clearly in the Fourth Meditation:**** By the understanding alone, I neither assert nor deny anything, but merely

* Note: references to Descartes will be given to the two volume edition of Haldane and Ross, Cambridge, 1959; J. L. Evans' article, 'Error and the Will' appeared in Philosophy, Vol. 38, 1963, pp 136-148

** De Genesi ad Litteram, lib 12, cap 14, no 29

*** For a discussion of the cogency of such a hypothesis, the reader is referred to Leonard G. Miller, 'Descartes, Mathematics and God', Philosophical Review, Vol. 66, 1957, pp 451-465

**** c.f. H & R, Vol. 1, pp 174-9

apprehend the ideas of things as to which I can form a judgment. Judgment, then, requires the co-operation of the will, which chooses to affirm or deny or suspend judgment on what is put before it by the intellect. I err because I judge that some state of affairs obtains when I have no adequacy of evidence. But this does not mean that God, who has given me a will whose power extends to deciding about matters which are not clearly comprehended by my finite intellect, is to be held responsible for my errors, for I have the power to restrain the will within the limits of what is clearly and distinctly perceived, and I ought so to restrain it. Error thus becomes akin to moral failure, and is indeed, a species of sin. We shall see later why Descartes has no conception of excusable error, and also consider some of the problems raised by his rigid distinction between the will and the intellect, but first his position will be defended against some of the criticisms raised by J. L. Evans.

Descartes, of course, thought that he had an infallible criterion of truth, in clear and distinct ideas, and Evans paraphrases what he takes to be Descartes' position on error by saying that Descartes held that 'if we persist in assenting to what we do not clearly understand the penalty is that we assert as true what is in fact false, and the responsibility is wholly ours.' This is in fact a slight over-simplification of Descartes' thought, because it seems to suggest that we realise we are failing to understand something clearly at the same time as we assent to it. In fact, in Principles of Philosophy, I.XLIV,** Descartes says that 'it happens but rarely that we judge of a matter at the same time as we observe that we do not apprehend it'; more often, we think that we have at one time reached an adequate understanding, when in fact we have not. Evans goes on to interpret Descartes as saying that we are always free to assent to what is unclear; this is true, only if it is realised that on

* p138

** H. & R, Vol 1, p 236

most occasions at least, we think we understand when we assent - as Descartes insists, we are taught by the light of natural reason to judge only those things we understand. In most cases of error and of making other judgments we do not have evidence for, we convince ourselves that our understanding of the matter is sufficient. Descartes thinks that adherence to his rules will enable us to see with certainty whether or not we really understand. The main burden of the Fourth Meditation is thus not a gratuitous warning against an extreme sort of voluntarism (which Evans seems to take it to be), but a demand that we never assent before applying the rules Descartes has discovered. This shift of emphasis makes rather more sense of some of what is being proposed there, as we shall see.

Evans' main line of argument against Descartes is to ask if Descartes implies that error is voluntary, and then to show the incoherence of the idea of a man deliberately being wrong. In order to establish that Descartes believed that error was deliberate, Evans writes:

Clearly, Descartes must have believed that error was avoidable since he gave us the recipes by the use of which we can avoid error. But as well as being avoidable, he apparently thought that error was also deliberate since he attributes its occurrence to the misuse of the will.*

It is not easy to see exactly how Descartes thinks of the will being operative in judgments, as we shall see, but one thing he did not think his doctrine of assent being willed implied was that error was deliberate or voluntary. This is explicitly stated in the Principles, 1.XLII**, whose title is 'How, although we do not will to err, we yet err by our will'. The text goes on:

But inasmuch as we know that all our errors depend on the will, and as no one desires to deceive himself, we may wonder that we err at all. We must, however, observe that there is a great deal of difference between willing to be deceived and willing to give one's assent to opinions in which error is sometimes found. For although there is no one who expressly desires to err, there is hardly one

* p 138

** H & R, Vol. 1, pp 235-6

who is not willing to give his assent to things in which unsuspected error is to be found. And it even frequently happens that it is the very desire for knowing the truth which causes those who are not fully aware of the order in which it should be sought for, to give judgment on things of which they have no real knowledge and thereby fall into error.

This passage has been given here in full, because in it Descartes makes a distinction that effectively takes the force from much of Evans' argument. For Descartes does not say, as Evans continually asserts he does, that error as such is wilful; what Descartes says is wilful, and for which we are therefore responsible, is the assent we give to a proposition. He seems to say, particularly in the Fourth Meditation, that assent is both avoidable and deliberate (though, as we shall see, he also thinks that some assents cannot but be given), whereas error, qua error, is avoidable but not deliberate. Evans misrepresents Descartes in making him hold that the error, as well as the assent which gives rise to it, is both avoidable and deliberate. In fact, not only does Evans misrepresent Descartes at this point; he also seems himself to be wrong when he finds it 'odd to assert that committing myself to what I do not know to be true and is in fact false is a deliberate act'.* Unfortunately people all too often deliberately commit themselves to what they could not possibly know to be true (because the propositions in question are false), either for emotional reasons, or because, as Descartes pointed out, they fondly imagine they did once have adequate grounds, which they have 'forgotten'. If such acts of committing oneself to propositions one does not have adequate evidence for are not deliberate, why do we blame and punish people for doing so? Certainly no one can assent to what he knows at the same time to be false, provided he is not being convinced by threats or arguments that he does not really think that it is false, but we often assent to what we do not know to be true; and the assent itself is deliberate.

* p 139

Evans goes on to say that 'just as it is unpractical and foolish advice to tell someone never to commit himself to what he does not know to be true, so it is unnecessary advice to tell someone to commit himself to what he clearly and distinctly perceives'.* The first part of this is extremely puzzling. It may be very wise for a mother to tell a child not to believe what strangers say, while one constantly has to be telling oneself not to believe a thing just because it is in print or argued for persuasively. Spinoza and William James may be right in thinking that the natural tendency of the human mind is towards complete credulity, and that it is only by this tendency constantly leading us into difficulties that we learn a critical sense. What Descartes is urging us to do is to exercise effectively the control over our beliefs which we can and ought to have over them. Practical experience leads one to feel that such advice is neither unpractical nor foolish.

There is more to the second part of what Evans says, that it is unnecessary to tell someone to commit himself to something he clearly and distinctly perceives. Descartes would reply that, although we must see what we clearly and distinctly perceive as true, he has raised the possibility of such clear and distinct perceptions in fact being false**, and that what he is now saying is that, having established the Cogito and the veracity of God, we have a complete metaphysical assurance that we will be right in committing ourselves to what we clearly and distinctly perceive. If this reply is not totally convincing, Descartes would have more difficulty with Evans' next sentence in which he says that the need to commit oneself to what one knows to be true does not arise. One believes it in knowing it to be true, and there can be no gap between apprehending this and assenting to it. If, as it looks, Descartes' model here is one of the will - the facultas electiva - coming in to choose

* p 139

** on how they could be false, c.f. Miller on cit, who is rightly critical of the whole programme.

to assent after the intellect - the facultas apprehensiva - has seen that something is true, it is certainly incoherent, and Evans' criticism of it is well founded. We shall have more to say about the relations between the intellect and the will in the Cartesian analysis of the judgment in summing up the strengths and weaknesses of that analysis.

Evans' next point, however, is less certain. He thinks that Descartes must hold that error is deliberate, as we have seen, and it follows from its being deliberate that when we err we must know that we are in error, or at least that what we are assenting to might be wrong. Once again, we must emphasise the distinction between the assent which I am responsible for (which is what Descartes really seems to be getting at when he speaks of assent as willed^{*}) and the state of error a bad assent or belief puts me in. Evans goes on to say that in fact we do not know that we are in error, because when we err, we think we know and that this is what constitutes the error. Psychologically, he says, knowledge and error are indistinguishable.^{**} In fact, Descartes would agree here totally. The reason why he resorts to the stratagem of the malin génie is precisely because in the past I have thought that I have known something for certain which later turns out to be false. In Principles 1.V he says one reason why we may doubt of the demonstration of mathematics is that 'those who have fallen into error in reasoning on such matters have held as perfectly certain and self-evident what we see to be false';^{***} he then immediately raises the question as to whether God, who can do what he wants, might not be deceiving us into thinking mathematical demonstration is correct - such a God, would, of course, be the malin génie of the Meditations. Whether, as Miller points out, it makes any sense to doubt that $2 + 3 = 5$, or that a triangle has three sides, is another matter.

* c.f. Fourth Meditation esp., H & R Vol.1, p 177

** p 140

*** H & R Vol.1, p 220

Also, Descartes implicitly relies on the correctness ^{of} his memory about people being mistaken, which he is not entitled to do yet, in order to establish his point. But, what we must insist on, against Evans, is that Descartes does not think that we are in any sense aware of being in error. Descartes does hold that when we apply the rules he gives us we know that we know, and that one who follows the rules strictly will never be in error, but it does not follow from this even if it is correct that anyone in error must know that he is. Many people have not heard of Descartes' rules, and those that have may not think them necessary or helpful in every case, or may be slap-dash in applying them.

Evans goes on to make a number of distinctions in which he shows that error is not to be confused with falsity (which applies to propositions, not to the people holding them), nor with ignorance, nor with supposal (which can be either true or false). He finally attempts to distinguish error from mistaken belief, on the grounds that in error we think and claim to know, whereas in mistaken belief, we merely believe the proposition in question, and are thus aware of the possibility that we might be wrong.* This is questionable; in many senses of 'believe', including that which is given as part of the definition of knowledge in terms of justified true belief, we simply accept the proposition as true without making any distinction between degrees of certainty. Questions about the degree of certainty one is justified in having by the evidence or reasons that one can produce are very much of a second order nature in everyday matters. If a philosopher showed a man that he could not be certain or actually claim to know that p was true, according to some philosophical sense of 'know' and 'be certain', the man might well retort that he still believes that p is true and that there is nothing conditional about his acceptance of p. If p turned out to be false, the man would

* p 143

surely have been in error.

Indeed, there is something strange in talking, as Evans does, about knowledge and error as states of mind. The reason for talking in this way seems to be that error and knowledge are conditions that 'someone may be in'.* But this is hardly sufficient for speaking of a state of mind. In fact, as Evans himself has pointed out, knowledge and error are psychologically indistinguishable, because in both cases a man is holding some proposition to be true. And what could 'psychologically indistinguishable' mean except 'indistinguishable as states of mind'? Strictly speaking, the state of mind is the ~~acceptance~~^{acceptance} of or assenting to the proposition; the being right or wrong about it, which are conditions of knowing it or being in error about it, depend on additional factors outside one's state of mind. Knowledge and error, then, involve states of mind, but are not wholly constituted by them. What constitutes the state of mind is the belief in the proposition concerned, and this is an automatic claim of the truth of that proposition. Whether or not we claim actually to know the proposition (which Evans takes to be a necessary condition of being in error) is irrelevant. For taking a claim to knowledge to be a strictly defined or technical concept is, as Findlay points out,** to introduce an arbitrary and conventional element, which is not necessary for a belief that the proposition in question is true. Of course, if 'claim to knowledge' is not taken in any technical sense, but simply as the equivalent of 'holding as true', Evans is right in saying that only claims to knowledge can be erroneous, but then his distinction is quite vacuous, because in all our beliefs that p, we hold p to be true. If, as Evans thinks, there is in belief that p, as opposed to a claim to know that p, something partial about our commitment to the truth of p, we are not really believing p at all, but another proposition which says that p is more or less likely.***

**Values and Intentions, p 131

* p 141

***c.f. pp 41-3 above for comments on the notion of degrees of belief.

Evans points out that Descartes' question really boils down to asking why I accept something as true when I do not know that it is true. This, as he says, becomes a specially perplexing problem for Descartes who thought he had one simple and infallible criterion of knowledge. However, although we may not believe we have one or even a group of criteria for guaranteeing us certainty, we are often able to distinguish a better method of getting at the truth of a matter from worse ones. We know that some sources are more reliable than others, we may know for example that we are more likely to get a complicated sum right if we do it on paper than if we do it mentally. But the fact remains that we often do give full credence on the basis of what we know to be inferior methods for attaining truth. If the problem is not as acute for us as it was for Descartes, it does not seem to be substantially different. What explanation can be given for assenting to that about which we are not as sure as we could be?

In his summing up of the question, Evans repeats that error is unconscious, and so cannot be deliberate or willed. We have already seen that Descartes also thinks that error is unconscious. Evans then goes on to say that there can be no element of will in the intuition of clear and distinct ideas, as in perceiving them we see their truth (at least, such is Descartes' theory). We will come back to this point, but it should be noted that Descartes does not hold that for the will to be said to be operative, it must have the sort of liberty of indifference which would enable it to choose at random either of two alternatives.

In the Fourth Meditation, he writes

In order that I should be free it is not necessary that I should be indifferent as to the choice of one or the other of two contraries; but contrariwise the more I lean to the one... the more freely do I choose and embrace it... Hence this indifference which I feel, when I am not swayed to one side rather than to the other by lack of reason, is the lowest grade of liberty, and rather evinces a lack or negation in knowledge than a perfection of will: for if I always recognised clearly what was true and good, I should never have trouble in deliberating as to what judgment or choice I should make, and then I should be entirely free without ever being indifferent.*

* H & R, Vol.1, p 175

Descartes, then, holds the characteristic rationalist view of freedom which sees the height of liberty in a self-possessed acceptance of what we realise could not be otherwise because of its nature or definition. He thinks that we act with our will when we act without being constrained by any outside force. We would say that we will to accept clear and distinct ideas not because we have the option of not accepting them, but because we ourselves perceive and accept the inner logic which makes them necessarily true. Descartes may have a strange sense of will and of freedom here, but it saves him from the strictures of logical absurdity thrown by Evans at his doctrine of a free assent to clear and distinct ideas.*

Evans goes on to criticise Descartes for telling us to restrict our assent to matters that are obviously true** or platitudes***. We don't know whether Evans considers the truths of mathematics and physics to be platitudes, but Descartes certainly thought he had the means of attaining them.****

However, if Descartes is too restrictive in what he allows us to assent to, this is not because he is wrong in telling us to ensure that we assent only when what we assent to is well-founded, but because he had too rigid a criterion of the well-founded. In fact, we do not have a single criterion of reasonable belief, and the criteria we do have are not infallible. This explains why even the best and most scrupulously attested judgments sometimes turn out to be wrong. That Descartes could find no room in his account for excusable error is certainly a defect in that account, but it arises from mistakes in his conception of the role of clear and distinct ideas and the notion that we have an infallible criterion of truth, rather than from his analysis of error.

* c.f. p 145

** p 146

*** p 147

**** c.f. e.g. Part V of Discourse on the Method, H & R, Vol.1, pp 106-118

Evans concludes his criticisms of Descartes by reiterating that to say that error is (sometimes at least) unavoidable is not the same as saying it is deliberate. But, of course, Descartes never made this fundamental mistake. Evans concludes by asserting that error is intrinsically neither unavoidable nor avoidable; it is just something that happens to one like falling downstairs.* Curiously enough, Bernard Mayo in his attack on Descartes' view of belief uses the same metaphor.** But is belief like falling downstairs? Do we not have some control over our explicit beliefs? Common sense would seem to support Descartes here; we should make ourselves responsible for our explicit beliefs, and up to a point, error is avoidable, even if not qua error deliberate. We do not excuse people for giving false testimony even if they are sincerely on the grounds that they did not want to be wrong.

Part 2 - Descartes on Error: Assessment

We are now in a position to make a balanced assessment of Descartes' views on error and on the role of the will in judgment. If we are to argue that his approach to these questions is basically sound, we must first indicate where his theories of human psychology and clear and distinct ideas lead him astray in the exposition of this approach.

Descartes' basic distinction between the will and the intellect, so that the intellect is completely passive and the will responsible for actually making judgments leads him to speak of the will as a mode of thinking.***. But this is a curious way to speak of a faculty which is in itself blind, and which has to be guided by the intellect before it can apprehend anything. It is difficult to see the precise role of the will in the act of assenting to clear and distinct ideas, which are all, in Descartes' view, that we ought to assent to. Although the role of the

* pp 147-8

** 'Belief and Constraint', loc cit, p 152

*** Principles, l.XXXII, H & R, Vol.1, p 232

will is more often emphasised as being one which enables us to refuse assent to anything not perceived as certain, Descartes insists that the will is essential for making any judgment.*

However, there is a certain ambiguity here, as if at times Descartes thought that no positive act of will was in fact necessary after we had perceived something as clear and distinct. We have already seen that he thinks of true liberty as consisting in submission to the demands of the intellect, which would seem to imply that we make no positive act of will when we perceive that something is certain. Further, in Principles 1.VI and 1.XXIX** he sees our power of suspending judgment extending only to notions which are not indubitable or perfectly certain. In the Sixth Set of Replies***, Descartes writes that 'nothing whatsoever can be clearly and distinctly perceived... that is not perceived to be such as it is, i.e. which is not true.', while in the Fourth Meditation, he writes of the Cogito that he 'could not prevent (himself) from believing that a thing (he) so clearly perceived was true'.**** In the Second Set of Replies****, Descartes explains that we can doubt the Cogito only by believing it to be true because to doubt it we have to think of it, and we cannot think of it without seeing it is true, which is equivalent to saying that we can never doubt it. With the Cogito and 'other similar truths' there would seem to be no distinction between apprehension and assent, no possibility for the will to do anything but assent. Here the will is constrained to assent, which would seem to be the same as saying that it plays no role at all in the act of assent once the intellect has seen the self-evidence of the Cogito.

Does this lack of activity of the will extend to our assents to mathematical truths and to other clear and distinct ideas, as well as to

* c.f. Principles, 1.XXXIV, H & R, Vol.1, p 233

** H & R, Vol. 1, pp 221 and 235

*** to the Seventh Objection, H & R, Vol.2, p 267

**** H & R, Vol. 1, p 176

***** H & R, Vol.2, p 42

as well as to the fundamentally self-verifying ideas of the Cogito and the existence of God? Although Descartes thinks that we are naturally carried to believe any clear and distinct idea, he thinks too that it is possible to doubt, for example, that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, unless we know that the criterion of clear and distinct ideas is itself metaphysically assured.* He thinks, of course, that he had succeeded in effecting just such a doubt by the device of the malin génie. We probably feel that the truths of mathematics are just as (if not more) 'self-evident' than the Cogito or the existence of God, and that Descartes should not have located a possibility of refusing assent in the one case, where he found no such possibility in the other. Perhaps the most that can be said in his defence here is that a faulty methodology led him postulate a gap between apprehension and assent where none exists in fact or could exist in theory, and where he himself thinks that we are so disposed by nature that on apprehending we cannot possibly fail to assent.** He should have seen how unnatural was the device which suggested we could doubt what we clearly perceive to be true, and which would in such a case have the will at first suspend judgment and later give assent.

The other major defect in Descartes account of the function of the will in belief and error also arises from his account of the nature of clear and distinct ideas. Because he felt that his criterion of knowledge was both infallible and universal, he could give no account of excusable error. With Descartes, there could, in speculative matters, be no mid-point between certainty and ignorance, no concept of the probable, nor could we ever be excused for being wrong. This mistake is also due to his belief in his criterion, rather than to his account of error being an affair of the will; we are prepared to speak of error being avoidable

* c.f. Replies II, H & R, Vol.2, p 39

** Principles, I.XLVIII, H & R, Vol.1, p 236

and, in a sense, culpable when the person who errs has not used the best criterion open to him for attaining truth.

Once it realised that Descartes is not saying that we have liberty of indifference when we are faced with what the intellect sees as certain and that the defects in his account of error arise principally from his misguided methodology it is possible to come to a more positive assessment of what he says about the place of the will in belief. What he is driving at is that we are responsible for our acts of assent in the sense that the criterion and evidence on which we judge is adopted by us, either actively or by default. On his account, what we have to do is to assent only when we are sure we have a clear and distinct idea; where the will really comes in is in restraining ourselves from making a cognitive decision until we are certain of the matter (or, we would say, reasonably assured).

Descartes does not say that we are free to believe what we see as false. What he does say is that we will (i.e. are responsible for) the explicit acts of assent we make. We are responsible for them because we accept the reasons on which the beliefs are based. We may if they are adequate and convincing have no choice but to accept them and to assent. This Descartes does not deny; as we have seen, he thinks this is the height of freedom.

How in particular does Descartes think that we are induced to go beyond what we clearly and intellectually grasp in our judgments, how, in other words, do we misuse the will? In the Discourse on the Method, he speaks of avoiding precipitation and prejudice in judgments. Etienne Gilson in his well-known commentary on the Discourse explains what Descartes means by these terms. Precipitation arises from excessive confidence in the resources of our mind, the fear of effort which makes

* H & R, Vol. 1, p 92

** Paris, 1930, pp 198-9

us prefer to guess about difficult matters at random than to restrain one's judgment to the truth of simple matters, human respect which makes us rather judge at random than admit ignorance and excessive haste leading us to examine questions which have not been well put. Prejudice arises first from what we have been brought up to believe and the impossibility of forgetting these ideas, together with the difficulty of thinking without recourse to the imagination and the necessity of using words and of judging them rather than ideas. If some of these failings are not positively willed, it is not stretching language too much to say that it is often weakness of will which allows them to go unchecked and undetected. It is because we are unwilling to practice the intellectual virtues of circumspection (not assenting where we do not understand) and methodic doubt that we fall into the errors for which we may be blamed - that is, because for some reason or other, we do not use the best available method of reaching the truth. Thus in Replies V*, Descartes writes:

When you judge that the mind is a certain attenuated body, you are indeed able to understand that the mind is itself, i.e. a thinking thing, and likewise that an attenuated body is an extended thing; but assuredly you do not understand that the thing which thinks and the extended thing are one and the same thing, you only wish to believe it because you have already believed it and do not willingly change your mind. Thus when you judge that an apple which has been poisoned will suit you as food, you indeed understand that its odour, colour, and similar qualities are pleasant, but not that the apple is therefore good for you as food; it is because you wish to believe it that you pass that judgement.

We have here examples of prejudice and precipitation respectively. The person making the mistake does not know that he is wrong, and so he cannot wish to err. But in both cases, his judgment is taken to exceed the evidence (or what he understands). For making these judgments, he is responsible, and, as they are bad judgments here, culpable too. This is why Descartes says that he wishes to believe these errors. By

* H & R, Vol. 2, p 224

the word 'wish', Descartes implies that the man has decided that the judgments in question are acceptable. It is not that the will has a voluntaristic effect over our assents (though there may be such an effect as well, as we shall see below), but that in making any judgment, right or wrong, we decide to accept or reject a proposition on the basis of some particular evidence and criterion. As with other types of action, our reasons for assenting may be good or bad. Descartes has tried to make us aware of the factors which lead us to assent and to show us the control we could and should have over those factors.

Part 5 - Assent as Something for which We are Responsible

The conclusion from this examination of Descartes' views on error and the place of the will in judgments is that when I explicitly advert to a belief, in the manner described in the previous chapter, in making my decision on that belief, I use certain criteria and methods, the responsibility for which I must be prepared to take. This is not to deny that sometimes this responsibility may be excused on the grounds that I was socially or psychologically conditioned to accept a proposition as true, and to take as acceptable certain ways of reaching a cognitive decision. Nevertheless, as we showed in Chapter 3, belief is a public concept only because there is a basic common understanding of what counts as true, and hence of which ways of reaching the truth are justifiable. The concept of belief could not be grounded on a totally perverse set of beliefs or of rules for believing, nor on beliefs and methods which were accepted only in certain social contexts and not in others or the concept of belief would itself be specific to particular societies and times. Clearly, many beliefs, including many of the most basic ones, transcend particular conditions, and on the basis of these we derive universally acceptable criteria of truth.

However, it cannot be denied that a large number of beliefs which play important parts in people's lives can be analysed in terms of social and psychological conditioning, so that it looks as if the believers in

fact exercise little rational control over them. But once we realise this, we should become Cartesians, rigourously enquiring into our reasons and motives for beliefs in areas we have cause to suspect are affected by such conditioning. Far from destroying the sense of responsibility we should have for what we believe, sociology and psychology enable us to see the non-rational factors which influence our beliefs, and then - and not before - we can do something about them. These sciences make us more rather than less responsible for what we believe, for once the irrationality of holding a certain belief is pointed out, we can no longer hold it and remain rational without finding some better reason.

In insisting that the responsibility for a belief is ultimately that of the believer, even if sometimes his responsibility is limited by other conditions he could not control, we do not mean that a man can necessarily believe what he likes, or even necessarily what, for some extraneous reason, he thinks he ought to believe. This would seem to be partly a consequence of the logical connection of belief with the public sense of what is true; in believing a proposition, a man is implicitly putting it with propositions other rational beings will find credible. And of course, because of the transparent nature of his own current thoughts, a man cannot believe something which at the same time he knows or thinks to be untrue. Thus, there is in belief no self-deception akin to lying or deception of others. A man deceives someone else when he makes that other person take as true what he himself thinks is false. A condition of possibility of success here is that the deceived should not realise that the deceiver does not believe what he is saying, but when deceived and deceiver are the same person, this condition obviously cannot be fulfilled. Self deception of this type is as paradoxical as deliberately erring or intentionally and consciously forgetting.

So, however much a man may want to believe p, if p does not seem to him to be true he will not there and then be able to believe p. He might come to believe p by searching out new evidence, or by changing the criteria he considers relevant to the truth of p, or even by bringing p about, but once he has done one of these things, p will seem true to him, and so he will now automatically believe p. For a man to say 'I would like to believe p' is, at the time of utterance, a profession of scepticism, as it implies that, whatever else he might do later, at that time, he does not believe p. When we read of Mahler, for example, that he struggled hard for religious faith, without being able to give a definite 'Yes' or a definite 'No', or even to put the question aside, we must recognise that a wish to believe and to be relieved from the irritation of doubt, is not in itself enough to bring about the desired result.

People who are mentally ill may be able to satisfy some deep need of the psyche by 'forgetting' what they really know perfectly well. A mythological example of this is Siegfried's forgetting of his betrothal to Brunnhilde, after having been given the magic potion, (the drinking of magic potions in myth frequently standing for the effects of underlying purposes of the unconscious). In his conscious self, Siegfried really does not remember Brunnhilde; there is a complete block here between his present and his past. But it would be hard to argue that examples, real or legendary, of such schizoid amnesia were cases of believing because we want. Apart from the fact that they are achieved only at the expense of the disintegration of the personality, so that at different times the subject is in two states which are unrelated to each other, we could not be said to will to forget what we forget in schizophrenic moments. Even if on an unconscious level some psychic purpose is being served, we do not will this purpose, in any ordinary

So, however much a man may want to believe p, if p does not seem to him to be true he will not there and then be able to believe p. He might come to believe p by searching out new evidence, or by changing the criteria he considers relevant to the truth of p, or even by bringing p about, but once he has done one of these things, p will seem true to him, and so he will now automatically believe p. For a man to say 'I would like to believe p' is, at the time of utterance, a profession of scepticism, as it implies that, whatever else he might do later, at that time, he does not believe p. When we read of Kahlner, for example, that he struggled hard for religious faith, without being able to give a definite 'Yes' or a definite 'No', or even to put the question aside, we must recognise that a wish to believe and to be relieved from the irritation of doubt, is not in itself enough to bring about the desired result.

People who are mentally ill may be able to satisfy some deep need of the psyche by 'forgetting' what they really know perfectly well. A mythological example of this is Siegfried's forgetting of his betrothal to Brünnhilde, after having been given the magic potion, (the drinking of magic potions in myth frequently standing for the effects of underlying purposes of the unconscious). In his conscious self, Siegfried really does not remember Brünnhilde; there is a complete block here between his present and his past. But it would be hard to argue that examples, real or legendary, of such schizoid amnesia were cases of believing because we want. Apart from the fact that they are achieved only at the expense of the disintegration of the personality, so that at different times the subject is in two states which are unrelated to each other, we could not be said to will to forget what we forget in schizophrenic moments. Even if on an unconscious level some psychic purpose is being served, we do not will this purpose, in any ordinary

sense of 'will', because it is of its essence that on a conscious level we should be unaware of it.

But we should not conclude that because a certain model of the way the will operates in belief is incoherent, the will has no role in our forming of our beliefs. The example of the man wishing to believe something he knows to be false, as well as that of schizoid amnesia if it is thought of as a state consciously sought and achieved, both picture a man who does not believe something at first, but who then, by an act of will manages to believe what he clearly sees to be false. Against this view, it will be objected that once I have understood the question, I cannot believe, for example, that $2 + 2 = 5$, however much I want to, and however strongly I will to. Neither does it seem possible for me to believe that I am rich or powerful or living in the nineteenth century just because I would like to believe these things; the contrary is too often forced on my attention and I see that they are false all too clearly. Stuart Hampshire* concludes that because we are not free to control assent as we please, it is wrong to speak of it as an act of will. He examines locutions like 'I want to believe what you are telling me, but I cannot' and 'I am determined to believe whatever he tells me', concluding that they are 'virtually professions of scepticism'. His reasoning here is that there is no sense in which I decide to decide that a statement is true. While what he says about the first of the locutions (that it is a profession of scepticism) would seem to be correct, it is not at all clear that the second is a profession of scepticism, virtually or otherwise. Occasions can be envisaged where one is convinced of someone's veracity, and so determines to believe whatever he says, despite its possible prima facie implausibility. If this is true, Hampshire's reason falls too, for deciding to decide that the man's statements are

* Thought and Action, London, 1959, pp 155-8

true is precisely what I am doing. (Presumably anyone who makes an open commitment to someone else's authority, religious or secular, does just this).

The reason why 'I want to believe what you are telling me, but I cannot' is a profession of disbelief is because I have already assented to the opposite or at least concluded that the evidence is inadequate either way. I have already seen that the opposite to what you are telling me is or equally well could be the case, and this precisely is to assent; so once this has been done, there can be no new free assent after this, so long as I do not change my mind. Similarly, why I cannot assent to $2 + 2 = 5$ is because I see immediately that $2 + 2 = 4$ is true (i.e. assent to it). Here there may be no distinction between understanding and assenting, but it is not inconceivable that someone else might assent to $2 + 2 = 5$. We might say that he has misunderstood the question, but we cannot say that - however wrongly - he does not think that $2 + 2 = 5$ is true. The reason why I cannot assent to $2 + 2 = 5$ or the statement that I am rich and so on is not because I am forced to believe that these things are false and have no chance of thinking them true, but because I see immediately that they are false, and thus I assent to their being false, probably without noticing any distinction between understanding the question and giving judgment on it. It probably seems to me that I have no control over these beliefs, because I seem to have no choice with regard to them.

But to return to the person for example, a child who thinks $2 + 2 = 5$, we might manage to show him that he is wrong (i.e. to get him to change his belief); in doing this, we help him to exercise a more rational control over his beliefs, so that he no longer simply puts down a larger number where he sees a plus sign, but works it out accurately. Eventually, for him too, simple addition sums will require no working out, and he will

simply see the correct answer immediately, but this will be because he is regulating correctly the evidence and methods on which he bases his beliefs, not because he has no control here at all.

In fact, it is at the point of applying the rules for coming to cognitive decisions that we do have control over what we believe, and where the will may be said to be operative. Once the rules are applied, we often assent as soon as we understand the question; in any case, usually there is no freedom of choice at this point. Of course, where both the criteria and subject matter of the belief come under the general category of common sense, we normally decide what to believe according to common sense without taking any thought over it, but even here it is possible to judge according to completely wayward criteria. In the Cairo madhouse scene in Ibsen's Peer Gynt, we meet a man whose misfortune it is to be mistaken for blotting paper when he is in fact a pen. It is not easy to see what criterion could lead a man to think of himself as a pen, but of course, we are dealing with a madman. One of the ways insanity manifests itself is presumably in the tenacious holding of erratic beliefs, which cannot be justified on any normal criterion of truth. We have argued in Chapter 3 that without a normal or common sense criterion of truth, there would be no concept of belief, so in a sense we are not free to choose whether or not to believe according to this criterion; hence segregation for those who are unable to accept it.

When we move away from matters of accepted common sense and ordinary factual beliefs to matters on which people feel strongly (for example, politics or sport) we find that the criteria on which judgments are based are frequently of an individualistic nature, if not actually irrational and unjustifiable. So much is this the case sometimes that in addition to saying that belief is under the control of the will as far as the criteria used are chosen by, or at least the responsibility of the

believer, we seem to be forced to say that people are believing what they want to believe and because they want to. It might be difficult to find any other reason for the belief of the rugger player that all demonstrators are communists agitators, or that of the demonstrator that everyone who opposes his views is a fascist. In these cases, the criterion on which the belief is based is very largely one of prejudice, and better criteria are available, which the people in the examples ignore. Why do they not choose the better criteria? It is simply that they decide to use the ones which they want (i.e. which satisfy their prejudices or emotions). As we have seen, it is only marginally possible to want to take up different criteria for ~~believe~~^{beliefs} in ordinary factual matters, but in other matters the possibility of freedom here* is quite wide. Of course, people probably would not say that they use less good criteria for their judgments or that they choose them irrationally or even because they wanted them; what we have been trying to show is that, for ~~whatever~~^{whatever} reason, good or bad, intellectual or voluntaristic, they choose them or at least are responsible for them, and the more they become aware of this, the more rational their beliefs can become. In the sense that we ourselves are responsible for the rules and criteria according to which we assent, assent itself can be spoken of as involving the will. In so far as a belief can be shown, as a result of prejudice or emotion, to go against or beyond the evidence which is available, we can see what Descartes means when he says that more is contained in the judgment than is presented to the intellect, and why he attributes this to the will. We have tried to show that the will is operative in all assents, including good ones, in the sense that we adopt the criteria on which we assent. We are not arguing for total freedom even here; one criterion (e.g. science) might seem better than another (superstition), even though the

* Descartes' liberty of indifference.

latter might serve our ends better. Then it might seem that we have no option except to choose science, but in so far as we see the reasons for science, the decision can still be attributed to us, as Descartes himself showed. Further, if, in renouncing superstition, we had to throw over a number of past beliefs and attitudes, we would realise just how personal an act this decision was.

Acceptance of a framework in which we believe may be as methodical and excogitated as the scholastic interpretation of Augustine's Credo ut intellegam according to which no proposition of natural philosophy could be allowed to contradict any theological truth, or it may be random and haphazard as when a mother believes those propositions about her children which fit in with her feelings, or it may be a matter of taking up a dogmatic political attitude and believing only what will fit in with it, or it could be a cool and rational decision to root out all that is not clear and distinct, or it might be what we all do almost imperceptibly in accepting to a greater or less extent the decrees of common sense. Perhaps we have suggested that taking up a framework is more explicit and conscious than it often is, and that there is more freedom of choice here than people in fact experience, and that the distinction between a belief and its framework is too clear cut and schematic. Nonetheless, in arriving at any belief, I implicitly make use of, and thereby accept, some method of getting at the truth. To become conscious of just what method is being used is what Descartes proposes. Although it is not impossible that common sense might be modified in certain respects, because belief is only possible at all given its basic criteria and assumptions, we will not find that we have any option but to accept it in general, but on other matters, such as taking up a theory of history, there may well be some room for an exercise of choice regarding methods of investigation. It might not be stretching language too much to follow Descartes in speaking

of such decisions, and even of the beliefs which arise from them, as willed.

Before closing this chapter we must refer to two ways in which the will might be said to operate where we have previously suggested it had no place; that is, after we have seen that something is true (assented to it), to believe the opposite. As both the methods seem to require long term 'brainwashing', even though it is self-induced, they do not really contradict our thesis that to see something as true is simply to believe it, as the person involved will never at the same time see that something is true and fail to believe it. In fact, the first method, at least, fits in with what we have said about selecting frameworks within which we believe, as it involves concentrating only on what favours our side. The methods are mentioned by H. H. Price in 'Belief and Will'.* The first method proposed by which I might control my assent is by deliberately and systematically directing my attention to what favours my interest. By inflating the importance of favourable evidence, I may be able to convince myself that contrary evidence is of less value. Even though it might be difficult to put one's finger on a particular deliberate act of will, as the process is a gradual one, the process itself may be called deliberate, particularly if it moves in the direction of some admitted bias.

Price's second method of deliberately influencing a belief is, he claims, even more powerful than the first. Certainly it is more clearly deliberate. It is to fix the mind on the proposition we want to be convinced of and 'to imagine in as much detail as possible the kind of situation there would be if the proposition were true'.** This new realisation of what the belief means is supplemented with acting as if the belief were true, and it is quite possible that the result will be

* SPAS, Vol. 28, 1954, pp 1-26

** p 19

a belief that is firm enough to stand independent of evidence. Price points out that states of belief are produced involuntarily by manipulation of such methods by advertisers, politicians and so on, so there seems to be no reason why we should not be able to produce such states ourselves. Experience would suggest that sometimes we can. The author of the Imitation of Christ, for example, recommends people who doubt of their salvation to act as if they were saved in order to overcome their doubts. Hampshire says that it is logically absurd to prohibit the holding of certain beliefs by law.* The reason for this would seem to be not, as he suggests, that we may not be able to bring ourselves eventually to believe what we want, but that it is impossible that one can legislate that people want something - though of course, even here wants can be subtly induced.

If Price is right, then, there may be a sense in which we can believe what we want. One could add that in emotional states, people may 'see' or 'understand' things they normally doubt, and that they can deliberately induce such states to re-inforce their belief. But in these cases, there is willing additional to and distinct from the willing we find in all cases of explicit belief. We hope that it is by now sufficiently clear that this willing does not consist in some act after I have seen that something is the case, but that in seeing - rightly or wrongly - that something is the case, I implicitly accept some way of attaining truth; and that even if this method is, as Descartes thought of his method, self-verifying, I can still be said to will to use it, at least in distinction to other less good methods I might have used and in so far as I myself decide that it is the best method.

* op cit, p 195

a belief that is firm enough to stand independent of evidence. Price points out that states of belief are produced involuntarily by manipulation of such methods by advertisers, politicians and so on, so there seems to be no reason why we should not be able to produce such states ourselves. Experience would suggest that sometimes we can. The author of the Imitation of Christ, for example, recommends people who doubt of their salvation to act as if they were saved in order to overcome their doubts. Hampshire says that it is logically absurd to prohibit the holding of certain beliefs by law.* The reason for this would seem to be not, as he suggests, that we may not be able to bring ourselves eventually to believe what we want, but that it is impossible that one can legislate that people want something - though of course, even here wants can be subtly induced.

If Price is right, then, there may be a sense in which we can believe what we want. One could add that in emotional states, people may 'see' or 'understand' things they normally doubt, and that they can deliberately induce such states to re-inforce their belief. But in these cases, there is willing additional to and distinct from the willing we find in all cases of explicit belief. We hope that it is by now sufficiently clear that this willing does not consist in some act after I have seen that something is the case, but that in seeing - rightly or wrongly - that something is the case, I implicitly accept some way of attaining truth; and that even if this method is, as Descartes thought of his method, self-verifying, I can still be said to will to use it, at least in distinction to other less good methods I might have used and in so far as I myself decide that it is the best method.

* op cit, p 155

CHAPTER 7Individual Beliefs and Systems of BeliefIntroduction

In this chapter we will continue our discussion of the contexts into which our individual beliefs fit, and within which they make sense. We will consider how far the adoption of such a framework can be seen as the result of decisions taken either by individuals or by the communities to which they belong. We will attempt to show how the limits of what is believable or acceptable may be determined as the result of having such frameworks. What we say here will tie in with our insistence in Chapter 3 that the concept of belief requires for its intelligibility a common standard of cognitive acceptability. It will also tie in with the stress in Chapter 4, Part 1, on the importance of understanding the context of individual beliefs in order to grasp their true import. In order to show how the beliefs of an individual must themselves, if they are to be rational, begin to form a system, we shall make use of ideas proposed in Chapter 5 about the awareness an individual has of his beliefs. This chapter will therefore sum up much of what has gone before. In the first two sections we will emphasise the constraints imposed on what a man may believe by the drive towards logical consistency in his own beliefs, on the one hand, and by the social understanding of what it is possible for a reasonable man to believe on the other. In the third part, we will consider how it may be possible for the beliefs of a community to shape the evidence on the basis of which it is able to verify the same beliefs. We will, however, stress throughout that to say that belief is socially determined in various ways does not mean that we should not or cannot criticise society's standards of belief, and suggest new ones. Belief may then remain both rational and free, in the sense proposed in Chapter 6.

Part 1 - The Need for Logical Consistency in Belief

Cardinal Newman remarks in the preface to his Idea of a University that there are many people who 'have no difficulty in contradicting themselves in successive sentences without being aware of it'. Of such people, is it true to say that they believe p and not-p at the same time? However unpalatable it may be to philosophers, the state of affairs envisaged by Newman is not uncommon, particularly when the contradiction is only implicit, in the sense that the juxtaposition of p and not-p arises only after we have drawn some logical consequences from a man's explicit beliefs. We should not say that a man is irrational (as opposed to obtuse) for holding on to two beliefs which are implicitly contradictory so long as he is unaware of the contradiction. Even less is there anything irrational in holding together two beliefs which are only contradictory given some piece of factual information not currently available to the subject. This latter is the category into which the examples of referential opacity fall: Tom is irrational in believing that Cicero denounced Catiline while at the same time denying that Tully denounced Catiline only if he knows that Cicero and Tully are the same person.

If, however, we find that a man at one time sincerely assents to p and then later assents to not-p, either by implication or in the same words, does the later belief automatically rule out the earlier? Or might we find ourselves accepting a conjunction of this type:

(1) w sincerely denies '...' w believes that...

with one and the same sentence in both blanks (regarded as objectionable by Quine)?* Although we have argued in Chapter 5 that a man's explicit sincere assents must be regarded as the last word on his beliefs, we have also stressed in Chapter 4 that we should not

* The Ways of Paradox, p 185

assume a man accepts any of the logical consequences of his beliefs. In other words (1) does not necessarily describe our situation, which is rather:

(2) w believes not-p. w believes p

Obviously this is an unsatisfactory state of affairs, but it is not as bad as (1), because an assent to not-p is not the same as a denial of or disbelief in p.* In other words, even if we rule out (1) as internally inconsistent, in view of the primacy we have given to a man's current thoughts in determining what he believes, so that if he says he does not believe p (i.e. either denies p or is agnostic about p), we cannot say consistently that he believes p, we are not thereby committed to ruling out schemata such as (2).

Indeed, (2)-type schemata are sometimes true (and a *fortiori* consistent), when we put a person's explicit beliefs side by side, or make one or two simple logical moves on two of his explicit beliefs. In such cases, it is in showing the person concerned that (2) is true of his beliefs that we get him to move to a more rational set of beliefs. To rule out (2) as internally inconsistent would seem to imply that a man could not (as opposed to should not) have contradictory beliefs.

It is therefore possible for a man to have beliefs which are contradictory, and even to hold on to them tenaciously after the fact has been pointed out to him (perhaps in the hope that the contradiction will eventually be resolved); but, as pointed out in Chapter 3, the concept of belief demands for its intelligible application that there exist common standards of appropriateness which link belief with what is believed. Later in this chapter we will consider what implications this has for the content of what is believed. But as far as the logical relationship of

* Israel Scheffler has a similar argument to the effect that denial or disbelief of p is not the same as non-belief of p. Thus to assent to p and not-p is not equivalent to believing and not-believing p. (c.f. The Anatomy of Inquiry, London, 1964, p 97n)

beliefs is concerned, common standards of appropriateness demand at the very least, as a purely formal requirement, that a man's beliefs should be consistent with each other. Otherwise, if a man could hold contradictory beliefs, without this itself being a ground for criticism of his beliefs, communication between believers would be impossible, for no one would ever have to renounce a belief that p just because not- p turned out to be the case. He could believe p and not- p . This would of course have fatal results for communication, because if a man were allowed to believe p and not- p without this being a ground for complaint, there would be nothing he could be barred from believing on grounds of consistency as any proposition whatever is derivable from the conjunction of p and not- p . Moreover, we would never be justified in inferring that just because a man believed p he did not believe not- p as well.

Findlay in Values and Intentions characterises the logical requirement that beliefs should be taken to exclude whatever contradicts them explicitly or implicitly as the essential 'openness' of beliefs, which he describes as 'unconditioned':

To take something to be real or true, in contexts where these words express unqualified belief... does mean being ready to consider what is asserted in the light of countless possible circumstances, however alien, that could possibly bear upon it, it does in short mean being ready to fit it into a context capable of indefinite expansion and in every possible direction... An essential omnidirectional openness may therefore... rightly be affirmed of belief.*

He qualifies this by saying that he does not wish to imply that in making an assertion of belief, a man includes in the content or meaning of that assertion all the infinite possible circumstances that might at some remote remove bear on his belief. Obviously a man will often be quite unaware of precisely what he is committing himself in his beliefs. His commitment is then unconditioned or indefinite, looking forward to whatever will tend to corroborate the belief and expecting

* pp 98-9

the absence of whatever will refute it, even though the believer himself is unaware of what form possible corroborations and refutations might take, and perhaps fails to recognise them when he actually encounters them.

Findlay goes on to speak of the way this openness grows into a single picture of reality:

The unconditional character of believing means, further, not merely that we are ready for an indefinite contextual extension of what we have in mind, but also that this contextual extension must be unique and embracing, that it brooks no parallel infinite alongside of itself... If our thought and experience roved to and fro between two systematic contexts, neither of which was in any way continuous with the other, we could not be said to believe in the contexts of either context, except perhaps in some loose and derived sense. Only if both were somehow co-ordinated in a single picture... or if the one were definitely subordinated to the other, being thought of as a dream or fiction or purpose of beings placed in the other, could the notion of belief have significant application.*

We could add that it is not possible to have two contexts of belief without self-contradiction. Either the contexts do not clash, in which case, there is really only one; or they do clash, in which case we have an inconsistent set of beliefs, the undesirability of which has already been indicated.

What for Findlay distinguishes our serious beliefs from fictions and imaginings is the expectation that serious beliefs will be corroborated by compulsive experience - experience which will impinge on us in some way, whether we like it or not. It is certainly debatable whether every belief is like this; many beliefs are tenaciously clung to despite being refuted by compulsive experience, however this notion is worked out in detail**. However, it is clear that such wayward beliefs are possible only given a foundation of beliefs which, to use Findlay's idiom, are corroborated by compulsive experience, as an understanding of truth clearly owes much to such experience.

Findlay in fact goes on to say that it is only when we have a

* pp 100-1

** Objection due to Griffiths, loc cit. p 136

relatively systematic and coherent picture of or feeling for compulsive experience that explicit belief in individual circumstances is possible. This picture has to loom massively and inevitably in the background, rather than being consciously believed, or there will need to be yet another background for it.* Findlay is probably correct in thinking that without some underlying feeling for reality, it would not be possible to distinguish what we believe from what we merely imagine, though whether he is right in thinking that this grasp of reality is itself the foundation of belief in the way he suggests is another matter. In so far as it seems to be something purely personal, it would seem to suffer from some of the drawbacks we found associated in Chapter 1 with theories which identified belief through private feelings. Certainly, it is not clear that everybody's sense of reality is the same, as we obviously modify and adapt our individual pictures in the light of public criticism and scientific discovery.

We have tried to base the beliefs of individuals not on their personal feeling for reality, but on their grasp of public criteria of cognitive acceptability. What is important in Findlay's account for our present purpose is the suggestion that belief, because of the open nature of the commitment a believer has to future and further corroborations of his beliefs, has of its very nature a tendency to build up a logically coherent and single picture of reality. These two notions come together at this point, when we consider that the public grasp of truth, from which we first learn what it is to believe, is itself a system, or as Wittgenstein puts it, a totality of judgments. In the same place he says:

When we first begin to believe anything, what we believe is not a single proposition, it is a whole system of propositions. (Light gradually dawns over the whole).**

* Findlay, *op cit.*, pp 104-5

** *On Certainty*, edited by G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, translated by Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford, 1959, p 21.

The need, as it were, of individual beliefs to achieve logical consistency is answered by the fact that they can be seen as already members of a system of beliefs, and that they derive their intelligibility from the way of looking at things of which they are a part. Wittgenstein goes on:

It is not single axioms that strike me as obvious, it is a system in which consequences and premises give one another mutual support.*

From the point of view of the person learning to believe, it is possible to look at what is happening as a response to the need to develop consistency among his beliefs: Wittgenstein writes of the child learning to believe a host of things, and

Bit by bit there forms a system of what is believed, and in that system some things stand unshakably fast and some are more or less liable to shift. What stands fast does so, not because it is intrinsically obvious or convincing; it is rather held fast by what lies around it.*

But, as we stressed in Chapter 3, there is a sense in which the system within which one learns to believe is itself autonomous in that its logical development is to some extent independent of what those who work within it may think, while the system itself is at any given time something prior to the mental states of belief of the individuals concerned, as it determines in the first instance just what is believable for those individuals. We will now look, in Part 2, at just how a system of belief determines the limits of the believable.

Part 2 - Contexts and Credibility

In this section, we will examine the notion of a system of beliefs as it is exemplified in common sense and in examples taken from the history of science. The examples from the history of science are of interest because as concerning highly developed and well-articulated systems of belief, they show fairly clearly how what is credible may be determined by the framework in which one is working. This is in contrast

* On Certainty, p 21

to what we showed in Chapter 4, Part 2, about the belief context determining the meaning of one's beliefs. What will become apparent here, particularly from the scientific examples is that the more highly developed one's system is, the less freedom one has to decide what one will believe without being inconsistent. Negatively, this may be seen as a limitation on the freedom of belief, though, of course, what has been discovered in science has emerged only through the limitation and direction the contemporary scientific context has imposed on the speculations of individual scientists.

We are basing what follows about history of science largely on examples and interpretations put forward by Thomas S. Kuhn in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. What is important for us is the way in which Kuhn shows that the adoptions of a well-articulated and consistent set of beliefs defines and thereby limits what a man might believe while remaining within the system, even though beliefs which are excluded by the system of one period may, from the point of view of later history, be better than some of those demanded by the system. This does not mean that we have to accept that scientific revolution and paradigm change are as clear cut or as dramatic as Kuhn suggests*, nor, more importantly that we agree with Kuhn's tendency to think that we are forced to substitute a psychology of the scientific community for a logic of scientific methods and research. This aspect of Kuhn's thesis has been well criticised by Imre Lakatos in 'Criticism and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes',** we will in fact insist throughout this section that the postulation of a belief 'system' or scientific paradigm does not necessarily lead to relativistic conclusions about the possibility of knowledge or of rational discussion. In so doing, we will criticise

* c.f. S. Toulmin, 'Conceptual Revolutions in Science, Synthese, Vol.17, 1967, pp 75-90

** PAS, Vol. 69, 1968-9, pp 149-186

to what we showed in Chapter 4, Part 2, about the belief context determining the meaning of one's beliefs. What will become apparent here, particularly from the scientific examples is that the more highly developed one's system is, the less freedom one has to decide what one will believe without being inconsistent. Negatively, this may be seen as a limitation on the freedom of belief, though, of course, what has been discovered in science has emerged only through the limitation and direction the contemporary scientific context has imposed on the speculations of individual scientists.

We are basing what follows about history of science largely on examples and interpretations put forward by Thomas S. Kuhn in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. What is important for us is the way in which Kuhn shows that the adoptions of a well-articulated and consistent set of beliefs defines and thereby limits what a man might believe while remaining within the system, even though beliefs which are excluded by the system of one period may, from the point of view of later history, be better than some of those demanded by the system. This does not mean that we have to accept that scientific revolution and paradigm change are as clear cut or as dramatic as Kuhn suggests*, nor, more importantly that we agree with Kuhn's tendency to think that we are forced to substitute a psychology of the scientific community for a logic of scientific methods and research. This aspect of Kuhn's thesis has been well criticised by Imre Lakatos in 'Criticism and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes',** we will in fact insist throughout this section that the postulation of a belief 'system' or scientific paradigm does not necessarily lead to relativistic conclusions about the possibility of knowledge or of rational discussion. In so doing, we will criticise

* c.f. S. Toulmin, 'Conceptual Revolutions in Science, Synthese, Vol.17, 1967, pp 75-90

** PAS, Vol. 69, 1968-9, pp 149-186

what underlies both Kuhn's thesis and much of what Wittgenstein says in On Certainty, to which we will return in discussing common sense as a system of beliefs. But first we will attempt to show what is meant by a belief system or context.

One of Kuhn's most highly developed examples concerns the possibility of interpreting the phenomenon of gravity in terms of innate qualities under different types of scientific theory. The point about each successive theory is that it made the way of looking at falling bodies advocated by its predecessor untenable. In the scholastic period, explanations had been offered in terms of the natural tendency of heavy bodies to move towards the centre of the earth, but the 'new science' of the seventeenth century succeeded in doing without the appeal to occult and essentialist qualities.

To say that a stone fell because its "nature" drove it toward the centre of the universe had been made to look a mere tautological word-play, something it had not previously been. Henceforth the entire flux of sensory appearances, including colour, taste, and even weight, was to be explained in terms of the size, shape, position, and motion of the elementary corpuscles of base matter. The attribution of other qualities to the elementary atoms was a resort to the occult and therefore out of bounds for science.*

The corpuscular mechanics had made a different decision from Aristotle and the Aristotelians concerning the basic inhabitants of the universe and their inter-relationships; in the light of the new science, reference to occult qualities was positively unscientific. But although corpuscularism had considerable success in solving many of its problems in dynamics, culminating in Newton's three laws of motion, in Newton's own work 'gravity, interpreted as an innate attraction between every pair of particles of matter, was an occult quality in the same sense as the scholastics' "tendency to fall" had been'.** Of course, many attempts were made to reject Newton's theory for its failure to explain gravity in terms of collisions of corpuscles, or to find a mechanical explanation

* Kuhn, p 103

** p 104

of gravity. But as it proved impossible to find such an explanation or to do without the Principia, scientists gradually came to accept the view that gravity was innate.

By the mid-eighteenth century that interpretation had been almost universally accepted, and the result was a genuine reversion (which is not the same as a retrogression) to a scholastic standard. Innate attractions and repulsions joined size, shape, position, and motion as physically irreducible primary properties of matter.*

Kuhn points out how this reversion to innate qualities had beneficial effects on the study of electricity and chemistry, where advances were made which would not have been possible in an atmosphere when the very idea of occult qualities was a fit subject for Moliere's humor. Of course, this is not the end of the story - it seems that Einstein has now succeeded in explaining gravitational attractions without innate qualities, and so 'that explanation has returned science to a set of canons and problems that are, in this particular respect, more like those of Newton's predecessors than of his successors'. Kuhn sums up the story as follows:

The attempt to explain gravity, though fruitfully abandoned by most eighteenth-century scientists, was not directed to an intrinsically illegitimate problem; the objections to innate forces were neither inherently unscientific nor metaphysical in a pejorative sense. There are no external standards to permit a judgment of that sort. What occurred was neither a decline nor a raising of standards, but simply a change demanded by the adoption of a new paradigm.**

Whether Kuhn is correct in saying absolutely that there are no external standards to judge competing paradigms (his expression for the set of theories and problem solving techniques characteristic of a given scientific movement) has been questioned (by Lakatos, for example), but historically he shows clearly enough how the paradigm determines for its adherents the range of possible scientific beliefs and questions.

It is one of Kuhn's theses that historically a paradigm is challenged only when it is presented with problems it cannot solve, and actually

* pp 104-5

** p 107

abandoned only when a better one arises to take its place. This is important because it shows that what in the terms of the new theory or set of theories are the 'prejudices' of the previous paradigm are shown to be prejudices only when it is realised how they obstructed the solving of the problems raised by and within the paradigm.* We shall return to this point later. In the case of the strict corpuscular theory it would have been obscurantist to postulate innate forces in order to articulate a view of the universe in terms of atoms and their inter-action, before the corpuscular theory had been shown to need revision. But in terms of Newtonian mechanics this had - reluctantly it seems - to be abandoned as a prejudice. In a similar way, there was, at the time of its suggestion, no need to take seriously Aristarchus' heliocentric system, because the Ptolemaic astronomy was not only enjoying considerable success in furthering knowledge of the heavens, but it had not yet encountered the problems which were to lead to its eventual rejection in favour of Copernicus' theory. So there was no reason for abandoning a quite successful proposal in favour of one logically incompatible with it, which had nothing in particular at the time to recommend it, even though looking back we might be tempted to say that Aristarchus' theory was, at least in certain respects, more 'correct' and free from some of the assumptions that were to prove fatal to the Ptolemaic system.** At the time, there was every reason for carrying on with the Ptolemaic programme, and none for the Aristarchan.

The intimate way in which the context affects the content of beliefs is illustrated further by the fact, already alluded to in Chapter 4, Part 1, that the meaning of scientific statements as well as their possible limits within a rational system, is frequently dependent on the total theory to which they belong. This is because of the fact that the

* c.f. K. R. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Vol.2, London, 1962 pp 220-1

** c.f. Kuhn, *op cit.* pp 75-6

whole network of our theories and the facts which give rise to them and which they interpret and articulate is interdependent. As we have seen in Chapter 4, the mere fact that two people use the same words or even give the same definition of a given concept is no guarantee that they mean the same thing by the words or the concept. (We are speaking here of concepts like 'chemical element' or 'rational animal' which have had a long history. But the fact that they have had a long history should make us cautious of attributing synonymy to their use in two different eras). Of course, it is possible to go too far in this direction, and what is being said here applies most of all to words and concepts in which a high degree of theory is embodied. Even if there is some truth in Quine's claim that 'our statements about the external world face the tribunal of sense experience not individually but only as a corporate body'^{*}, many simply descriptive statements involve very little theory of the sort that undergoes frequent and radical change, comparable to the revolutionary changes in the interpretation of gravity. This is not to deny that theoretical - i.e. dispositional - elements are involved in the most ordinary descriptions; but these theories are far more constantly and widely accepted than the more highly developed scientific theories we have been considering, and do not seem to play so direct a part in the interpretation of common sense descriptions as scientific theories play in the interpretation of scientific observations.

The fact that a scientist's beliefs are limited and determined by the paradigm within which he works does not mean that he has any notable feelings of conviction about his theories or that it is impossible for him to conceive the opposite. Feelings of conviction are of no particular importance to science, while, as Popper points out^{**}, in

^{*} From a Logical Point of View, New York, 1963, p 41

^{**} The Logic of Scientific Discovery, p 429

reductio proof what we know to be false or contradictory is often 'conceived to be true' in order to show that some other statement whose truth we are testing presupposes it. It is rather that in working within a paradigm, both the problems and the ways of dealing with them are presented within the framework of the paradigm. As Kuhn points out in connection with the Copernican revolution, what led astronomers to accept a heliocentric system was the crisis which arose within the Ptolemaic system. Similarly

one reason why the theories of combustion by absorption from the atmosphere - theories developed in the seventeenth century by Key, Hooke, and Mayow - failed to get a sufficient hearing was that they made no contact with a recognised trouble-spot in normal scientific practice.*

Scientists of the seventeenth century had neither the incentive nor the means within their own systems to accommodate such a theory of combustion, which was therefore not scientifically credible. As we know, in an infinite universe the absolute logical probability of any scientific theory being true is equal to zero, so the acceptance of one theory as against the rejection of another cannot be justified in terms of such probability.** Acceptance of one theory rather than another must be made with reference to current scientific practice, that is to say, against the background of the way scientists currently think and work.

Analysis of scientific activity along the lines attempted by Kuhn is valuable from our point of view because it reflects something of the autonomous logical development of theories, showing how the possibilities of belief are determined more and more precisely, the more highly developed and articulated one's explanations and observations become. One reason why the language and concepts of common sense do not seem subject to constant radical re-orientation is probably because the

* p 76

** c.f. Popper, op cit, pp 257, 363ff

'theories' underlying common sense are far looser and less rigorously articulated, and so changes of scientific viewpoint within the scientific section of society infiltrate gradually and imperceptibly into the thought of that society as a whole.

Although to work within a scientific community restricts and defines the limits of the credible at least in so far as one works as a scientist, to enter into such work and to accept its current presuppositions and methodology is, significantly, represented often as a decision. Kuhn in answering the question as to why a new paradigm is adopted when an old one begins to create more problems than it solves, says

Gradually the number of experiments, instruments, articles and books based upon the paradigm will multiply. Still more men, convinced of the new view's fruitfulness, will adopt the new mode of practicing normal science, until at last only a few elderly hold-outs remain. And even they, we cannot say, are wrong. Though the historian can always find men - Priestly, for instance - who were unreasonable to resist for as long as they did, he will not find a point at which resistance becomes illogical or unscientific. At most he may wish to say that the man who continues to resist after his whole profession has been converted inso facto ceased to be a scientist.*

The reason why we cannot simply condemn resistance as wrong (as opposed possibly to calling it unscientific) is that just as scientific viewpoints cannot be simply and conclusively verified, neither can they be conclusively falsified. Lakatos ** gives the example of Prout, who in 1815 in face of the current scientific evidence and theorising held on to the view that the atomic weights of the chemical elements were whole numbers. In the end, Prout was shown to be correct, but only after there had been a change in the concept of a 'chemical element', such that their separation could be effected by physical means as well as by chemical reactions. Until this change in the concept, however, it became increasingly hard for scientists to accept Prout's theory.

* p 158

** loc cit., p 174

Kuhn's conclusion is that although observation and experience can and must drastically restrict the range of admissible scientific belief... they cannot alone determine a particular body of such belief. An apparently arbitrary element, compounded of personal and historical accident, is always a formative ingredient of the beliefs espoused by a given scientific community at a given time.*

One might indeed argue that without this 'apparently arbitrary element' which restricts and determines the particular type of investigation and theorising of scientists at a particular moment in history, there would be no science, precisely because observation and experience alone do not sufficiently determine the admissible body of knowledge. Even so, it looks as if a decision to accept something less than certain is required if one is to be a working scientist, and that this decision is not one which is required logically.

The arbitrary or non-empirically determined element in a system of scientific theories has sometimes been spoken of as 'metaphysical'. In one sense, of course, every descriptive statement, except possibly those concerned purely with sense data, contains a metaphysical - i.e. a theoretical and absolutely speaking non-falsifiable - element, but here we are thinking simply of the general pre-suppositions of a given scientific paradigm as its metaphysics. It is often possible to distinguish this level of metaphysics from the often more basic or at least more generally acceptable descriptive statements the paradigm is invoked to explain and predict. The metaphysical element we are speaking of is the core of the paradigm, as it represents the 'world-view' articulated by the paradigm, and provides a programme for research. In an article entitled 'Confirmable and Influential Metaphysics',** J. W. N. Watkins has shown how such metaphysical assumptions have been at the bottom of many scientific theories; among his examples are determinism in its various

* p 4

** Mind, Vol. 67, 1958, pp 344-365

forms, biological attempts to explain life mechanistically rather than vitalistically, doctrines of conservation of energy, and Faraday's counter-Newtonian belief that every kind of energy, gravity included, is directly transformable without loss into every other kind of energy. Failure to show how these beliefs are borne out in practice in any given case can always be put down to present ignorance; indeed, as representing the kernel of the theories in question, these beliefs are treated as irrefutable, although, as Watkins tries to show, they can be gradually undermined by criticism.* To work with such pre-suppositions cannot unreasonably be thought of as a decision, either by individuals or by a community as a whole, to enter a system. This decision cannot be reduced merely to adopting certain methodological conventions, for as Watkins points out, these metaphysical elements in addition to guiding method (by telling us, for example, always to look for a cause), 'clash with certain kinds of falsifiable hypotheses and so forbid their construction'.**

Popper, who would criticise much of what Kuhn is doing as 'naturalistic',*** nevertheless agrees that, from the psychological angle, progress in science would hardly be possible without a scientifically unwarrantable or 'metaphysical' faith in ideas of a purely speculative kind.**** He also speaks most eloquently of the decision involved not in accepting any particular theory or of its metaphysical core, but of engaging in scientific work at all:

My business (is)... to formulate a suitable characterisation of empirical science, or to define the concepts 'empirical science' and 'metaphysics' in such a way that we shall be able to say of a given set of statements whether or not its closer study is the concern of empirical science.

* c.f. below p173-4

** loc cit p 357

*** The Logic of Scientific Discovery, p 52

**** ibid p 38

My criterion of demarcation will accordingly have to be regarded as a proposal for an agreement or convention. As to the suitability of any such convention opinions may differ; and a reasonable discussion of these questions is only possible between parties having some purpose in common. The choice of that purpose must, of course, be ultimately a matter of decision, going beyond rational argument...

What Popper is arguing is that owing to the impossibility of an inductive method or of conclusive justification science cannot achieve certainty in its enquiries, and so the scientist has to decide to work with the theories and methods that are available, in the belief that some progress will be made, at least negatively:

Anyone who envisages a system of absolutely certain, irrevocably true statements as the end and purpose of science will certainly reject the proposals I shall make here... There is only one way, as far as I can see, of arguing rationally in support of my proposals. That is to analyse their logical consequences: to point out their fertility - their power to elucidate the problems of the theory of knowledge.

Thus I freely admit that in arriving at my proposals I have been guided, in the last analysis, by value judgments and predilections. But I hope that my proposals may be acceptable to those who value not only logical rigour but also freedom from dogmatism; who seek practical applicability, but are even more attracted by the adventure of science, and by discoveries which again and again confront us with new and unexpected questions, challenging us to try out new and hitherto undreamed-of answers...

Thus for Popper, there is a fundamental value decision involved in engaging in science at all, a decision which is further characterised and defended in Chapter 24 of The Open Society and Its Enemies as a moral act, justified by having better consequences than the adoption of any irrationalist or uncritical position.

Popper calls his position over the adoption of scientific method 'critical rationalism', the main characteristics of which are that, given we cannot achieve certainty in scientific knowledge, all theories and hypotheses are to be subjected to tests and criticisms. As we hope to show, purely relativistic conclusions may be avoided despite the fact that we have to rely on such factors as intuition, imagination and the state

* The Logic of Scientific Discovery, pp 37-8

of the question at our place and time, so long as whatever theories are devised are open to public testing and the people concerned are prepared to listen to each other. At the same time, it would be psychologically dishonest to pretend that there are not many statements and theories which we are at present quite unable to criticise and which we cannot, at present, see ourselves being argued out of.* Lakatos, it is true, speaks of belief as a 'regretfully unavoidable biological weakness',** but even though we would not, on logical grounds alone, speak of any theories or set of theories as absolutely certain, this does not in itself give us a reason for not believing what seems most in accord with reality or most likely to lead to new discoveries. Even Popper, who has developed a theory according to which the scientist, qua scientist concerned simply with the objective development of scientific knowledge, neither knows nor believes the hypotheses he attends to, but deals with them with various 'objective' or 'third world' activities, such as trying to understand them, trying to derive new problems from them, and above all, trying to criticise them, nonetheless admits that even here the scientist can be said to have subjective beliefs in that he guesses that the hypotheses he deals with will be fruitful in bringing about a growth in the third world of objective knowledge.*** Apart from this, clearly some statements have to be used as beyond criticism just to put other statements to the test. There must be a body of doctrine, accepted at least provisionally as true, in order to start work. The fact that it is not possible conclusively to justify this body does not necessarily imply it is irrational to accept it, or that which body of statements is taken as basic is simply a matter of arbitrary choice, even in science.****

* Point made by J. W. H. Watkins in an unpublished paper called 'CCR: a Rebuttal'.

** loc cit., p 150

*** c.f. 'Epistemology Without a Knowing Subject', loc cit., especially pp 231 and 265

**** c.f. below, pp 172-4

The example of scientific systems as complex structures of well articulated rational belief, and of the restrictions imposed by these systems on the scientifically believable is obviously not simply reproduced in the way beliefs according to which we live our ordinary lives form themselves into a system. For one thing, we seem, on the face of it, to have far less freedom to tamper around with this system, or to think of the accepting of its assumptions as something we are free to do or not to do. (Many people in order to uphold 'mysticism' run down scientific methods). But to refuse to accept what we might loosely term common sense is going to change our lives rather radically. Also, common sense is less explicitly worked out as a system, and yet more pervasive, entering every moment of our lives. Although one might wish to see science as being a technical development of common sense, and the line between science and common sense being often crossed in both directions, the scientist can break off from his work and theories and perhaps even move into working with competing theories in a way a sane man cannot break off from the beliefs and canons of common sense. Even when indulging in fantasy, we know at the back of our minds that it is not real.

So, to talk of a decision to accept the beliefs of common sense, even if by a descriptive metaphysics we could from the inside determine just what these were, seems inappropriate. Indeed, we have argued in Chapter 3 that it is precisely because we all accept a common area of truth that we have an understanding of what it is to believe at all. In On Certainty, Wittgenstein stresses that although common sense itself cannot be finally and conclusively justified, just because every reasonable person accepts some beliefs as certain, it makes no sense for an individual within the group or culture to doubt those beliefs:

Doubting has certain characteristic manifestations, but they are only characteristic of it in particular circumstances. If someone said that he doubted the existence of his hands, kept looking at them from all sides, tried to make sure it wasn't 'all done by mirrors', etc., we should not be sure whether we ought to call that doubting. We might describe his way of behaving like the behaviour of doubt, but his game would not be ours.*

Although it does not matter very much what we call the man's behaviour, if everything else he did was normal, we might well begin to wonder whether such doubt was genuine. It seems that common sense - and this is the basic point of our discussion of scientific systems - does limit the genuinely credible in the same sort of way as a scientific theory, although this does not mean we have to accept the conclusion that failing absolute justification of common sense, its grounds of acceptability are purely sociological.

Wittgenstein himself comes near to such a conclusion. He talks of a man thinking he might be mistaken in his assumption that he had never been on the moon (in his sleep, for example) as 'playing the game wrong'** The idea is that such a possibility is ruled out by our other beliefs (or, at least, was ruled out at the time of writing), and so it is not to be entertained. But, another belief which is ruled out by our system of beliefs is the belief that we should consult oracles at appropriate times. We would rather trust the propositions of physics - but

Supposing we met people who did not regard this as a telling reason... Instead of the physicist, they consult an oracle. (And for that we consider them primitive). Is it wrong for them to consult an oracle and be guided by it? - If we call this "wrong" aren't we using our language game as a base from which to combat theirs? ***

The answer is that we are. We seem to have the impasse which arises when two competing scientific paradigms clash. But does Wittgenstein's conclusion follow?

I said I would 'combat' the other man - but wouldn't I give him reasons? Certainly; but how far do they go? At the end of reasons comes persuasion. (Think what happens when missionaries convert natives).****

* pp 33-4
*** p 80

** ^{ibid} P 88
*** ^{ibid} F 81

This is a clear example of the dogma that for criticism to be valid, it must itself proceed from unquestionable assumptions.*

This dogma, which is presumably shared by those who see the adoption of a new scientific paradigm in place of an old as a basically irrational procedure, incapable of rational reconstruction, overlooks the fact that although any theory must have assumptions which cannot be finally justified (because of an infinite regress of justifications), we can get nearer the truth through testing and criticising theories. (See page 169a). The fact that the criticisms themselves may be based on other assumptions need not worry us so long as we are prepared to give up these assumptions if they can be shown to be prejudices themselves obstructing the solution of some problem. Indeed, it is by showing that trust in oracles positively hinders advance in knowledge, by falling back on merely linguistic and ad hoc moves, that we might hope to show that physics is better at explaining what happens in the world.

Of course, as Popper showed, value judgments will be involved here, which are typically those used in assessing the achievements of physics, and no doubt someone could, if he wished, continue to insist that oracles were more fruitful than physics. Unless he could show this, there would indeed be a breakdown of communication. But there are many possible reasons for this much vaunted psychological phenomenon, such as obstinacy on the part of one or both of the parties, their mutual lack of immediate or practical interest in the matter being discussed, or their mutual lack of cleverness in thinking up stronger reasons in favour of their respective positions. In other words, there is no reason why we should not treat breakdown of communication as something of solely psychological interest, reflecting rather on the dispositions of the communicators than necessarily on the ultimate insolubility of the problem.**

(Text continues p. 170)

* c.f. K. R. Popper, The Open Society and Its Enemies, Vol. 2, p 380

** I am grateful to Mr. David Miller for discussion on this - and other points - in this Chapter.

line 8
^

(additional note to p 169)

Unfortunately a symposium entitled Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge, edited by Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (Cambridge, 1970) has appeared too late (September 1970) to be consulted during the writing of this thesis or to be included in the bibliography, although it is very relevant to the issues here and in Part 3 below. Obviously it is not possible to go into any detail here, but it seems at first sight that what is in it does not call for alteration in the substance of what we say, which is to suggest an approach comparable to that elaborated more expertly in the contributions of Popper and Lakatos. However, it should be noted that in this new volume, Kuhn himself rejects the suggestion that the choice of one paradigm rather than another is basically irrational*, even though Feyerabend apparently welcomes the charge.** In The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Kuhn had said that the reasons for change from one paradigm to another are not singly decisive or compelling;*** here he stresses that for scientists reasons - and good reasons - for change do exist.**** However the implication that outside the community that shares these values there are no criteria of rationality with which to assess them is repeated.***** Moreover, although Kuhn is prepared to admit - trivially, it seems - that we can assess one scientific theory as better than another if it does better what scientists normally do, his stance remains fundamentally relativistic, as he is doubtful whether 'truth' is a term with more than intra-theoretic application. Moreover, he firmly rejects attempts to characterise one theory as approaching absolutely nearer to the truth than another,***** though, as Lakatos points out, this could be partly due to a confusion over the interpretation of Popper's technical term 'verisimilitude'.*****

* p 260

** pp 214-229

*** c.f. pp 154-8

**** pp 261-3

***** pp 263-4, pp 20-2

***** pp 264-6

***** pp 188-9

(All references in this note, except ***, are to Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge)

Wittgenstein is right in suggesting that we would be asking an oracle believer to change his ideas of what was credible when we ask him to accept modern physics. What we want to resist is the further implication that it therefore is not possible to say that modern physics provides a better explanation of what goes on in the world. Nevertheless, the oracle believer would probably find great difficulty in saying this, as lots of things which had seemed to him to be perfectly credible and likely would, under the new system, become impossible. Indeed, it is not uncommon, when there is such a conversion for the individual's life to continue to express a curious and uncomfortable duality. Rene Vallejo Ortiz, the Cuban leader, who was a well-known lung specialist refused to operate when the spirits were not propitious, while Castro himself is said to have acted on his consultation of the orisha during the Bay of Pigs affair. Greek politicians are well-known to consult soothsayers, which is part of a wider belief they have in the irrationality of politics.* Such examples, which could be multiplied, are interesting because they show that belief in magic is not confined to primitive agricultural communities, but can appear in quite sophisticated contexts. They also show that forms of life and language games are not as clear cut or as self-enclosed as Wittgenstein seemed to think.

Despite examples of amalgamation of two rather different types of belief, which may in themselves be no more peculiar than the marriage of Jewish Christianity and Greek philosophy, it seems that in any set of beliefs, however heterogenous the beliefs are in themselves, there must be some area where doubt is not genuine. In his insistence on this point, Wittgenstein over-states his case. He says that in these cases, to preface one's observations by saying 'I am sure that...' or 'I am certain than...' would be more or less incomprehensible:

* I thank Peter Levi for this information.

If someone were to look at an English pillar-box and say "I am sure that it's red", we should have to suppose that he was colour-blind, or believe he had no mastery of English and knew the correct name for the colour in some other language. If neither was the case we should not quite understand him."

As H. P. Grice points out in his article 'The Causal Theory of Perception',²² the fact that it might be misleading or unusual to say something does not mean that it is necessarily either false in itself or unintelligible to assert it. This would seem to be what Wittgenstein is trying to say here, and he is surely wrong to do so. (One might on a slight remark a general tendency in Wittgenstein's later philosophy, for example when writing on religious belief, to characterise lack of agreement that it is correct or appropriate to say something as lack of understanding of what it is that is said).

We can still agree with the general trend of Wittgenstein's remarks - that if someone were to preface his remarks on matters where there is no genuine doubt by saying, for instance, that he was not quite certain that the pillar box (in normal light and in England) was red, but that he thought it probably was, we should try to see if his behaviour was odd in other ways. If not, it would be open to conclude that he had not understood what it meant to 'doubt', 'believe', 'be certain', etc. Charity at least would suggest some indeterminacy between our use of these expressions and his:

A mad doctor (perhaps) might ask me "Do you know what that is?" and I might reply "I know that it's a chair; I recognise it, it's always been in my room". He says this, possibly, to test not my eyes but my ability to recognise things, to know their names and their functions. What is in question here is a kind of knowing one's way about. Now it would be wrong for me to say "I believe (i.e. I think, but I am not certain) that it is a chair" because that would express my readiness for my statement to be tested. While "I know that it..." implies bewilderment if what I said is not confirmed."²³

²² Grice
pp 59-70

²³ Grice, Vol. 35, 1961, pp 121-152

²⁴ p 46 of Grice

If someone were to look at an English pillar-box and say "I am sure that it's red", we should have to suppose that he was colour-blind, or believe he had no mastery of English and knew the correct name for the colour in some other language. If neither was the case we should not quite understand him.*

As H. P. Grice points out in his article 'The Causal Theory of Perception',** the fact that it might be misleading or unusual to say something does not mean that it is necessarily either false in itself or unintelligible to assert it. This would seem to be what Wittgenstein is trying to say here, and he is surely wrong to do so. (One might en passant remark a general tendency in Wittgenstein's later philosophy, for example when writing on religious belief, to characterise lack of agreement that it is correct or appropriate to say something as lack of understanding of what it is that is said).

We can still agree with the general trend of Wittgenstein's remarks - that if someone were to preface his remarks on matters where there is no genuine doubt by saying, for instance, that he was not quite certain that the pillar box (in normal light and in England) was red, but that he thought it probably was, we should try to see if his behaviour was odd in other ways. If not, it would be open to conclude that he had not understood what it meant to 'doubt', 'believe', 'be certain', etc. Charity at least would suggest some indeterminacy between our use of these expressions and his:

A mad doctor (perhaps) might ask me "Do you know what that is?" and I might reply "I know that it's a chair; I recognise it, it's always been in my room". He says this, possibly, to test not my eyes but my ability to recognise things, to know their names and their functions. What is in question here is a kind of knowing one's way about. Now it would be wrong for me to say "I believe (i.e. I think, but I am not certain) that it is a chair" because that would express my readiness for my statement to be tested. While "I know that it..." implies bewilderment if what I said is not confirmed.***

On Certainty

* pp 69-70

** SEAS, Vol. 35, 1961, pp 121-152

*** p 46 of On Certainty

If someone were to look at an English pillar-box and say "I am sure that it's red", we should have to suppose that he was colour-blind, or believe he had no mastery of English and knew the correct name for the colour in some other language.

If neither was the case we should not quite understand him.*

As H. P. Grice points out in his article 'The Causal Theory of Perception',** the fact that it might be misleading or unusual to say something does not mean that it is necessarily either false in itself or unintelligible to assert it. This would seem to be what Wittgenstein is trying to say here, and he is surely wrong to do so. (One might en passant remark a general tendency in Wittgenstein's later philosophy, for example when writing on religious belief, to characterise lack of agreement that it is correct or appropriate to say something as lack of understanding of what it is that is said).

We can still agree with the general trend of Wittgenstein's remarks - that if someone were to preface his remarks on matters where there is no genuine doubt by saying, for instance, that he was not quite certain that the pillar box (in normal light and in England) was red, but that he thought it probably was, we should try to see if his behaviour was odd in other ways. If not, it would be open to conclude that he had not understood what it meant to 'doubt', 'believe', 'be certain', etc. Charity at least would suggest some indeterminacy between our use of these expressions and his:

A mad doctor (perhaps) might ask me "Do you know what that is?" and I might reply "I know that it's a chair; I recognise it, it's always been in my room". He says this, possibly, to test not my eyes but my ability to recognise things, to know their names and their functions. What is in question here is a kind of knowing one's way about. Now it would be wrong for me to say "I believe (i.e. I think, but I am not certain) that it is a chair" because that would express my readiness for my statement to be tested. While "I know that it..." implies bewilderment if what I said is not confirmed.***

O. C. Grice

* pp 69-70

** SPAS, Vol. 35, 1961, pp 121-152

*** p 46 of O. C. Grice

What Wittgenstein seems to be getting at is that in some situations doubt is unrealistic - unless it is possible to show that the situation is in some way unusual, and so to justify the raising of a doubt. Hence, perhaps, our uneasiness with Cartesian doubt, if it is interpreted psychologically.

Of course, it would always be possible to raise questions about any proposition whatever, but Wittgenstein is saying that unless we can show a reason for doubt, in some cases to doubt would go right against the concept of evidence within the system of belief. To use Neurath's image of a ship, which we have to rebuild plank by plank, it seems that some planks are more central and more essential to the ship. It is not just that some premises have to remain in order effectively to criticise anything, but rather that in any system of beliefs there are some elements, the doubting of which would lead us to say 'This doubt isn't one of the doubts in our game. (But not as if we chose this game!)'.*

This position seems to be irrational or relativistic only if it is felt that because some propositions are central to a certain system of beliefs, it could never be possible for someone from that system to question them. As we have already pointed out** prejudices can be rooted out only when they are seen as such - that is, when we have already begun to dispose of them. The attempt to avoid all presuppositions is clearly self-contradictory. It would thus be irrational to try to go on without them. Having them becomes irrational only when we realise they are open to some criticism and refuse to question them further. We agree with Wittgenstein that no final justification is possible of even the simplest beliefs, apart perhaps from logical truths, if only because all our general terms are dispositional and hence, in a strict sense, unverifiable. But we do not agree that it is therefore not possible to criticise and so to improve our beliefs. We are not, as Wittgenstein thinks, condemned to stay forever in exactly the same unchanging vessel, nor, as Kuhn seems to some to think, do we scuttle

On Certainty

* Wittgenstein, p 41

** pp 158-9

one ship in a panic and jump into another one. This is because, rejecting dogmatic justificationism, we do not think we have to be absolutely certain of something before we can begin to criticise rationally. Popper shows four basic ways in which criticism of theories can proceed without having to start from established and justified assumptions. First, the theory might be internally inconsistent. Secondly, it might be shown to come up against generally accepted assumptions. Thirdly, it might be challenged by some competing theory, which answers its problems better or, less importantly, stands up better in some crucial test. Fourthly, and quite generally, it will count as a valid criticism of a theory if it finally fails to solve the problems it is invoked to solve. This might well lead to a general review of its pre-suppositions. Finally, of course, even invalid criticism can throw valuable new and fruitful light on a theory.*

Perhaps it should be mentioned that criticism of basic assumptions should not necessarily be thought of as falsification of them. Indeed, the 'metaphysics' of a given paradigm or set of theories will, provided it is not self-contradictory, resist formal falsification both because it is not laid out in such a way that any particular single event or set of events can be regarded as refuting it, and because it may itself determine the form and nature of the evidence relevant to it.** Counter-examples are treated as problems for future research; it is hoped that with ingenuity and more complete knowledge they will also be brought within the

* c.f. The Open Society and Its Enemies, Vol. 2, pp 379-380
 For a good example of the third type of criticism, c.f. below p 185
 Most of the scientific theories mentioned in this chapter can be criticised under the fourth category, but this is not to deny the problems involved in knowing just when to do so.

** c.f. Part 3 below on the way in which the evidence itself may be affected by the theory it is supposed to uphold. Although what we say about this is not in the end different from what we say about belief systems generally, the phenomenon is important enough to be dealt with in a separate section.

metaphysics. Nevertheless, it may be possible to criticise these metaphysical views because it becomes less and less possible to show just how they might be applied except as articles of faith. One might even be able to show in some cases that even if what they say is true, we will never be able to make use of it. This seems to be the case with determinism, because although it could be true that every physical event was determined by inflexible laws, there will always be some events which appear to be impossible in practice to predict, among them, the future states of knowledge of the predicting machine or person. On other occasions, the metaphysical belief could be criticised on the grounds that it required ever more complex and unlikely hypotheses to explain its application; this seemed to be the case with speculative mechanism. Yet other types of metaphysics could be criticised because their effects were either useless or positively harmful; Popper's criticisms of irrationalism take this form. Indeed, if we were to take it as an effective ground of criticism of metaphysical beliefs that their defenders would admit no possible state of affairs as in any way counting against their beliefs, and no degree of complexification of auxiliary, saving hypotheses as tending to cast doubt on the beliefs, then even though formal refutation of such beliefs would not be possible, no such system would be uncriticisable. Irrefutability does not necessarily entail uncriticisability.

In general, so long as we are ready for our beliefs to be discussed and criticised in the ways we have rather schematically suggested, and so long as the relevant evidence is freely available and the experiments on which the beliefs are based are repeatable, we show that our methods are objective, and we can with justification hope that they will take us nearer the truth, even though, as Popper says,

It certainly has to be admitted that, at any given moment, our scientific theories will depend not only on the experiments etc. made up to that moment, but also upon prejudices which are taken

for granted, so that we have not become aware of them... We can say in regard to this incrustation that science is capable of learning, of breaking down some of its crusts. The process may never be perfected, but there is no fixed barrier before which it must stop short. Any assumption can, in principle be criticised. And that anybody may criticise constitutes scientific objectivity.*

So with science, and we hope, with common sense, we can agree that any set of beliefs will contain at their heart assumptions which seem unimpeachable at one time, and which are later thrown out. But, far from leading to relativism, this phenomenon should encourage us, because it shows that although the community in which one lives determines one's beliefs to a quite considerable extent, it is possible, through criticism, to change and improve one's doctrinal legacy.

In fact, the central beliefs and assumptions of one's community - the beliefs everyone must have and those which are totally incredible - provide the limiting cases according to which we understand and interpret other beliefs. These certainties make up, at any given moment, the foundation which is required in order that we should be able to tack other beliefs on. It is because belief is, in the final analysis, tied down to what is believed, that Wittgenstein says that 'the grammar of "believe" just does hang together with the grammar of the proposition believed'.** We do not learn what belief is, and then start applying the concept to likely candidates. We learn and understand belief only as tied down to some prior set of beliefs, and it is in terms of this original set that we begin to extend our applications of the concept. Hence our insistence in Chapter 3 on the notion of belief being intelligible only in terms of a common acceptance of what is to be believed, and why Griffiths, for example, says that we would have no right to speak of belief in the case of a hypothetical community of persons whose standards of appropriateness in judging were totally different from ours.***

* The Open Society and its Enemies, Vol.2, p 221

** p 40 On Certainty, p 40

*** c.f. loc cit, p 141

It might be objected that if we found a community which treated certain propositions which we thought were absurd and inconsistent as we treat our beliefs, (acting on them, thinking about them, etc.) we should still talk of them believing these propositions. In other words, the most that we have shown is that belief requires that each group of believers hold certain propositions as true, and not that 'belief' itself requires for its intelligible application that both the person the concept is predicated of and the person using the concept should hold certain beliefs and standards in common. After all, we have conceded that people can have widely differing ideas on what is certain; why should these differences not be total? Although nothing hangs on the use of the word 'belief', we could say immediately that if nothing counted as a reason for belief for this hypothetical community that counted as a reason for us, it would be quite misleading to speak of belief in their case. To speak of someone believing p would no longer carry with it the suggestion that they treat p on a par with what is acceptable to our common sense; presumably a man could not now be criticised for having arbitrary or irrational beliefs. But the real problem with such a community would arise in describing its beliefs at all. For this is not just a question of them having a different cosmological or metaphysical interpretation of what we all recognise as facts, for once there is agreement on some basic facts, the hypothesis of complete disagreement and total non-communication breaks down. Discussion becomes possible, and with it revision of cosmologies and metaphysics, perhaps on our side as well as on theirs. But the case here is when people do not accept even the same basic facts as us.

Is it plausible to think of a community with a conceptual framework which made no contact with ours at all? The imagination boggles here, and for the very good reason that it would not be possible for us to

It might be objected that if we found a community which treated certain propositions which we thought were absurd and inconsistent as we treat our beliefs, (acting on them, thinking about them, etc.) we should still talk of them believing these propositions. In other words, the most that we have shown is that belief requires that each group of believers hold certain propositions as true, and not that 'belief' itself requires for its intelligible application that both the person the concept is predicated of and the person using the concept should hold certain beliefs and standards in common. After all, we have conceded that people can have widely differing ideas on what is certain; why should these differences not be total? Although nothing hangs on the use of the word 'belief', we could say immediately that if nothing counted as a reason for belief for this hypothetical community that counted as a reason for us, it would be quite misleading to speak of belief in their case. To speak of someone believing p would no longer carry with it the suggestion that they treat p on a par with what is acceptable to our common sense; presumably a man could not now be criticised for having arbitrary or irrational beliefs. But the real problem with such a community would arise in describing its beliefs at all. For this is not just a question of them having a different cosmological or metaphysical interpretation of what we all recognise as facts, for once there is agreement on some basic facts, the hypothesis of complete disagreement and total non-communication breaks down. Discussion becomes possible, and with it revision of cosmologies and metaphysics, perhaps on our side as well as on theirs. But the case here is when people do not accept even the same basic facts as us.

Is it plausible to think of a community with a conceptual framework which made no contact with ours at all? The imagination boggles here, and for the very good reason that it would not be possible for us to

to describe such a community's conceptual framework. For imagine trying to understand (interpret or translate) such a framework. With each divergence from our own, the alien framework becomes less intelligible, and the mystery simply thickens if many disagreements are interspersed with the odd agreement. As Barry Stroud puts it:

We can give no content to the notion of a conceptual scheme or a language which is a genuine alternative to our present one. No revision open to us can take us beyond the language we now use and understand - any 'alternative' is either something we already understand and can make sense of, or it is no alternative at all. Any difference between ourselves and other tribes can therefore only be partial... *

Long before we attribute wholesale divergence of belief to another tribe, we will be thinking that we have got the translation or interpretation of their language wrong. We can only start attributing differences of belief when we have a foundation of a considerable body of agreement, for it is only through what we think are their assents to what we think are the same states of affairs as we are picking out, that we can begin to understand or translate alien idioms or languages into our own. So the hypothetical community turns out to be impossible even to describe, and so our hypothesis that belief can be predicated only on the basis of a common understanding of what is true is corroborated.

Part 3 - Community and Evidence

In section 2 we have shown some of the ways in which individual beliefs often presuppose and are made intelligible by the whole context of which these individual beliefs are a part. A system or context of beliefs can usually be regarded as something held in common by a whole community. We have already seen Kuhn suggesting that working as a scientist involves entering a community which shares a paradigm; he says further that scientific progress is possible only once this has been settled, because only then are scientists free to concentrate on their problems without having constantly to re-examine first principles.**

* 'Conventionalism and Translation', in Words and Objections, p 92

** pp 162-3

Kuhn is prepared to say that there is nothing irrational in an absolute sense about a man who does not accept the current scientific paradigm, but that unless he does, he will not be a scientist. Certainly, such a man would be irrational from the point of view of the scientific community he is refusing to enter; if his rejection of scientific standards was so fundamental that he studied the heavens from the point of view of astrology rather than of astronomy, his work would not, without considerable demythologisation, be scientifically acceptable.

We can see common sense as the framework of a given community as well. Here the situation for the dissenter is more critical, as he does not just cease to be a scientist if he rejects this way of looking at the world. Even though no one may be logically compelled to accept the propositions inherent in our way of looking at the world, as these may be at root 'metaphysical' and 'unjustifiable', there would come a point where a man who refused to accept certain things as facts would have to be told 'our not doubting them all is simply our manner of judging, and therefore of acting'.*

Elsewhere, Wittgenstein stresses the communal aspect of common sense:

'We are quite sure of it' does not mean just that every single person is certain of it, but that we belong to a community which is bound together by science and education.**

So someone in our community who continually failed to judge and act in accordance with what we took to be a matter of common sense would simply be accounted eccentric or actually mad, however prophetic or visionary his beliefs were found in retrospect by later generations. Living in a given community imposes limits on the credible, just as much as the drive towards logical consistency in belief. As an illustration as to how far one is insulated by the beliefs of one's community from taking seriously what for other people is a matter of daily life, it might be worth considering just how widespread belief in magic is in the world,

* Wittgenstein, On Certainty, p 30

and hence how limited is the obviousness of some of what we take for granted. (This, of course, has nothing to do with the correctness of what we take for granted). No doubt, there will often be enough common ground elsewhere to carry on a reasonable discussion with someone whose belief in magic was quite extensive, and to that extent, there would still be an area of common sense between us, although it would not cover all of what we, in our community would call 'common sense'.

What we now want to examine briefly is the way in which the beliefs of a community can influence the evidence on the basis of which the beliefs are verified. For beliefs not only form an interlocking system, but they also determine the way in which a community looks at the world. To the extent that what is seen in a given situation depends partly on the beliefs (or hypotheses) of the people looking at that situation, people who have differing fundamental beliefs relevant to the situation may well be at cross purposes in discussion with each other. What seems to one side to strengthen their position may seem to the other side to strengthen theirs or to be unimportant, and vice versa. This fact is a consequence of the further fact, epitomised by Popper in the assertion that truth is not manifest. There are no brute facts at the basis of our beliefs, but what we believe is always mediated through interpretations of one sort and another. We have seen, in Chapter 1 how even basic factual assertions may be described as 'theory-laden'. This observation is striking only because many of the theories behind our factual assertions seem to find universal acceptance, and so we forget that there is a theoretical element even in a simple statement to the effect that what I now see is a glass. Indeed, translation and understanding of other people's beliefs is possible only on the assumption of a considerable agreement on basic facts.* However, in order to illustrate the inter-relation of fact and theory in determining evidence, we will

* c.f. above, pp 175-7

consider two examples, one social, one scientific, where it is possible to see a new theory influencing the selection and interpretation of evidence. Although we will suggest in the end that this phenomenon does not invalidate what we said in Part 2 about the rational criticism of belief systems, it is important to realise that evidence is not available which is itself independent of theory.

Our first example is made slightly more complicated because we can see in it both a change of nuance in the meaning of some key terms as well as an important change in attitude which results from people taking up the belief and which by a feedback effect helps to bring about the verification of the belief. About twenty years ago, it would have been eccentric to speak of the black ghettos in North American cities as 'colonies', but this is just what is being done now by black militants. Has this any plausibility as an objective analysis of the situation, or is it just a matter of sloganising? Let us assume that the over-riding purposes of colonisation are economic - this is notwithstanding the many people who have gone out to colonies to 'civilise' or evangelise - and that the economic situation, which consists in getting cheap raw materials and opening new markets for the industries of the colonising country is institutionalised so that not every member of the colonising class needs consciously to oppress the colonised and so that some members of the colonised people can be assimilated into the government and administration. The vast majority of the 'natives' in such a situation are economically and politically impotent; they cease to care about those areas of life over which they have no control and become 'lazy', because work does them no good. They seek emotional outlet in frenzied cults, alcohol etc., while pent up aggression is loosed in fights among themselves. At a late stage in the process, some natives are assimilated by the colonisers; in renouncing their own customs and religion these will

lose the trust of their own people.

All these aspects of colonialism are exemplified in the black ghetto, if we think of the cheap raw material as human labour. The ownership of houses, shops and produce is largely in the hands of whites, and the very things produced by the cheap black labour are re-sold in the ghettos at a profit. Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton write:

The black community perceives the 'white power structure' in very concrete terms. The man in the ghetto sees his white landlord come only to collect exorbitant rents and fail to make the necessary repairs, while both know that the white-dominated city building inspection department will wink at violations or impose only slight fines. The man in the ghetto sees the white policeman on the corner brutally manhandle a black drunkard in the doorway, and at the same time accept a pay-off from one of the agents of the white-controlled rackets. He sees the streets in the ghetto lined with uncollected garbage... *

Black leaders are seen to be integrated into the white power structure and manipulated by it - according to Carmichael and Hamilton, the classical colonial situation. The laziness of the American blacks has often been noticed, as has the high incidence among them of alcoholism, drug addiction and pentecostal sects. Finally the middle class negro is often regarded as having betrayed his fellow blacks by turning his back on them once he has successfully entered white society.

Of course, in our example the putative coloniser does not come from outside, but the force of this is diminished as an objection when one remembers South Africa and Rhodesia. What has been said should be enough to show that there are grounds in favour of the 'colonial' analysis. Its adoption represents what Kuhn would call a significant paradigm shift, because the black militant now sees the internal American situation as a colonial struggle, without any change in the material circumstances. It is true that once the analysis grows in acceptance there is a gradual hardening of attitudes all round; black self defence organisations start to defend the ghettos against the police (the invading army), black

* Black Power, Harmondsworth 1969, p 25

Our analysis of the black militant case is based on this account.

community organisations replace the civil rights movements, and there is a complementary hardening of attitudes among the whites. Because of the new attitude the material position does begin to change and the black case is 'proved' as a result of its own adoption.

However, before the belief had actually begun to bring about its own verification in new tangible effects, we can see it as a significantly different point of view from the normal one regarding the blacks in American cities, which saw integration as its goal and which was encouraged by successful assimilation of middle class negroes. This new attitude sees such piecemeal integration as failure, and as proof of the colonial nature of the situation. The same fact is used by one group to prove that advances are taking place in the society, and by the other group as a sign that the black community will never be able to stand on its own feet. The black militants' insight is incompatible with the hopeful 'liberal' view, and proponents of two views will presumably be more or less at cross purposes, as the same data mean such different things for each of them. But, as far as the militants' view is concerned, as Robert L. Scott, a commentator of the situation writes:

We must assume that their rhetoric makes clear the world as it is for many, perhaps most, Black Americans. The ghetto is a colony; the white is the enemy... Truth in a social sense is always created by the human beings who participate in its articulation. What at least a few members of the black minority see as truth, they see permeating the reality of America.*

The point to notice here is how this new theory for the first time 'makes clear' a problematical situation, and how it creates a new interpretation of the relevant evidence. We have tried to show how there is some justification for this new clarification, but that the justification will be acceptable only to those who are disposed to accept the theory.

Our second example is rather clearer cut, as there is no question of the changes of attitude resulting from the adoption of the belief themselves altering the situation, nor are there shifts of meaning in the key

* from The Rhetoric of Black Power, by Robert L. Scott and Wayne Brockriede New York, 1969, pp 143-4.

terms. Indeed, in it we have highlighted the fact that what we might take to be the basic evidential datum is itself a factor of the hypothesis which explains the datum. The example, given by Kuhn, concerns the change of aspect which took place with a perfectly familiar phenomenon, the pendulum. In fact, to speak of a pendulum immediately is really to miss the point of the example:

Since remote antiquity most people have seen one or another heavy body swinging back and forth on a string or chain until it finally comes to rest.*

The Aristotelians did not see this phenomenon as a pendulum at all; it was rather a case of constrained fall, in which the heavy body, in its attempt to reach its natural resting place (the centre of the earth) gets to its lowest point only after 'a tortuous motion and a considerable time'.

We see in this example the pendulum, a swinging body repeating the same motion over and over again, the extent of the swing depending on the length of the chain and not the heaviness of the body. Galileo, to whom we attribute this insight, also saw many other properties of the pendulum 'and constructed many of the most significant and original parts of his new dynamics around them'.

Why did that shift of vision occur? Through Galileo's individual genius, of course. But note that genius does not here manifest itself in more accurate or objective observation of the swinging body. Descriptively, the Aristotelian perception is just as accurate. When Galileo reported that the pendulum's period was independent of amplitude for amplitudes as great as 90° , his view of the pendulum led him to see far more regularity than we can now discover there. Rather, what seems to have been involved was the exploitation by genius of perceptual possibilities made available by a medieval paradigm shift.**

Kuhn goes on to describe how Galileo's approach to the problem had been made possible for him by the work of Buridan and Oresme in the fourteenth century, and how Oresme was the first to see a swinging stone as a pendulum.

* p 117

** p 118

The data and how phenomena are seen are transformed in a paradigm shift; Kuhn likens such transformations to those shifts of vision undergone by subjects of Gestalt experiments, and suggests that this may be why scientists who solve problems by new models often speak of 'lightening flashes' and of 'scales falling from the eyes'. Because the model or paradigm according to which a scientist looks at what he sees determines the relevant parameters in his experiments, the type of fact and law which is discovered will also be determined by the paradigm. Any idea that a scientist moves to his theories from perception of pure data is falsified not only by the fact that no satisfactory language of pure percepts has been developed, but also because such a language would have to be erected on the basis of those objects which the scientist works with. In fact, as Ryle points out in an interesting passage in The Concept of Mind, when we speak of something looking green, for example, what we say is dispositional in the sense that it is a matter of applying to the actual look of the object a rule or 'recipe' about the typical looks of green things. Thus to say that something is green is to refer to more than simply the observer's visual sensations; it is to bring what the observer sees under a fairly general perception recipe - an operation not in principle different from picking out common, fully-fledged objects, at least in its general and hypothetical implications.* On what we see immediately, or basically, Kuhn sums up:

As a result of the paradigm-embodied experience of the race, the culture, and finally, the profession, the world of the scientist has come to be populated with planets and pendulums, condensers and compound ores... Compared with these objects of perception, both meter stick readings and retinal imprints are elaborate constructs... This is not to suggest that pendulums, for example, are the only things a scientist could possibly see when looking at a swinging stone. (We have already noticed that members of another scientific community could see constrained fall). But it is to suggest that the scientist who looks at a swinging stone can have no experience that is in principle more elementary than seeing a pendulum.**

* c.f. Ryle Ch VII passim, esp pp 217-9

** p 127

And what shape that experience will take is determined by the paradigm (or conceptual system) of the community, although, of course, there are objective limits on possible plausible interpretations.

Kuhn draws an even stronger conclusion than that the evidence is interpreted in the light of the paradigm from the pendulum example and from others like it, such as Lavoisier's discovery of oxygen and all that implied where Priestly had seen only dephlogisticated air. He says that 'though the world does not change with a change of paradigm, the scientist afterward works in a different world'.* This is surely an exaggeration. The scientist before and after the paradigm shift works in the same world (and the same goes for people from radically differing belief backgrounds); it is just that, to take an example, Galileo and the Aristotelians saw the swinging stone phenomenon differently. It is not that Galileo would have been unable to understand what the constrained fall people were saying; he would have had no more difficulty in doing this than Kuhn himself who is apparently able to enter and leave several different worlds at will.

Once it is realised that people with one point of view are at least sometimes able to understand other points of view, and the way in which the other point of view interprets its evidence, the talk about the two groups being at cross purposes in their discussions loses some of its bite. Of course, each will interpret the evidence in his own way, and to that extent what each sees will be somewhat different. But this only takes us back to breakdown of communication again; it is not that one side cannot understand what the other side is doing, it is just that neither side is willing to renounce its pre-suppositions. Until some means is found of deciding between the competing paradigms, (or, as Kuhn would have it, until no one is left to defend one of them) there may be a deadlock,

*p120

but this does not mean that the only reasons for deciding between the competing paradigms are necessarily arbitrary and irrational. Indeed, it would not be difficult - though this is not the place to do it - to show how much better and more fruitful Galileo's interpretation of the swinging stone was than the Aristotelian, how, in other words Galileo's insight was a genuine clarification which Aristotelian assumptions would have made impossible. It is true that a new insight might well change the nature of a problem and with it, the form of the evidential basis, but once it is appreciated that all evidence is more or less theory-laden, this ceases to be a particular problem for us. What is important is to criticise and improve the theories, and in so doing, the evidence will also be refined and improved. Of course, it may not be easy to give a clear criterion of an 'improved' theory, but as far as the possibility of giving such a criterion goes, the absence of irrefutable and theory-independent evidence on which to judge competing theories would be an absolute block only for the dogmatic justificationist.*

Part 4 - Conclusion

In this chapter, we have tried to show how individual beliefs naturally form part of a more general context of beliefs. We have shown how a system of beliefs can be seen to answer the purely logical demand for consistency. In examining belief-contexts, we have seen that we naturally have an idea of what is believable, but that this idea is not necessarily equivalent to the idea of what is possible. In looking at the belief context as something held in common by a community as a whole, we were able to examine from a different angle the requirement stressed in Chapter 3 for an acceptance of a common sense as a condition of possibility of belief; belief cannot be seen in total abstraction from what is believed. Finally, we attempted to illustrate two cases in which the

* Lakatos (*loc cit*) attempts to give just such a criterion, while recognising no evidence is pure of theory or in principle uncriticisable.

beliefs of a community might be said to affect the evidential basis of the beliefs.

In stressing the contextual and social aspects of belief, we can see that the more interesting problems concerning the freedom of belief do not relate to individual beliefs in isolation. Granted that it is always psychologically possible for a person to hold on to a belief in face of all the evidence, there is not much more that can be said about this from a philosophical point of view. Such a person is behaving irrationally, and we hand him over to a psychiatrist if he behaves in this way too radically or too often. There is not really a philosophical problem here. What is far more important is the control a person has over the belief context in which he gradually learns to see the world - either in his infancy, or in learning some discipline such as physics. What has tended to emerge from this largely descriptive chapter is a process whereby the more deeply involved in making his system of beliefs explicit, the more committed to the system a man usually becomes, but also the more he is in fact able to criticise and change that system. Although Kuhn makes some play with the fact that significant scientific discoveries, where these have involved paradigm shifts, have usually been made by scientists new to the branch of science in question*, we could equally point out that such changes have only been made by scientists. They have not been made by oracle consultants.

It is only in making explicit the background of our beliefs - which is so largely taken for granted, as stressed in Chapters 1 and 5 - that we can see just what problems are involved and what might need to be examined further. It is this possibility of criticising our beliefs in the light of the problems they lead to that means that belief contexts are not prisons, despite the impression to the contrary often given by talk

* pp 89-90

of 'language games' and 'forms of life'. It is in this ability to criticise the ways of thinking that are current at any time, and in the imagination that is required to produce new and better ways to replace them that the rational man may continue to exercise freedom in his beliefs.

Bibliography

- Agassi, J. 'Sensationalism', Mind, Vol 75, 1966, pp 1-24
- Ammerman, R. R. 'Ethics and Belief', PAS, Vol 68, 1964-5, pp 257-266
- Anscombe, G. E. M. Intention, Oxford, 1957
- Aristotle De Anima
- Armstrong, D. M. A Materialist Theory of the Mind, London, 1968
- Aune, B. Knowledge, Mind and Nature, New York, 1967
- " " 'Statements and Propositions', Nous, Vol 1, 1967,
pp 215-229
- Ayer, A. J. Thinking and Meaning, London, 1947
- " " " The Origins of Pragmatism, London, 1968
- Bain, A. The Emotions and the Will, London, 1859
- Barnes, W. H. F. 'Ethics Without Propositions', SPAS, Vol 22, 1948,
pp 1-30
- Bartley, W. W. The Retreat to Commitment, London, 1964
- Beardmore, R. W. Moral Reasoning, London, 1969
- Bennett, J. Rationality, London, 1964
- Bergmann, G. The Metaphysics of Logical Positivism, Madison, 1967
- Black, M. 'Saying and Disbelieving', Analysis, Vol 13, 1952-3
pp 25-33
- Braithwaite, R. B. 'The Nature of Believing' in Griffiths (2), pp 28-40
- " " " 'Belief and Action', SPAS, Vol 20, 1946, pp 1-19
- Braybrooke, D. and Others 'Some Questions for Miss Anscombe about Intention',
Analysis, Vol 22, 1952, pp 49-54
- Brentano, F. Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt, edited Kraus, O.
2 Vols, Leipzig, 1924-5
- " " The True and the Evident, edited Chisholm, R. H.
London, 1956
- Burnyeat, M. F. 'Belief in Speech', PAS, Vol 71, 1967-8, pp 227-248
- Campbell, C. A. 'Towards a Definition of Belief' Philosophical
Quarterly, Vol 17, 1967, pp 204-220
- Carnap, R. Meaning and Necessity, Chicago, 1956

- Chisholm, R. M. 'Sentences about Believing' PAS, Vol 56, 1955-6
pp 125-148
- " " " Perceiving, Ithaca, New York, 1957
- " " " (editor) Realism and the Background of Phenomenology,
Glencoe, Ill, 1960
- " " " 'Notes on the Logic of Believing', Philosophy and
Phenomenological Research, Vol 24, 1963-4, pp 195-201
- " " " 'A Note on Saying: a Reply to Mr. Landesman', Analysis,
Vol 24, 1963-4, pp 182-4
- Chomsky, M. Review of Skinner's Verbal Behaviour, in The Structure
of Language, ed Fodor, J. & Katz, J. Englewood Cliffs,
New Jersey, 1964, pp 547-578
- Church, A. 'On Carnap's Analysis of Statements of Assertion and
Belief' in Philosophy and Analysis, ed Macdonald, M.,
Oxford, 1954, pp 125-8
- Cohen, G. A. 'Belief and Roles', PAS, Vol 70, 1966-7, pp 17-34
- Collins, A. W. 'Unconscious Beliefs', Journal of Philosophy, Vol 66,
1969, pp 667-680
- Cook Wilson, J. Statement and Inference, 2 Vols, Oxford, 1926
- Davidson, D. 'Truth and Meaning', Synthese, Vol 17, 1957, pp 304-323
- " " 'On Saying That' in Davidson and Hintikka, pp 158-174
- Davidson, D. and Hintikka, J. (editors) Words and Objections, Dordrecht-Holland, 1969
- Descartes, R. Philosophical Works, translated by Haldane, E. and
Ross, G. 2 Vols, 1969
- " " Discours de la Methode, texte et commentaire par
Gilson, E. Paris, 1930
- Deutscher, M. 'A Note on Saying and Disbelieving', Analysis,
Vol 25, 1964-5, pp 53-7
- Donnellan, K. S. 'Knowing What I am Doing', Journal of Philosophy,
Vol 60, 1963, pp 401-9
- Evans, J. L. 'Error and the Will', Philosophy, Vol 38, 1963,
pp 136-148
- Findlay, J. H. 'The Logic of Bewusstseinslagen', Philosophical
Quarterly, Vol 5, 1955, pp 57-68
- " " " Values and Intentions, London, 1961
- Flew, A. Hume's Philosophy of Belief, London 1961
- Frege, G. 'The Thought: A Logical Inquiry', Mind, Vol 65, 1956,
pp 289-311
- Gallie, W. B. Peirce and Pragmatism, Harmondsworth, 1952

- Chisholm, R. M. 'Sentences about Believing' PAS, Vol 56, 1955-6
pp 125-148
- " " " Perceiving, Ithaca, New York, 1957
- " " " (editor) Realism and the Background of Phenomenology,
Glencoe, Ill, 1960
- " " " 'Notes on the Logic of Believing', Philosophy and
Phenomenological Research, Vol 24, 1953-4, pp 195-201
- " " " 'A Note on Saying: a Reply to Mr. Landesman', Analysis,
Vol 24, 1963-4, pp 182-4
- Chomsky, N. Review of Skinner's Verbal Behaviour, in The Structure
of Language, ed Podor, J. & Katz, J. Englewood Cliffs,
New Jersey, 1964, pp 547-578
- Church, A. 'On Carnap's Analysis of Statements of Assertion and
Belief' in Philosophy and Analysis, ed Macdonald, M.,
Oxford, 1954, pp 125-8
- Cohen, G. A. 'Belief and Roles', PAS, Vol 70, 1965-7, pp 17-34
- Collins, A. W. 'Unconscious Beliefs', Journal of Philosophy, Vol 66,
1969, pp 667-680
- Cook Wilson, J. Statement and Inference, 2 Vols, Oxford, 1926
- Davidson, D. 'Truth and Meaning', Synthese, Vol 17, 1967, pp 304-323
- " " 'On Saying That' in Davidson and Hintikka, pp 158-174
- Davidson, D. and Hintikka, J. (editors) Words and Objections, Dordrecht-Holland, 1969
- Descartes, R. Philosophical Works, translated by Malone, H. and
Ross, G. 2 Vols, 1969
- " " Discours de la Methode, texte et commentaire par
Gilson, E. Paris, 1930
- Deutscher, M. 'A Note on Saying and Disbelieving', Analysis,
Vol 25, 1964-5, pp 53-7
- Donnellan, K. S. 'Knowing What I am Doing', Journal of Philosophy,
Vol 60, 1963, pp 401-9
- Evans, J. L. 'Error and the Will', Philosophy, Vol 38, 1963,
pp 136-148
- Findlay, J. M. 'The Logic of Bewusstseinslagen', Philosophical
Quarterly, Vol 5, 1955, pp 57-68
- " " " Values and Intentions, London, 1961
- Flew, A. Hume's Philosophy of Belief, London 1961
- Frege, G. 'The Thought: A Logical Inquiry', Mind, Vol 65, 1956,
pp 289-311
- Hallie, W. B. Peirce and Pragmatism, Harmondsworth, 1952

- Galton, F. Inquiries into the Human Faculty and Its Development, London, 1907
- Geach, P. T. Mental Acts, London, 1957
- " " " 'Assertion', Philosophical Review, Vol 74, 1965, pp 449-465
- Ginnane, W. J. 'Thoughts', Mind, Vol 69, 1960, pp 372-390
- Grice, H. P. 'The Causal Theory of Perception', SPAS, Vol 35 pp 121-152
- Griffiths, A. (1) 'On Belief' in Griffiths (2) pp 127-143
Phillips (2) (editor) Knowledge and Belief, Oxford 1967
- Hampshire, S. Thought and Action, London, 1959
- Hare, R. M. The Language of Morals, Oxford, 1952
- " " " Freedom and Reason, Oxford, 1963
- " " " contribution to the University discussion in New Essays in Philosophical Theology, edited by Flew, A. and MacIntyre, A., London, 1955, pp 99-103
- Hintikka, J. Knowledge and Belief, Ithaca, New York, 1962
- Hume, D. A Treatise of Human Nature, Oxford, 1896
- " " An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, Oxford, 1962
- James, W. Principles of Psychology, 2 Vols, London, 1901
- " " The Will to Believe, New York and London, 1902
- Kaplan, D. 'On Quantifying In' in Davidson and Hintikka, pp 206-242
- Klemke, E. D. The Epistemology of G. E. Moore, Evanston, 1969
- Kuhn, T. S. The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Chicago, 1962
- Lakatos, I. 'Criticism and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes', PAS, Vol 69, 1968-9, pp 149-186
- Landesman, C. 'A Note on Belief', Analysis, Vol 24, 1963-4, pp 180-2
- Lebacqz, J. Certitude et Volonté, Bruges, 1962
- Lehrer, K. 'Belief and Knowledge', Philosophical Review, Vol 77 1968, pp 491-8
- Levi, I. Gambling With Truth, New York and London, 1967
- Locke, D. 'Perceiving and Thinking', SPAS, Vol 42, 1968, pp 173-190
- Locke, J. An Essay Concerning Human Understanding
- MacIntyre, A.C. The Unconscious, London, 1958

- Bates, E. 'Synonymity' in Semantics and the Philosophy of Language, edited by Linsky, L., Illinois, 1952, pp 111-136
 " " Elementary Logic, London, 1965
 Mayo, B. 'Belief and Constraint', in Griffiths (2), pp 147-161
 Mill, James Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind, London, 1869
 Mill, J. S. A System of Logic, 2 Vols, 9th edition, London, 1875
 Miller, L. G. 'Descartes, Mathematics and God', Philosophical Review, Vol 66, 1957, pp 451-465
 Moore, G. E. The Philosophy of G. E. Moore, edited Schilpp, P. A., New York, 1952
 " " Some Main Problems of Philosophy, London, 1953
 Newman, J. H. A Grammar of Assent, New York, 1955
 O'Connor, D. J. 'Beliefs, Dispositions and Actions', PAS, Vol 69 1968-9, pp 1-16
 Ogden, C. K. and The Meaning of Meaning, London, 1930
 Richards, I. A.
 Peirce, C. S. Collected Papers, Cambridge, Mass., 8 Vols, 1931-1958
 Popper, K. R. The Open Society and Its Enemies, Vol 2, London, 1962
 " " " The Logic of Scientific Discovery, London, 1968
 " " " Conjectures and Refutations, London, 1969
 " " " 'Epistemology Without a Knowing Subject', in Philosophy Today No 2, ed Gill, J., New York and London, 1969 pp 225-277
 Price, H. H. Thinking and Experience, London, 1953
 " " " 'Belief and Will', SPAS, Vol 28, 1954, pp 1-26
 " " " 'Half-Belief' (symposium with Braithwaite, R. B.) SPAS, Vol 38, 1954, pp 149-174
 " " " Belief, London, 1969
 Putnam, H. 'Synonymity and the Analysis of Belief Sentences', Analysis, Vol 14, 1954, pp 114-122
 Quine, W. V. O. From a Logical Point of View, New York, 1963
 " " " " Word and Object, Cambridge, Mass, 1964
 " " " " The Ways of Paradox, New York, 1966
 Quinton, A. 'Knowledge and Belief' in The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, ed Edwards, P., New York and London, 8 Vols, 1967, Vol 4, pp 345-352
 Ramsey, F. P. The Foundations of Mathematics, London, 1931

- Wates, B. 'Synonymity' in Semantics and the Philosophy of Language, edited by Linsky, L., Illinois, 1952, pp 111-136
- " " Elementary Logic, London, 1965
- Mayo, B. 'Belief and Constraint', in Griffiths (2), pp 147-161
- Mill, James Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind, London, 1869
- Mill, J. S. A System of Logic, 2 Vols, 9th edition, London, 1875
- Miller, L. G. 'Descartes, Mathematics and God', Philosophical Review, Vol 66, 1957, pp 451-465
- Moore, G.E. The Philosophy of G. E. Moore, edited Schilpp, P.A., New York, 1952
- " " " Some Main Problems of Philosophy, London, 1953
- Newman, J. H. A Grammar of Assent, New York, 1955
- O'Connor, D. J. 'Beliefs, Dispositions and Actions', PAS, Vol 69 1968-9, pp 1-16
- Ogden, C. K. and Richards, I. A. The Meaning of Meaning, London, 1930
- Peirce, C. S. Collected Papers, Cambridge, Mass., 8 Vols, 1931-1958
- Popper, K. R. The Open Society and Its Enemies, Vol 2, London, 1962
- " " " The Logic of Scientific Discovery, London, 1968
- " " " Conjectures and Refutations, London, 1969
- " " " 'Epistemology Without a Knowing Subject', in Philosophy Today No 2, ed Gill, J., New York and London, 1969 pp 225-277
- Price, H. H. Thinking and Experience, London, 1953
- " " " 'Belief and Will', SPAS, Vol 28, 1954, pp 1-26
- " " " 'Half-belief' (symposium with Brithwaite, R. B.) SPAS, Vol 38, 1964, pp 149-174
- " " " Belief, London, 1969
- Putnam, H. 'Synonymity and the Analysis of Belief Sentences', Analysis, Vol 14, 1954, pp 114-122
- Quine, W. V. O. From a Logical Point of View, New York, 1963
- " " " " Word and Object, Cambridge, Mass, 1964
- " " " " The Ways of Paradox, New York, 1966
- Quinton, A. 'Knowledge and Belief' in The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, ed Edwards, P., New York and London, 8 Vols, 1967, Vol 4, pp 345-352
- Ramsey, F. P. The Foundations of Mathematics, London, 1931

- Russell, B. Analysis of Mind, London, 1921
 " " Logic and Knowledge, London, 1956
 " " Philosophical Essays, revised edition, London, 1966
- Ryle, G. The Concept of Mind, London, 1949
- Sartre, J. P. L'Être et le Néant, Paris, 1963
- Scheffler, I. 'On Synonymity and Indirect Discourse', Philosophy of Science, Vol 22, 1955, pp 39-44
 " " The Anatomy of Inquiry, London, 1964
- Schiller, F. C. S. Problems of Belief, London, 1924
- Scriven, M. review of Hampshire's Thought and Action, Mind, Vol 71 1962, pp 100-7
- Sleigh, R. 'On Quantifying Into Epistemic Contexts', Nous, Vol 1 1967, pp 23-31
- Soltis, J. F. Seeing, Knowing, and Believing, London, 1966
- Spinoza Ethics
- Stevenson, C. L. Ethics and Language, New Haven, 1944
- Stout, G. F. Analytic Psychology, 2 Vols, London, 1896
- Strawson, P. F. 'Truth', SPAS, Vol 24, 1951, pp 129-156
 " " " Introduction to Logical Theory, London, 1952
- Stroud, B. 'Conventionalism and the Indeterminacy of Translation' in Davidson and Hintikka, pp 82-96
- Thomson, J. F. 'Truth-bearers and the Trouble about Propositions', Journal of Philosophy, Vol 66, 1969, pp 737-747
- Toulmin, S. 'Conceptual Revolutions in Science', Synthese, Vol 17, 1967, pp 75-90
- Urmson, J. O. 'Parenthetical Verbs', Mind, Vol 61, 1952, pp 480-496
- Watkins, J. W. N. 'Confirmable and Influential Metaphysics', Mind, Vol 67, 1958, pp 344-365
 " " " " 'Hume, Carnap and Popper', in The Problem of Inductive Logic, ed Lakatos, I., Amsterdam, 1968, pp 271-282
 " " " " 'CCR - A Refutation', unpublished paper
- Willis, R. 'Professor Black on Saying and Disbelieving', Analysis, Vol 14, 1953-4, pp 24-5
- Wittgenstein, L. The Blue and Brown Books, Oxford, 1958
 " " Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, London, 1963
 " " Philosophical Investigations, Oxford, 1967
 " " On Certainty, Oxford, 1969