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Subjectivity and the objects of belief.

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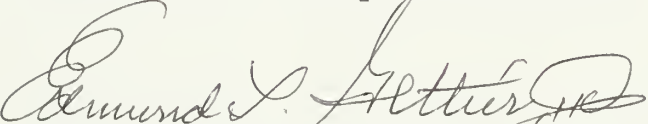
SUBJECTIVITY AND THE OBJECTS OF BELIEF

A Dissertation Presented

by

NEIL P. FEIT

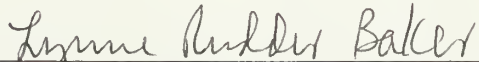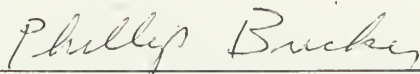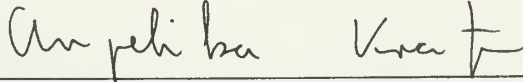SUBJECTIVITY AND THE OBJECTS OF BELIEF

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ABSTRACT

SUBJECTIVITY AND THE OBJECTS OF BELIEF

MAY 1996

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Directed by: Professor Edmund Gettier

This dissertation is a study of the problem of beliefs about oneself, or so-called **de se** beliefs: for example, the beliefs that I would express by saying 'I am left-handed' or 'I am in Massachusetts'. The problem arises against the background conception of belief as a propositional attitude, i.e., as a relation between conscious subjects and abstract entities that are either true or false absolutely.

Many philosophers have recently argued that the intentional objects of one's **de se** beliefs could not be propositions: since, e.g., I can believe the proposition that Neil Feit is left-handed without believing myself to be left-handed (if I somehow fail to realize that I am Neil Feit), and I can believe any proposition expressed by a sentence of the form 'the F is left-handed' - where 'the F' is a qualitative description - without believing myself to be left-handed (if I do not think that 'the F' denotes me).

I take the position that the argument is sound, and, after surveying various attempts to solve the problem, I defend the self-ascription view of belief: viz., the view

that to have a belief is to ascribe a property to oneself.
For example, I believe that I am left-handed simply by self-
ascribing the property of being left-handed.

I defend the view against various objections to it,
discuss its relations to other views about the objects of
belief and the other attitudes, and maintain that it can
account for the acceptance of propositions (**de dicto** belief)
and for beliefs about particular individuals (**de re** belief)
as well as for beliefs directly about oneself. I argue that
belief states are best taken to be self-ascribed properties,
and try to solve some problems about **de re** belief from the
perspective of the self-ascription view.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Suppose that we are acquainted with two people, Adams and Barber, say, each of whom believes that Adams is a spy: i.e., Adams believes that he himself is a spy, and Barber believes that Adams is a spy. (Perhaps Barber sees Adams wearing a trench coat, and believes that anyone who wears a trench coat is a spy.) It is quite plausible to assume that in this case Adams and Barber believe the same proposition, viz., the proposition that Adams is a spy. Whatever sort of thing we take a proposition to be, it seems clear that if Barber can believe the proposition that Adams is a spy, then Adams could believe this proposition while at the same time failing to believe **himself** to be a spy. For example, Adams might see himself in a mirror, wearing a trench coat, but fail to realize that he is looking at himself.

Suppose that there is a psychological law to the effect that everyone who believes himself or herself to be a spy is **ipso facto** a chronic paranoid. With respect to the above example, we could infer from this that Adams is a chronic paranoid, but not that Barber is. However, it appears that we could not infer that Adams is a chronic paranoid merely from the fact that he believes the **proposition** that Adams is a spy - since he could, like Barber, come to believe this proposition by entering into some sort of epistemic contact with himself (e.g., by perceiving himself in a mirror),

without thinking of himself, so to speak, as himself. Thus
the above "law" could not be formulated as follows: for any
subject x, if x believes the proposition that x is a spy,
then x is a chronic paranoid.

What, then, distinguishes one's believing oneself to be
a spy, on the one hand, from one's believing the proposition
that one is a spy, on the other? More generally, for any
property F whatsoever, what distinguishes believing oneself
to have F from believing the proposition that one has F? If
there is a genuine difference here, as there certainly seems
to be, then there is also a problem about how to account for
many of our beliefs about ourselves (such as Adams's belief
that he himself is a spy) - i.e., our **de se** beliefs - in
terms of a relation between believers and propositions. If
there is more to Adams's belief that he himself is a spy
than belief in the proposition that Adams is a spy, how is
such a belief to be characterized? This is the problem of
de se belief, an instance of the more comprehensive problem
of **de se** psychological attitudes. There are other ways to
present the problem, and some of these will be considered in
the next two chapters.

My main concern in this dissertation is the problem of
de se belief, although I will at times discuss analogous
problems having to do with the other so-called propositional
attitudes. One's **de se** beliefs are one's beliefs about what
features one has, understood broadly so as to include, e.g.,

my beliefs that I am Neil Feit, that I am left-handed, that I am presently in Massachusetts, and so on. With respect to commonsense psychology, **de se** attitudes are neither unusual nor unimportant; in fact, they are commonplace and central to the prediction and explanation of purposeful behavior. This is especially clear in the case of desire and the locutions that we ordinarily use to attribute desire. For example, the sentences 'Neil wants to be healthy', 'Neil wants lunch' and 'Neil wants to catch the seven o'clock train' all attribute **de se** desires to me. (For the most part, I shall not be concerned with the analysis of attributions of **de se** attitudes. My main topic is the metaphysics of such attitudes rather than the semantic analysis of the sentences used to report them.)

Some notion of a proposition is essential to the statement of the present problem. Like most other problems, the problem of **de se** attitudes arises only given a certain background. In this case, the background is a cornerstone of contemporary philosophy of mind: viz., the view that psychological attitudes (or, at least, many sorts of them) are relations between conscious subjects and abstract propositions. I make only two assumptions about the existence and nature of propositions. The first is that there are propositions; and the second is that propositions have truth values in an absolute sense - truth values that do not vary from time to time, place to place, etc. This

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second assumption is intended to be equivalent to the claim
that propositions are the sorts of things that have
possible-worlds truth conditions. I will not review here
the many good reasons for thinking that belief, whatever
else it may be, is a propositional attitude.

The differences between the various conceptions of
propositions do not bear on the problem of de se belief, so
long as propositions are taken to have possible-worlds truth
conditions. I plan to remain neutral between the different
accounts of propositions, then, unless I am discussing the
views of a philosopher who is committed to one rather than
another of those accounts. Two general accounts will be
relevant to the views being considered in the dissertation.
The first takes propositions to be functions from possible
worlds into truth values, or, equivalently, sets of possible
worlds (it thus requires a view about the nature of possible
worlds). The second takes propositions to be complexes or
structured entities made up of properties (or concepts of
properties) and objects (or perhaps just concepts of
objects) (it thus requires a view about the kind of
structures involved).

Again, the problem to be considered in this thesis is
independent of the particulars of these competing views
about propositions. It thus cuts across the various
accounts of what sorts of things propositions are. So,
while it may be helpful (at least **prima facie**) in order to

solve some problems about mathematical beliefs, and about the mental processes essential to deduction, to distinguish between necessarily equivalent propositions - as on the structured propositions view - it does not matter to the issues being considered here.

In this thesis, I will not be discussing certain questions that are more or less related to any work in the metaphysics of mental content. I will not, for instance, have anything to say about issues concerning degrees of belief, or of any other attitude. For simplicity, I will treat belief as if it were an all-or-nothing affair rather than something that comes in degrees; but what I say can easily be adapted to an account of degrees of belief, e.g., a straightforward account that introduces a probability distribution, for each subject, over various objects of belief, instead of a single object of belief. (Just for now, we can accept the background view of belief as a propositional attitude and suppose that the objects of belief are propositions.)

I will also have nothing to say in this dissertation about issues having to do with the explication of the concept of belief in non-semantic or non-intentional terms. I am concerned here with a presentation and evaluation of various theories about the objects of belief, with respect to the problem of **de se** belief, and not with the question whether there is a correct analysis of belief in purely

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naturalistic terms. I do think that, as a matter of contingent fact, intentional mental states are physical states; but I do not think that anything I say in the thesis either requires or precludes any sort of reductive analysis of the attitudes.

As I mentioned earlier, my primary focus is not on the semantic analysis of belief sentences or of attributions of attitudes in general. My aim is to approach the problem of **de se** belief from a more metaphysical point of view, by evaluating some accounts of the belief relation (and hence of the objects of belief) in light of the problem of **de se** belief. However, from time to time I will not be able to avoid making some brief remarks about the semantics of belief sentences. Most of these remarks occur within the scope of discussions of particular metaphysical views of belief, and are not general recommendations for the treatment of attitude reports.

Chapter 2 of this thesis contains a discussion of the Triadic View of belief, which has been extracted from the work of David Kaplan, John Perry, Nathan Salmon and others. Perry, for example, adopts this view expressly to handle the problem of **de se** belief. According to the sort of account provided by Perry and the others, one's belief in a certain proposition is mediated, in a way, by what has come to be called a belief state or propositional guise.

So, our make-believe spy, Adams, believes the proposition that Adams is a spy in virtue of being in a certain belief state - a state that typically disposes a speaker of English, for example, to assent to a sentence like 'I am a spy'. Barber, on the other hand, believes this very same proposition in virtue of being in a different belief state - a state that might dispose a speaker of English to assent to a sentence such as 'he is a spy', or perhaps 'the person I am looking at is a spy'. Many of the psychological differences between Adams and Barber (maybe, for example, the fact that Adams is paranoid while Barber isn't) are taken by proponents of the Triadic View to be explained, at least in part, by the differences in their belief states. What is essential to belief, on this view, is the three-place relation between subjects, belief states and believed-true propositions.

In chapter 3, I consider a different approach to the problem of **de se** belief, due chiefly to the work of David Lewis and Roderick Chisholm. Lewis and Chisholm have proposed what I shall call the Property Theory of belief. Like the Triadic View, the Property Theory rejects the idea that belief, or the relation that is essential to belief, is a two-place relation between a subject and a proposition. Unlike the Triadic View, however, the Property Theory implies that belief is in fact a binary relation - a relation between subjects and properties.

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According to the view held by Lewis and Chisholm, to
have a belief is to self-ascribe a property. When Adams
believes himself to be a spy, for example, he does so in
virtue of self-ascribing the property of being a spy. The
difference between Adams and Barber is thus accounted for in
terms of the fact that they each have a different object of
belief. Barber does not self-ascribe the property of being
a spy, and so the property of being a spy is not an object
of his belief. Instead, Barber self-ascribes a property
such as the property of looking at someone who is a spy, or
looking at a man in a trench coat who is a spy, or some such
property.

It might appear at first glance that the Triadic View
and the Property Theory are competing views of belief that
could not both be true. In chapter 4, however, I argue that
the two theories are not really competitors. After giving a
precise formulation of each view, I try to show that on very
plausible assumptions, the two views are in a strong sense
equivalent. Part of this amounts to arguing for the claim
that the correct theory of belief states is the theory of
self-ascription of properties. Finally, in the last part of
the chapter, I provide a set of principles that connect a
subject's self-ascribed properties with the propositions
that the subject may be said to believe.

Both the Triadic View and the Property Theory reject
what I shall call the doctrine of propositional objects of

belief: viz., the view that belief, or any relation that is essential to belief, is merely a binary relation between a conscious subject and an abstract proposition. However, some philosophers - most notably Robert Stalnaker - have argued that the problem of de se belief can be solved without resorting to a view that rejects the doctrine of propositional objects of belief. In chapter 5, I examine the attempt to solve the problem while maintaining this doctrine.

I also consider, in chapter 5, an argument given by Lewis against any view like Stalnaker's: Lewis's case of the two gods. Despite Stalnaker's assertion that Lewis's argument begs the question, I find the argument persuasive. I try to sort out the details and solidify the argument against the doctrine of propositional objects of belief. I also present a related argument against Stalnaker's view, which is based upon another, related, argument sketched by Lewis.

The remainder of the thesis consists mainly of a defense of the Property Theory as a view of belief and an application of the theory to some problems having to do with de re belief. My main thesis is that the Property Theory is a better alternative than any version of the doctrine of propositional objects of belief.

In chapter 6, I consider various arguments that have been raised against the Property Theory. The arguments that

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I survey are intended to refute any version of the Property Theory, rather than just, say, Lewis's version or Chisholm's version. (The differences between these two versions of the same general view are chiefly due to the different theories of properties held by the two philosophers.) In each case, I focus on a careful presentation and explanation of the argument. I do not find any of the arguments to be sound, and in each case, I present what I take to be the best objection to the argument. Although I maintain that each argument against the Property Theory is unsuccessful, I do think that each one of them raises some interesting questions about the objects of belief.

Finally, in chapter 7, I turn to a discussion of some issues concerning the relations between the Property Theory and **de re** belief. I first briefly review Lewis's account of the nature of belief in general, and his analysis of **de re** belief in particular. After taking a look at what I think is an unsuccessful argument against Lewis's account of **de re** belief, I present a case that I suggest is a counterexample to Lewis's analysis: I claim that the analysis implies that a certain subject has a **de re** belief about a particular individual, when intuitively it seems that the subject has no such **de re** belief. I then suggest a way in which we might modify Lewis's account in order to give a plausible, property-theoretic view of belief **de re**.

In the remainder of chapter 7, I consider (within the framework of the Property Theory) some questions concerning **de re** beliefs about pluralities and the individuals that are contained within them. In particular, I ask whether it is always necessary, in order to have a **de re** belief about a given individual, to be acquainted uniquely with that individual - i.e., to stand in a certain relation of acquaintance to that individual and only to that individual. I suggest that it is not necessary in some cases where the subject is acquainted uniquely with a plurality of things that contains the individual. I also try to formulate some principles, through a systematic study of cases, connecting plurally **de re** beliefs with individually **de re** beliefs.

CHAPTER 2

THE TRIADIC VIEW OF BELIEF

In a number of influential papers including "The
Problem of the Essential Indexical,"[1] John Perry suggests
that certain features of some of our attitudes about or
toward ourselves tell against the traditional doctrine of
propositional objects of belief, or the view that belief is
ultimately a binary relation between a conscious subject and
an abstract proposition. A proposition, on this view, is a
bearer of truth or falsehood in an absolute sense, and not
merely for a person, or at a time.[2] The attitudes that are
currently in question Perry calls "locating beliefs" - they
are "one's beliefs about where one is, when it is, and who
one is."[3]

In the first two sections of this chapter, I briefly
review the problem that leads Perry to the alternative view
that he favors, and discuss the theory and some of its
consequences. According to Perry, what often explains our
behavior is not merely the fact that we believe a certain
proposition, but rather the fact that, roughly, we believe

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[1]Perry (1979). I will cite a reprinted version of
Perry's paper in Salmon and Soames (1988), pp. 83-101.

[2]Perry favors a theory of propositions according to
which they have a sort of internal structure akin to the
structure of the natural language sentences that express
them. I will discuss this additional constraint upon the
nature of propositions only when its details are relevant to
the discussion of Perry's treatment of belief.

[3]Salmon and Soames (1988), p. 85.

it in a certain way, in virtue of being in what he calls a belief state. If this view is correct, then in some of our successful psychological explanations we convey information about these belief states, as well as about believed-true propositions. It may even be the case that we quantify implicitly over belief states in all of our ordinary talk about what we believe.

In the third section, I discuss the very similar and somewhat more detailed view held by Nathan Salmon. Salmon and Perry acknowledge a debt to the work of David Kaplan, who also holds what I will call the Triadic View of belief. Salmon, however, is primarily interested in the philosophy of language, and in section four of this chapter I briefly explore some semantic views about attributions of locating beliefs that presuppose the Triadic View.

2.1 The Messy Shopper Puzzle

Perry presents the well known case of the messy shopper as a puzzle for the doctrine of propositional objects of belief, which implies that change in belief is necessarily change in a believed-true proposition. He originally describes the case as follows:

> I once followed a trail of sugar on a supermarket floor, pushing my trolly down the aisle on one side of a tall counter and back along the aisle on the other, seeking the shopper with the torn bag to tell him he was making a mess. With each trip around the counter, the trail became thicker. But

> I seemed unable to catch up. Finally it dawned on
> me. I was the shopper I was trying to catch.[4]

The problem for the proponent of the doctrine of propositional objects of belief is to pick out two distinct propositions: first, the one Perry believed before his epiphany, viz., the proposition that he would have expressed by saying 'the shopper with the torn bag is making a mess'; and second, the proposition he comes to believe, the one he would express by saying 'I am making a mess'. According to Perry,

> I believed at the outset that the shopper with a
> torn bag was making a mess. And I was right. But
> I did not believe that I was making a mess. That
> seems to be something I came to believe. And when
> I came to believe that, I stopped following the
> trail around the counter, and rearranged the torn
> bag in my trolly.[5]

We explain why Perry stopped to rearrange the bag of sugar in part by conveying information about the relevant change in his beliefs. Since this change in belief is what explains his mess-assuaging behavior, the doctrine of propositional objects of belief must be able to provide the propositions to give a plausible account for the change.

Perry favors an account of propositions according to which any two sentences express the same proposition only if they involve the same concepts, and concern the same objects

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[4]Ibid., p. 83.

[5]Ibid.

and relations.[6] The proposition that Clinton is bigger than Reich is not the same as the proposition that the president of the U.S. is bigger than the Secretary of Labor, for example, since although both concern Clinton and Reich and the 'bigger than' relation, only the latter involves the concept of being the president of the U.S.

This view of propositions need not be worked out in great detail in order to identify what Perry believed, according to the doctrine of propositional objects of belief, before he discovered that he himself had been making a mess. He believed the proposition that the shopper with the torn bag was making a mess. This proposition is somehow made up, in part, out of the individual concept of being a shopper of a certain sort, and the property of making a mess (and perhaps a certain moment or duration of time). While the proposition concerns Perry in that he accidentally makes it true, it does not involve him essentially, and neither Perry himself, nor the concept of being Perry, nor even the concept of being called 'Perry', is a constituent of the proposition.

The problem for the doctrine of propositional objects of belief arises when the task is to identify the belief that Perry comes to have when he discovers that he himself is making a mess - the proposition that he would express by saying 'I am making a mess', or some such thing. Again, the

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[6]See ibid., p. 86.

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doctrine must hold that it is his coming to believe this proposition that explains why he stops following the trail of sugar on the floor and rearranges his own torn bag.

Perry first notes that independently of a context, the sentence 'I am making a mess' does not express a proposition since "this sentence is not true or false absolutely, but only as said by one person or another; had another shopper said it when I did, he would have been wrong."[7]

What about the proposition that Perry is making a mess? This may be a singular proposition, made up of Perry himself and the property of making a mess; or, it may be a quasi-singular proposition made up out of the individual concept of being Perry. Could this be the proposition that Perry discovers? He argues that it could not. The proposition that he discovers explains some interesting aspect of his behavior, whereas the proposition that Perry is making a mess does not. Attributing to him the belief that Perry is making a mess explains his behavior only on the assumption that he believes that he is Perry. It seems that he could come to believe the proposition that Perry is making a mess without thereby coming to believe that he himself is making a mess - e.g., he might see himself in a mirror and fail to recognize himself.[8] So, the argument goes, the proposition

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[7]Ibid., p. 87.

[8]This assumes that seeing a particular person, under good conditions, etc., is sufficient for believing a singular, or object-dependent, proposition about that person.

that Perry is making a mess cannot be the one that he comes to believe when he learns that he himself is making a mess.

Perhaps there is less need to argue against the claim that, of necessity, when Perry discovers himself to be the mess-maker, he thinks of himself under an individual concept with some descriptive content. According to this claim, the proposition that Perry comes to believe is constituted by the individual concept in question as well as by the concept or property of making a mess. But Perry argues that this suggestion does not work. He writes:

> even if I was thinking of myself as, say, the only bearded philosopher in a Safeway store west of the Mississippi, the fact that I came to believe that the only such philosopher was making a mess explains my action only on the assumption that I believed that I was the only such philosopher, which brings in the indexical again.[9]

On the doctrine of propositional objects of belief, the fact that Perry comes to believe a particular proposition explains why he engages in some mess-assuaging behavior or other. However, the fact that he comes to believe the proposition that the only bearded philosopher in a Safeway store west of the Mississippi is making a mess does not explain such activity. The same goes for all propositions that are expressed by sentences lacking indexical terms designating Perry.

As Perry observes, the only way to preserve the force of an explanation in which the above proposition is

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[9]Salmon and Soames (1988), p. 88.

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expressed is to add to it by saying something like 'and Perry believes that **he** is the only bearded philosopher in a Safeway store west of the Mississippi'. As Perry also observes, however, this brings the entire problem back anew. It seems that there is no way for the proponent of the doctrine of propositional objects of belief to say just which proposition Perry comes to believe when he comes to believe that **he himself** is the only bearded philosopher....

Reflection on the case of the messy shopper shows that some of our belief attributions are essentially indexical: couched partly in terms of indexicals, the substitution of which with non-indexical terms renders the attributions devoid of their original explanatory force or meaning. I take this to be a claim in epistemology, or perhaps the philosophy of language. Perry suggests that a metaphysical result follows from this (much like the way in which the claim that the word 'red' expresses the property of being red entails that there is the property of being red). The result is that the doctrine of propositional objects of belief lacks the resources to account for, and hence is refuted by, cases in which such attributions are true, like that of the messy shopper. According to Perry, "there is something lacking in the propositions offered by the doctrine, a missing indexical ingredient."[10]

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[10]Ibid.

Since we could not find a proposition - a truth-value bearer in an absolute sense - that would explain Perry's behavior if he were to come to believe it, it seems likely that there is no such proposition; for surely we knew well enough where to search. But the doctrine of propositional objects of belief implies that there is such a proposition, indeed, that it is his coming to believe this proposition that explains why Perry does what he does. Perry concludes that we ought instead to search for an alternative to views of belief as a two-place relation. I will defer until chapter 5 a detailed discussion of possible objections to Perry's argument, from the point of view of an adherent to the doctrine of propositional objects of belief.

2.2 Perry's Solution to the Puzzle

The solution to the problem of the essential indexical favored by Perry involves viewing belief as a three-place relation between a subject, a proposition, and a belief state. What determines the truth, or falsehood, of attributions of belief to someone is her being, or not being, one of the **relata** of such a relation. He also maintains that we typically make implicit reference to belief states in our talk about beliefs, in particular when we make essentially indexical belief attributions, or generalizations about locating beliefs:

> We use sentences with indexicals . . . to
> individuate belief states, for the purposes of
> classifying believers in ways useful for
> explanation and prediction. That is, belief
> states individuated in this way enter into our
> commonsense theory about human behaviour and more
> sophisticated theories emerging from it.[11]

We can think of a belief state, roughly, as a way of assenting to, or believing, a proposition. To say that belief states somehow play a role in the comparison of believers and their actions, and that they are sometimes individuated by sentences containing indexicals, is surely to say something about belief states. However, a more precise and thorough characterization of them is needed.

Perry suggests that it is important, in order to understand our own belief states, that we realize that they can be individuated by sentences of natural language. On this picture, for example, there is a belief state such that only those people in it are disposed to utter a token of the sentence 'I am making a mess'. Perry comes to be in this belief state when he realizes that the torn bag of sugar is his own. Were someone else to be in the same belief state, on this view, she would thereby believe a proposition that is distinct from the one that Perry in fact believes.

Perry certainly does not claim to have analyzed the notion of a belief state, or to have given necessary and sufficient conditions for being in a certain belief state, in terms of a disposition to utter or otherwise assent to a

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[11]Ibid., p. 98.

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particular sentence. He says only the following:

> That we individuate belief states in this way
> doubtless has something to do with the fact that
> one criterion for being in the states we
> postulate, at least for articulate, sincere
> adults, is being disposed to utter the indexical
> sentence in question.[12]

Clearly Perry is wise not to say that being disposed to utter a certain sentence is both a necessary and sufficient condition for being in a given belief state. For one thing, plenty of people who do not speak English - and hence are not disposed to utter any English sentences - have been in the same belief state that led Perry to rearrange the bag of sugar in his grocery cart. Moreover, such an analysis would have the surely implausible result that creatures without language could not be in belief states.

Perry also acknowledges that "the characterization of one's belief states may include sentences without any indexical element."[13] If two people are in a belief state in which they are disposed to utter 'Everest is [has always been, always will be] the tallest mountain', then each of them is related to the same proposition. We might take the view that the proposition that Everest is the tallest mountain has as a constituent Mt. Everest itself, i.e., that it is a **de re** or singular proposition. Perry takes such a view. But a belief state that is characterized by a non-

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[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid., p. 99.

indexical sentence may also relate someone to a proposition that does not have a (concrete) individual as a part. In such a case, the belief relation relates a subject, a belief state, and a **de dicto** or general proposition.

In the cases of belief states that are in fact characterized by sentences with indexical terms, two people in the same belief state will not in general believe the same proposition - i.e., each may be related to that same belief state and a different proposition. If I were in the same belief state that Perry was in, for example, I would not be related to the same proposition to which he was related; rather, I would be related to the proposition that Feit is making a mess.

On the other hand, also in cases where belief states are characterized by sentences with indexicals, two people in different belief states will not in general believe distinct propositions. Consider the supermarket manager, who sees Perry leaving a sugary trail all over the store, and is disposed to utter 'he is making a mess'. In virtue of being in such a belief state, the manager believes the same proposition that Perry believes when he identifies himself with the messy shopper: the proposition that Perry is making a mess. Perry himself is related to this proposition and a different belief state.[14]

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[14]The same might be true for two people who are disposed to utter 'Twain lived in Hartford', and 'Clemens lived in Hartford', respectively. These people, perhaps,

Perry sums up these points as follows:

> We have here a metaphysically benign form of limited accessibility. Anyone at any time can have access to any proposition. But not in any way. Anyone can believe of John Perry that he is making a mess. And anyone can be in the belief state classified by the sentence 'I am making a mess'. But only I can have that belief by being in that state.[15]

According to the account of the case of the messy shopper offered by Perry, the change in Perry's behavior is explained not by his coming to believe a new proposition, but by his coming to be in a new belief state. Before he realizes that he himself is the shopper with the torn bag (but after he has noticed the trail of sugar on the floor), Perry believes the proposition that Perry is making a mess. Perhaps he believes this proposition in part because he is in a belief state that disposes him to utter or somehow assent to a sentence like 'the shopper who left that trail of sugar on the floor is making a mess', and in part because he happens to be the shopper whose trail of sugar he is now observing. (Perhaps he would need to be in a position to demonstrate himself, in a mirror, for example, in order to believe this proposition; but at this point I am not much concerned with what it takes, according to the proponent of the Triadic View, to believe a singular proposition.)

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are in different belief states, each characterized by a non-indexical sentence. But it is at least plausible to claim that they believe the same proposition.

[15]Salmon and Soames (1988), p. 99.

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What explains the change in his behavior is his coming
to believe this same proposition in virtue of being in a
new, "essentially indexical" belief state - a state that
disposes him to utter or otherwise assent to the indexical
sentence 'I am making a mess'. Perry comes to believe, in a
new way, the proposition that he already believes in some
other way. The moral: change in belief is not necessarily
change in propositions believed.

2.3 Salmon and the BEL Relation

I have said that on Perry's view belief is not a two-
place relation between a subject and a proposition, but
rather is a three-place relation between a subject, a
proposition and a belief state. In other terminology, this
is the view that there are two objects of belief rather than
just one.[16] (Perry, however, might object to the use of
this terminology, since he reserves the term 'object of
belief' for the believed-true proposition.)

The first of these objects is, of course, a proposition
(Lewis and Perry use the word 'proposition' in different
senses, but let me continue for the moment to use it to
refer to a kind of structured entity made up out of
properties, relations, perhaps physical objects, etc.). On

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[16]Lewis gives this interpretation of Perry's view in
Lewis (1979). My references to this paper are to a reprint
in Lewis (1983a). Lewis bases his remarks on Perry (1977).

Lewis's characterization of Perry's view, "the second object [of belief] is a function that takes the subject as argument and delivers as value the first object...."[17] Let us, for the time being, accept this characterization and identify a belief state with a function from (possible) subjects into propositions.[18]

Some philosophers writing recently on this topic - notably Nathan Salmon and Robert Stalnaker - have suggested that Perry's account is not really incompatible with the doctrine of propositional objects of belief. In **Frege's Puzzle**, Salmon notes that Perry takes the problem of the essential indexical to tell against an "account of belief as a binary relation between believers and propositions, sometimes singular propositions."[19] Salmon, however, goes on to claim that the doctrine is a consequence of Perry's own account of belief. "In fact," he writes, "Perry's solution apparently preserves this binary relational account, and couples it with an existential analysis of

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[17]Lewis (1983a), p. 151.

[18]Consider someone - call him 'Terry' - who at some time is disposed to utter sincerely a token of 'I am making a mess'. Terry, at this time, is in the same belief state that Perry comes to be in when he realizes that his bag of sugar is torn. On the current view, each is related to - i.e., has as an object of belief - the function that takes Terry into the proposition that Terry is making a mess, and Perry into the proposition that Perry is making a mess. This accounts for the way in which Terry and Perry believe alike.

[19]Salmon (1986), p. 173 (fn. 1 to chapter 9).

belief in terms of belief states."[20] What, exactly, is at issue here?

It appears that Perry does endorse an existential analysis of belief **sentences** according to which a sentence of the form 'S believes that p' is true if and only if there is some belief state b such that the person denoted by 'S' is in b, and the value of b for this person is the proposition named by the expression 'that p'.[21] On this view, the truth-maker for attributions of belief is a three-place relation between a subject, a proposition and a belief state. Following Salmon, let us call this relation 'BEL'.

Suppose we have a person called 'S', a proposition called 'P', and a variable over belief states, denoted by 'x'. Then it might be the case that there is an x such that BEL(S, P, x). If so, then some belief sentence about S will be true. Of course, it is possible to define two related relations, called 'B' and 'B*', as follows:

(D1) B(S, p) =$_{df.}$ there is an x such that BEL(S, p, x)

(D2) B*(S, x) =$_{df.}$ there is a p such that BEL(S, p, x).

From the fact that there is an x such that BEL(S, P, x), it follows that B(S, P), and also that B*(S, x). Salmon, then, seems to be worried about which relation we call 'belief':

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[20]Ibid. Cf. Stalnaker (1981), fn. 11.

[21]Again, I assume that belief states are functions. The locution 'in a belief state' may be taken as shorthand for 'related (in the appropriate sort of way) to a function from subjects into propositions'.

BEL, B or B*. It seems to me that it really doesn't matter which of these relations we decide to **call** 'belief'.

Of course, in English 'believes' is a binary predicate. Perhaps Salmon takes this, along with certain other facts about belief sentences, to entail that belief is a binary relation between subjects and propositions. This inference, however, may plausibly be denied, and it appears that Perry would wish to deny it. What Perry and Salmon agree upon is that in some sense the logical form of a sentence like 'S believes that p' is something of the form 'there is an x such that BEL(S, p, x)' (which is equivalent to 'B(S, p)' and implies 'B*(S, x)').

Again, I do not much care about which relation, two- or three-place, we call 'belief', and so I take this agreement to be considerable. Both Perry and Salmon think that BEL is the truth-maker for belief sentences, and it really doesn't matter whether we take the word 'belief' to express this relation, or which of its **relata** we pick out with the phrase 'object of belief'. It therefore seems to me that there is no genuine disagreement about the nature of belief between Perry and Salmon.

In the remainder of this section, I would like to consider Salmon's account of the BEL relation. According to Salmon, the third **relatum** of BEL is a way of taking, or a means of grasping, or a "guise" of, a proposition - and the relation BEL is something like "the relation of disposition

to inward agreement [to a proposition] when taken in a certain way."[22] I shall disregard any difference there may be between what Perry calls 'belief states' and what Salmon sometimes calls 'guises'.[23]

Earlier, we entertained a conception of belief states as functions from subjects into propositions. This seemed to work well enough for the **de se** cases under discussion, but it may not work straightforwardly for all guises. For example, two different guises or belief states intuitively correspond to the following two sentences:

(i) Mark Twain is Mark Twain

(ii) Sam Clemens is Mark Twain.

Here we have two different guises by means of which, on the view favored by Perry and Salmon, a single proposition may be believed. If a guise is a function from subjects into propositions, however, then it seems that there is no way to distinguish these two guises.

In order to get around this problem, perhaps we should give a new account of belief states or propositional guises. I suggest that, at least for the time being, we take belief

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[22]Salmon (1986), p. 111. Since Salmon is mainly interested in the logic of belief, he doesn't care much about whether this is the correct account of the relation in question. However, the semantic theory he defends requires that there be some such three-place relation.

[23]Perhaps a belief state is a guise to which someone stands in B*. Perhaps also we should be talking about the objects of belief states rather than the states themselves; but this is distinction that I will for the most part ignore in the text.

states to be ordered structures that may contain the relations that the subject bears to the constituents of the (perhaps singular) proposition believed. Very roughly, if we believe Russellian propositions, then we do so by means of modes of presentation of them, or Fregean propositions. (In this chapter, I will not say much about individuating belief states by means of their truth conditions - in fact, the question whether belief states (call them what you may) have possible-worlds truth conditions will be one of the central questions of this thesis.)

Consider again belief states (i) and (ii) above. I will represent the singular proposition believed as follows: $\langle MT, =, MT \rangle$. Then, the belief state that corresponds to (i) may be represented by the ordered triple: $\langle R_{MT}, =, R_{MT} \rangle$.[24] R_{MT} is a single relation by means of which a believer may be acquainted with someone. For example, it might be the relation of having heard of someone under the name 'Twain'. On the other hand, the belief state that corresponds to (ii) above may be represented by the triple: $\langle R_{SC}, =, R_{MT} \rangle$. In this case, R_{SC} and R_{MT} are two different relations of acquaintance, and so we have a way of distinguishing the belief states corresponding with (i) and (ii), even though they are ways of believing the selfsame proposition.

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[24]Here, I have put the identity relation, given by '=', into the belief state. Perhaps what should really go into the belief state is some mode of presentation, or concept, of identity, given by '$R_=$'. In the text, however, I will ignore this sort of complication.

On this picture, which may accord better with Salmon's
views on guises, the proposition that a subject believes may
be recovered from his belief state together with information
about the identities of the external objects to which he is
related. If I am in one of the belief states above, then
the proposition that I believe is determined by replacing
each relation of acquaintance with the individual to whom I
bear that relation (if there is such an individual; see
chapters 4 and 7 for a discussion of other sorts of case).
If there are no relations of acquaintance in the belief
state, then the proposition believed may just be taken to be
the belief state (but see also fn. 24). This is the case
for genuine **de dicto** belief. For **de se** cases, belief states
may be taken to be pairs of a special sort of acquaintance
relation - the relation of being identical to someone - and
properties. So, when I believe myself to be making a mess,
my belief state may be represented by the following pair:
$<R_=$, making a mess>. The propositional object of my belief
would then be the proposition: <Feit, making a mess>.

There is a way to reconcile this account with Lewis's
suggestion that belief states are functions from subjects
into propositions. Consider again the following belief
state: $<R_{sc}$, =, $R_{MT}>$. We could also represent this as a
propositional function, although the value must not be the
sigular proposition that Twain is Twain. Using 'x' as a
free variable, we can represent the same belief state as

follows: there is a y and a z such that x bears R_{sc} to y and R_{MT} to z, and y=z. The belief state corresponding to (i) above may be given in a similar way.

For belief states without relations of acquaintance - e.g., 'anything extended has mass' - we may represent the state as a function whose value will be either true for all arguments, or false for all arguments, e.g.: x is such that anything extended has mass. For **de se** cases, a belief state like <$R_=$, making a mess> may be given by: there is a y such that x=y, and y is making a mess (or more simply by: x is making a mess). In chapter 4, I discuss various conceptions of belief states in greater detail.

Salmon and Perry arrive at their similar views about belief in quite different ways. In particular, Salmon does not think that the phenomena related to locating beliefs, or indexical beliefs, pose a special problem about accounting for the attitudes. He argues that other puzzle cases also require an analysis of belief in terms of the BEL relation:

> the general problems posed by self-locating beliefs and other beliefs formulated by means of an indexical are not peculiar to these special subcases of **de re** beliefs, and arise even with **de re** beliefs whose psychological explanatory force does not involve an "essential indexical."[25]

In order to support this claim, Salmon describes a case that is similar to Frege's Puzzle about identity statements and thoughts, and Kripke's puzzle about belief. He calls

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[25]Salmon (1986), p. 174 (fn. 1, chapter 9).

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the case 'Elmer's Befuddlement'. Rather than quote at length, I will summarize the situation as follows.[26] Elmer is a bounty hunter, somehow affiliated with the FBI, who is hot on the trail of an infamous jewel thief, Bugsy Wabbit. For some months before January 1, Elmer spends a good deal of time scrutinizing various photographs and movies of Bugsy, studying FBI documents about Bugsy, etc. On January 1, after learning quite a lot about Bugsy Wabbit, Elmer "forms the opinion that Bugsy is (is now, has always been, and will always be throughout his lifetime) dangerous...."[27] Unbeknownst to Elmer, however, Bugsy, having learned that a bounty hunter was after him, endures major plastic surgery, has his voice altered, and otherwise changes his publicly observable characteristics. Elmer's leads allow him to track down and encounter Bugsy Wabbit; but Elmer fails to recognize Bugsy as the suspect whom he has been tracking, and simply thinks that he has met another person with the same name. Elmer befriends Bugsy and soon comes to know a good deal about him. On April 1, Elmer overhears a dispute between his friend Bugsy and someone else, and in virtue of the nature of the fight, "Elmer decides then and there that this Bugsy Wabbit is also a dangerous man."[28]

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[26]See ibid., pp. 92-8.

[27]Ibid., p. 92.

[28]Ibid., p. 94.

The story takes a final twist on June 1, when Elmer gets some information from the FBI to the effect that despite being a criminal, Bugsy might be relatively harmless after all. This new information fails to persuade Elmer to form the opinion that Bugsy is not dangerous; however, it does persuade him to suspend his former opinion that Bugsy is dangerous. So, as of June 1, "Elmer feels certain that his friend Bugsy is dangerous, but still wonders whether Bugsy the criminal is dangerous or not."[29]

The puzzle may be stated in terms of a question about Elmer's doxastic state on or after June 1. Salmon describes it as follows:

> Either Elmer believes that Bugsy is dangerous or he does not. Which is it? We seem to be required to say that Elmer does indeed believe that Bugsy is dangerous, for he remains convinced of his friend Bugsy's dangerousness. We also seem to be required to say Elmer does not believe that Bugsy is dangerous, for he now actively suspends judgment concerning the criminal's dangerousness. Yet we are logically prohibited from saying both together. How, then, are we to describe coherently Elmer's doxastic disposition with respect to the information that Bugsy Wabbit is dangerous? How can it be consistent for Elmer to believe that Bugsy is dangerous, on the one hand, and to withhold that belief, on the other?[30]

According to Salmon, the case of Elmer's Beffudlement poses the same problem as the case of the messy shopper for the view that belief sentences are to be analyzed ultimately in terms of a two-place relation between a subject and a

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[29]Ibid.

[30]Ibid., p. 97.

proposition. I would urge that the de se cases may pose special problems in metaphysics or the philosophy of mind, even if they do not in the philosophy of language. If Salmon is right, then cases involving indexical belief are not the only ones that provide support for an existential analysis of belief sentences in terms of a three-place relation between a subject, a proposition and something else. (We may wish, however, to treat belief sentences in some other way. I will briefly discuss this issue in chapter 3.)

On the theory favored by Salmon, Elmer believes that Bugsy is dangerous if and only if he stands in a certain relation to the singular proposition that Bugsy is dangerous - a relation that would lead us to agree that he has a belief about Bugsy, to the effect that he is dangerous. A consequence of Salmon's version of the Triadic View is this: even after the events of June 1, Elmer believes that Bugsy is dangerous, so that to say that he does not believe this is to say something literally false.

Despite the fact that Salmon's view has an answer to the question whether or not Elmer believes that Bugsy is dangerous, things are not quite so simple. Elmer's state is such that (in many ordinary contexts) it would be at least seriously misleading to say that he believes that Bugsy is dangerous. Since Elmer thinks that two different people share the name 'Bugsy', the belief attributed to Elmer seems

to be incompatible with some of his other beliefs. Elmer's attitude toward Bugsy's dangerousness changed substantially as of June 1, and it would be nice to be able to account for this change. What is needed, then, is a way to distinguish Elmer's believing that Bugsy is dangerous, on the one hand, from his suspending or withholding belief that Bugsy is dangerous, on the other.

Salmon presents some principles about belief and the BEL relation - principles that allow the Triadic View to entail both that Elmer believes that Bugsy is dangerous, and that he withholds belief as to whether Bugsy is dangerous. The principles help to locate BEL within a certain conceptual scheme. According to Salmon:

> (i) ⌈A believes p⌉ may be analyzed as $(\exists x)$[A grasps p by means of x & BEL(A, p, x)],
>
> (ii) A may stand in BEL to p and some x by means of which A grasps p, without standing in BEL to p and all x by means of which A grasps p,
>
> and
>
> (iii) ⌈A withholds belief from p⌉, in the sense relevant to Elmer's befuddlement, may be analyzed as $(\exists x)$[A grasps p by means of x & ~BEL(A, p, x)].[31]

Salmon wants to say that there is a means by which Elmer grasps the proposition (or information) that Bugsy is dangerous such that he does not stand in BEL to this proposition and this particular means of grasping it. It is somehow essential to this means of grasping the proposition

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[31]Ibid., p. 111.

that it involves a mental representation of Bugsy as a notorious jewel thief, rather than as, say, a new friend. The way in which Elmer is acquainted with Bugsy, according to Salmon, constitutes in part the guise by means of which Elmer grasps the proposition that he is dangerous.

On the plausible assumption that a subject may stand in BEL to a proposition and a propositional guise only if she grasps the proposition by means of the guise[32] - i.e., that BEL(S, p, x) only if S grasps p by means of x - we may say simply that on the view of belief attribution given by Salmon, a sentence of the form ⌈A believes that p⌉ is true if and only if there is a guise x, a subject S such that A denotes S, and a proposition P such that p expresses P, such that BEL(S, P, x). The presumed background for this semantic thesis is the Triadic View, according to which both propositions and belief states (or guises) are essential to belief.

2.4 Explaining Behavior on the Triadic View

In this section I would like to consider again the issue of how change in belief explains change in behavior. According to the semantic and metaphysical views of Salmon and Perry, in English we may use only a two-place predicate

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[32]I do not think that Salmon would object to this. It may be more or less plausible depending upon how the metaphor of grasping is cashed out.

'believes' for the purpose of conveying information about a certain three-place relation. It might be interesting to see how these views account for the very sentences in terms of which Perry originally explained his behavior in the case of the messy shopper. As we have seen, Perry wrote:

> I believed at the outset that the shopper with a torn bag was making a mess. And I was right. But I did not believe that I was making a mess. That seems to be something I came to believe. And when I came to believe that, I stopped following the trail around the counter, and rearranged the torn bag in my trolley.[33]

The first sentence of this passage is true, according to the present semantic view. The embedded sentence - 'the shopper with a torn bag was making a mess' - expresses a certain proposition (presumably not a singular proposition, although complications may arise) such that Perry stood in BEL to it and some belief state: Perry, for example, was disposed to assent to the sentence 'the shopper with a torn bag is making a mess'.

According to a view like Salmon's, however, the third sentence of the passage - viz., 'I did not believe that I was making a mess' - could very well have been false. The embedded sentence here, on the view favored by Salmon and perhaps Perry as well, expresses the singular proposition that Perry is making a mess (at the relevant time in the past). If Elmer could believe singular propositions about Bugsy Wabbit in virtue of tracking him in a certain fashion,

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[33]Salmon and Soames (1988), p. 83.

it seems there is no reason to deny that Perry could believe singular propositions about himself in virtue of following his own trail of sugar. If he can, and if the sentence in question literally means that he did not stand in BEL to the singular proposition that Perry is making a mess, then it appears that the sentence is false: Perry did believe that he was making a mess (despite the way in which he would have expressed his belief) just as Elmer believed that Bugsy was dangerous.

However, perhaps it takes more than merely following someone's trail of sugar to believe singular propositions about that person. Perry also discusses a revised version of his example, in which the relation of acquaintance that he bears to himself is more direct:

> Suppose there were mirrors at either end of the counter so that as I pushed my trolley down the aisle in pursuit I saw myself in the mirror. I take what I see to be a reflection of the messy shopper going up the aisle on the other side, not realizing that what I am really seeing is a reflection of a reflection of myself. I point and say, truly, 'I believe that he is making a mess'.[34]

Let us suppose with Perry that these are the facts of the case. Then Perry's claim that he did not believe that he was making a mess really is false, if the role of the embedded sentence is simply to express the singular proposition that Perry is making a mess, since in fact he stood in the BEL relation to the proposition that Perry is

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[34]Ibid., p. 92.

making a mess (in virtue of pointing to himself) and some belief state. So, the fact that Perry comes to have a singular proposition about himself as an object of belief does not explain the change in his behavior.

Consider an ordinary explanation of Perry's mess-assuaging behavior, e.g., 'he rearranged the torn bag in his trolley because he came to believe that he was making a mess'. We take this to be true, given the facts of the case. On the semantic view taken by Salmon, however, it seems that the explanation is literally false, since on this view it was true that Perry came to believe that he was making a mess when he saw himself in the mirror; but this caused him to speed off in pursuit of the messy shopper rather than rearrange his bag of sugar.

Regardless of the literal meaning of the explanation - which I will discuss briefly later in this section - we do come to understand why Perry rearranged the bag of sugar when we hear it, and when we read Perry's own explanation of his behavior. (Like Elmer, Perry had thought that there were two distinct people instead of just one.) We have already seen how the apparatus of the Triadic View can account for the behavior of the messy shopper. What explains Perry's behavior is not a change with respect to the propositions he believes; rather, it is a change in belief state. The proposition that Perry was making a mess may have been an object of his belief all along, but the

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belief state that disposes him to utter 'I am making a mess' surely was not. The fact that he comes to stand in BEL to this proposition and this particular belief state explains why he stopped to check and rearrange his own bag of sugar.

It will be helpful to characterize the sort of belief state under consideration, assuming a previous account of belief states in general. I will call such a belief state an **I-guise**, and give the following definition, which makes use of the notion of grasping a proposition by means of a guise or belief state:

> (IG) f is an I-guise $=_{df.}$ necessarily, for all agents x
> and propositions p, if x grasps p by means of f,
> then there is a property F such that p is
> logically equivalent to the singular proposition
> that x is F.

We might have occasion to characterize a belief state, in part, with a natural language sentence containing an indexical, such as 'I am making a mess'. The belief state that is so characterized is an I-guise: if a person grasps a proposition by means of it, or stands in BEL to it and a proposition, then it is the singular proposition about that person to the effect that she is making a mess.[35]

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[35]The class of I-guises is one of many classes of essentially indexical guises, by means of which different subjects may believe different propositions. For example, we might be interested in the notion of a Now-guise, for grasping propositions directly about the present moment.

How does the Triadic View explain the change in the messy shopper's behavior? Let us suppose that the relevant change in belief occurs at a particular time, called 't'. The explanation goes as follows: there is an I-guise such that before t, Perry does not stand in BEL to it and the proposition that he is making a mess; but as of t, Perry does stand in BEL to it and the proposition that he is making a mess. As it happened, before t Perry stood in BEL to the proposition that he is making a mess, and some guise or other. However, that guise (cf. 'he is making a mess') was not an I-guise: the supermarket manager might have grasped a proposition by means of it, but this proposition is not equivalent to any singular proposition about the manager.

I would now like to discuss briefly some issues about the semantic meaning of sentences of the form 'S believes that he (she) is F', and hence about the meaning of psychological explanations into which such sentences figure. These issues are not at all central to the thesis as a whole; but I will make a few remarks about them with respect to the Triadic View of belief. I will also make a few remarks about the 'he himself' and 'she herself' locutions as they occur in belief sentences.

Given the background of the Triadic View, there is little question that if I were to utter, in the ordinary course of a conversation, the sentence 'Perry believes that

he is making a mess', where 'he' clearly refers to Perry, my remark would convey the information that there is an I-guise such that Perry stands in BEL to it and the proposition that he is making a mess. The question is whether or not all of this information is entailed by the literal or semantic meaning of my utterance.

On Salmon's view, the semantic meaning of the utterance implies nothing at all about I-guises. He maintains that the embedded sentence merely functions to pick out the singular proposition that Perry is making a mess, and from his first principle concerning the BEL relation, we get the result that my remark would be literally true even if I said it at some time during the interval in which Perry was chasing down the messy shopper in the mirror. Salmon's view requires only that there be **some way or other**, by means of which Perry grasps the proposition that Perry is making a mess - and there is such a way, since Perry is pointing to himself in the mirror and saying '**he** is making a mess'.

A case can be made, however, for the claim that this semantic view does not correctly account for the truth values of many English sentences. If Smith watches Perry chase after a reflection of himself rather than simply straighten out his bag, and Smith, in a report to Jones concerning Perry's state of mind, says "Perry believes that he is making a mess," it is plausible to think that Smith would have said something false. Many speakers of English

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probably have such intuitions. If Jones were watching Perry along with Smith, he could surely reply to him, truly, in the following way: "No. Of course Perry doesn't believe he's making a mess. If he did, he would be rearranging that torn bag of sugar in his cart."[36]

Salmon might reply that so many people would take Smith's remark to be false because it is easy to confuse a statement's semantic meaning with one of its pragmatic implicatures, especially if similar implicatures are commonplace. For example, Smith's remark may carry the conversational implicature that Perry's belief state is an I-guise, or, perhaps as a consequence, that Perry would answer "yes" if he were asked "are you making a mess?"[37]

If this information - or something like it - is a conversational implicature of the sentence 'Perry believes that he is making a mess', we should expect it to be cancelable by a subsequent utterance of the speaker. It might be claimed that this is what would happen if I were to say the following: "Perry believes that he is making a mess; but even if he were to express his belief, he would not express it by saying anything like 'I am making a mess'." Salmon would probably make this claim, maintaining that the second clause serves to cancel the implicature of

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[36]I will not press this point against Salmon here. I do think that an even stronger case against his view can be made with certain belief sentences containing proper names.

[37]See, e.g., Salmon (1986), p. 115.

the first.[38] He might also claim that since it is easier,
from the point of view of communicating in English, to deny
the (true, on his view) belief attribution in the first
clause, instead of cancelling it with the second, an English
speaker would likely do just that, taking it to be false.

Another way of treating this case seems to me to be
more plausible. We might hold that the second clause in the
monologue above has the effect of selecting between two
different readings of the belief attribution in the first.
On this view, a sentence of the form 'S believes that he/she
is F' would be literally ambiguous: it may mean (1) that
there is an x such that BEL(S, **that S is F**, x),[39] as on
Salmon's view; or, it may mean (2) that there is an x such
that x is an I-guise, and BEL(S, **that S is F**, x). Here, the
second reading does imply that the subject grasps the
relevant proposition by means of an I-guise, and this
reading might be forced by certain features of the context
in which such a sentence is used.

One could also hold that sentences of the same general
form are univocal, and that their meanings are given by (2)
above. If this were correct, it would be literally false to
say, before Perry discovers himself to be the mess-maker but
after he sees himself in the mirror, that Perry believes

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[38]Cf. ibid., p. 118.

[39]For ease of exposition, I ignore the use/mention
distinction here and later in this section.

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that he is making a mess, even with an added qualification about Perry's state of mind, as in the monologue above. Of these three possible views concerning the semantics of such sentences, the second - i.e., the view that they are systematically ambiguous between two sorts of reading - seems to me to be the most plausible.

The same options are available, again given the background of the Triadic View, for the evaluation of sentences of the form 'S believes that he himself (she herself) is F'. On a view like Salmon's, it might be claimed that the 'he himself' and 'she herself' locutions, when they occur in belief sentences of the present form, conventionally indicate the alleged presence of an I-guise. For example, if I were to utter 'Perry believes that he himself is making a mess', it might be a conventional implicature of my utterance - one that has come to be associated with the form of words and hence does not depend upon any special features of the context of utterance - that Perry believes the proposition that he is making a mess in virtue of being in a very special sort of belief state, viz., an I-guise.

If this information is a conventional implicature of my utterance, then it is not part of the proposition expressed semantically by the words in the utterance itself, and hence the utterance could be true even if Perry did not grasp the proposition that he is making a mess by an I-guise (if, for

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example, he saw himself in the mirror). However, there is good reason to think that the information about the de se nature of the belief reported in the sentence is represented at the level of logical form, and as a result is not merely conventional implicature.

This leaves us with the second and third options listed above. A proponent of the Triadic View could claim that the sentences in question are ambiguous: on one reading, a sentence of the form 'S believes that he himself (she herself) is F' is true if and only if there is an x such that BEL(S, **that S is F**, x); and, on the other reading, a sentence of this form is true if and only if there is an x such that x is an I-guise, and BEL(S, **that S is F**, x).

The second reading is much more likely, it seems, to be intended by a speaker and accommodated by an audience. For this reason, it might be tempting to take the third option and claim that it is the univocal reading of the relevant form of words. On this view, if I said 'Perry believes that he himself is making a mess' while he was chasing the messy shopper in the mirror, I could not possibly have said something true. It seems to me that the second strategy is still the best option for a semantic theorist working within the framework of the Triadic View, although the third alternative certainly is a plausible candidate as well.

CHAPTER 3

THE PROPERTY THEORY OF BELIEF

In 1957 Peter Geach asked the following question about belief and its attribution, and then went on to restrict the range of possible answers:

> ...if we say of a number of people that each of them believes that he himself is clever, what belief exactly are we attributing to all of them? Certainly they do not all believe the same proposition, as 'proposition' is commonly understood by philosophers.[1]

As commonly understood by philosophers, of course, the word 'proposition' names a kind of thing that is true or false **simpliciter**, and not merely true, say, of one person, and false of another.

Geach's question seems to presuppose that the assertion in question is true provided that there is some entity such that each person in the relevant domain of quantification stands in a certain binary relation - the belief relation - to that entity. The view to be discussed in this chapter entails that such a presupposition is correct: it is the view that belief, although it is a binary relation, is not a relation between subjects and propositions; rather, the view holds that the objects of belief are properties, and hence are neither true nor false **simpliciter**.

The thesis that belief is essentially a relation between subjects and properties has been developed and

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[1]Geach (1957), p. 23.

defended by both David Lewis and Roderick Chisholm. The
view, however, had been to a certain extent anticipated by
Sydney Shoemaker.[2] Shoemaker argues that some of the
statements that we make about ourselves using the pronoun
'I' are not "subject to error through misidentification"
relative to 'I'.[3] Shoemaker goes on to write:

> There are predicates which I apply to others, and
> which others apply to me, on the basis of
> observations of behavior, but which I do not
> ascribe to myself on this basis, and these
> predicates are precisely those the self-ascription
> of which is immune to error through
> misidentification. I see nothing wrong with
> describing the self-ascription of such predicates
> as manifestations of self-knowledge or self-
> awareness.[4]

Shoemaker here considers the self-ascription of a
predicate (or an attribute) to be a certain kind of speech
act; but the analogy with belief is apparent. Moreover,
Shoemaker suggests that our ability to self-ascribe the kind
of predicate mentioned above is not to be explicated in
terms of an ability to refer to ourselves by means of
grasping some individual concept.[5]

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[2]See Shoemaker (1968).

[3]Ibid., p. 557. My statement, for example, 'I am
tired' is subject to error through misidentification
relative to 'I' if and only if it is possible that I should
know that some particular thing is tired, but mistakenly
think that the thing I know to be tired is what my use of
'I' refers to. Presumably this is not possible, and hence
my statement is immune to error through misidentification.

[4]Ibid., p. 562.

[5]See ibid., pp. 562-3.

Brian Loar has also proposed that we posit a primitive relation between agents and (something like) properties:

> I suggest taking self-ascriptive belief as unanalyzed. If Cynthia believes that she has the flu, then what is true is:
> B*(Cynthia, **y has the flu**).
> She is related by the self-ascriptive belief relation to that propositional function.[6]

Loar does not, however, go on to make the stronger claim made by Lewis and Chisholm: that necessarily, if someone believes something, then there is a property such that she self-ascribes it; and indeed, that the believing is to be analyzed in terms of the self-ascription, or direct attribution, of the property.

3.1 Lewis and Self-Ascription

In this section I would like to discuss Lewis's arguments for, and version of, the view that properties are the objects of belief. Lewis argues for two theses:

> (1) When propositional objects will do, property objects also will do. (2) Sometimes property objects will do and propositional objects won't.[7]

It should be noted that Lewis takes propositions to be sets of possible worlds - the members of the set are the worlds

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[6]Loar (1976), p. 358. We may identify properties with propositional functions, since there is a trivial one-one correspondence between them.

[7]Lewis (1983a), p. 134. Lewis intends the theses to hold for attitudes other than belief, but here I consider only the case of belief. Many other cases are analogous.

where the proposition is true - and takes properties to be sets of possible individuals - the members of the set are the things that have the property. (We might think of propositions as properties of entire worlds.) As we shall see in the next section, Chisholm arrives at essentially the same view about belief, despite his markedly different views about the ontological status of propositions and properties.

Lewis defends his first thesis by showing that there is a one-one correspondence between all of the propositions that there are, and some of the properties that there are. He observes:

> to any set of worlds whatever, there corresponds the property of inhabiting some world in that set. In other words, to any proposition there corresponds the property of inhabiting some world where that proposition holds.[8]

This procedure obviously yields a unique property corresponding to each proposition. The correspondence is one-one since none of the properties is yielded by more than one proposition; if there were such a property, then something at a world where one of the propositions is true and the other false would both have and fail to have the property, which of course is impossible.

The motivation for replacing propositional objects of belief with property objects of belief is provided by Lewis's second thesis, together with the methodological principle that positing uniform objects of belief is the

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[8]Ibid., p. 135.

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best way to systematize our knowledge about the causal role
of belief in behavior. Lewis's strategy for replacing
propositional objects with property ones is straightforward:

> We have a one-one correspondence between all
> propositions and some properties. Whenever it
> would be right to assign a proposition as the
> object of an attitude, I shall simply assign the
> corresponding property. Since the correspondence
> is one-one, no information is lost and no surplus
> information is added.[9]

To believe the proposition, for example, that elms are
deciduous, is by analysis to self-ascribe the corresponding
property of inhabiting a possible world where elms are
deciduous (or, being such that elms are deciduous). In this
section, I will not question Lewis's claim that information
is neither gained nor lost in the analysis, even though the
structure of the objects of belief is different: the
proposition is a set of worlds, and the corresponding
property is a set most of the members of which are not
entire worlds (for Lewis, each world inhabits itself, and of
course so does every proper part of it). There is an
argument in the literature against the move made here by
Lewis - an unsound argument, in my view - which I discuss in
chapter 6.

Considering the objects of the attitudes, Lewis
suggests that since they might just as well be properties as
propositions, they might just as well be properties that
don't correspond to entire worlds as ones that do. Of

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[9]Ibid., pp. 135-6.

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course, there is no reason to take the view that properties, rather than propositions, are the objects of belief if there are no cases of belief that may be analyzed in terms of property objects but not in terms of propositional ones. Lewis's second thesis maintains that there are such cases.

The standard examples of self-locating or **de se** belief are by now familiar. Lewis first discusses Perry's example about Rudolf Lingens, who is an amnesiac and is lost in Main Library, Stanford. Lingens, in a perfectly ordinary sense, does not know who he is (e.g., that he is Lingens) or where he is; yet he has read in the library an accurate biography of himself and a correct account of the library itself. Somehow, Lingens could even come to believe that Lingens is lost in Main Library, without thereby believing that he himself is in that situation. What is the nature, then, of this belief that Lingens lacks?[10]

Lewis diagnoses the case as follows:

> The more he reads, the more propositions he
> believes, and the more he is in a position to
> self-ascribe properties of inhabiting such-and-
> such a kind of world. But none of this, by
> itself, can guarantee that he knows where in the
> world he is. He needs to locate himself not only
> in logical space but also in ordinary space. He
> needs to self-ascribe the property of being in
> aisle five, floor six, of Main Library, Stanford;
> and this is not one of the properties that
> corresponds to a proposition.[11]

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[10]Cf. Perry (1977).

[11]Lewis (1983a), p. 138.

If a property corresponds to a proposition, then if an individual has the property, so does everything else (i.e., everything that inhabits the same world that it inhabits). The property of being in the fifth aisle of the sixth floor of Main Library, then, is not a property that corresponds to a proposition: Lingens has this property, but most things that inhabit his world do not.

Lewis claims that the present example shows that certain beliefs can be analyzed in terms of property objects but not in terms of propositional objects, and that for this reason his second thesis is true. Suppose that Lingens comes to know, and hence believe, that he is in Main Library - then his belief can be understood in terms of his self-ascribing the property of being in a certain building; but not, it seems, in terms of his self-ascribing the property of being in a certain kind of world.

Perry himself also uses the Lingens case, and others like it, to argue for the thesis that belief is not a binary relation between a person and a proposition - conceived of as a Fregean proposition with a kind of syntactic structure; but Perry ultimately proposes a view that is at least prima facie distinct from the one endorsed by Lewis.[12]

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[12]For reasons to believe that Lingens does not come to believe a new Fregean proposition when he learns where he is or who he is, and for a discussion of Perry's own positive view, see Chapter 2. Perry claimed that propositions lack an "indexical ingredient" needed to account for certain beliefs; Lewis responds not by giving indexicality to the objects of belief (since properties are just sets of

In Chapter 5, I discuss Robert Stalnaker's objection to Lewis's claims about the Lingens case. Roughly, Stalnaker would take the object of Lingens's belief that he himself is in Main Library to be a set of possible situations in which Lingens (or an epistemic counterpart for himself) is in that very building;[13] and he would take the object of Lingens's different, previous belief - say, the one that Lingens would have expressed by saying 'Lingens is lost in the library' - to be a set of possible situations in which some person or other named 'Lingens' (and who has certain other properties) happens to be lost there.

To be sure, Lewis does not claim that his second thesis has been proved before he presents his case of the two gods:

> Consider the case of the two gods. They inhabit a certain possible world, and they know exactly which world it is. Therefore they know every proposition that is true at their world. Insofar as knowledge is a propositional attitude, they are omniscient. Still I can imagine them to suffer ignorance: neither one knows which of the two he is. They are not exactly alike. One lives on top of the tallest mountain and throws down manna; the other lives on top of the coldest mountain and throws down thunderbolts. Neither one knows whether he lives on the tallest mountain or on the coldest mountain; nor whether he throws manna or thunderbolts.[14]

individuals) but by making use of the relation of self-ascription, which is necessarily such that any agent can bear it only to himself or herself (and, when location in time is important, by claiming that the self-ascribing is done by a momentary temporal part of the persisting agent).

[13] I put off a discussion of the details of Stalnaker's view until chapter 5.

[14] Lewis (1983a), p. 139.

Lewis claims that the situation is a possible one, and is thus a legitimate test case for our views about knowledge and belief. He also suggests that the gods could lack the beliefs that they do because "they have an equally perfect view of every part of their world, and hence cannot identify the perspectives from which they view it."[15] Since the gods believe every proposition that is true at their world but could nevertheless believe (truly) more than they in fact do, the argument goes, the objects of the missing beliefs could not be propositions.

Lewis's solution, as discussed earlier, is to say that the objects of belief and other attitudes are properties rather than propositions. On this view belief is a binary relation; but not between a subject and a bearer of a truth value in any absolute sense. If the god on the tallest mountain were to learn that he himself lived on the tallest mountain (never mind for the moment that this seems to be impossible given the description of the case), he would not come to believe a new proposition; rather, he would self-ascribe a new property: viz., the property of living on the tallest mountain. This property does not correspond to any proposition, since the god who lives on the tallest mountain is the only one in his world who has it.[16]

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[15]Ibid.

[16]I discuss the debate between Stalnaker and Lewis, over the correct treatment of the case of the two gods, in chapter 5.

Lewis suggests that these examples warrant the analysis of belief in general as the self-ascription of a property, in cases where the property corresponds to a proposition as well as cases where it does not. Again, the uniformity in kind of the objects of our attitudes is desirable since it best explains the logical relations between them, reference to which is indispensable in accounting systematically for how what we think affects what we do.

Lewis coined the phrase 'belief **de se**' for the self-ascription of properties. He describes part of his project as follows: "My thesis is that the **de se** subsumes the **de dicto**; but not vice versa. A general account of belief or knowledge must therefore be an account of belief or knowledge **de se**."[17] The other part of Lewis's project is the explication of **de re** belief also in terms of the self-ascription of properties. I discuss this account briefly in the third section of this chapter and at greater length in chapter 7.

Although Lewis claims that these two examples suffice to show that his second thesis is true, he does discuss another example originally due to Perry. I think that consideration of this example will bring out an interesting consequence of Lewis's view in particular, and the Property Theory in general. The example concerns a certain man Heimson, who is a bit mad and thinks, wrongly of course,

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[17]Lewis (1983a), p. 139.

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that he is David Hume.[18] What is the object of Heimson's
mistaken belief that he is Hume?

Lewis claims that there are two problems with taking
the object of Heimson's crazy belief to be a proposition,
neither of which is present if instead it is taken to be a
property that he self-ascribes. Lewis writes:

> The first problem is that Heimson **couldn't** be
> Hume. If he believes the proposition that holds
> at just those worlds where he is Hume, then he
> believes the empty proposition that holds at no
> worlds.[19]

Whatever the object of Heimson's belief is, according to
Lewis, it is surely not the necessarily false proposition:
Heimson is deluded, but this proposition does not seem to
appropriately characterize his delusion.

Lewis is right to point out, to anyone who favors
propositional objects of belief (but is unwilling to opt for
the Triadic View), that the object of Heimson's belief that
he himself is Hume should not be taken to be the proposition
that Heimson is Hume (assuming, as Lewis does, that the same
person could not have both the property of being Hume and
the property of being Heimson). This is not to say,
however, that the problem cannot be solved in a way that is
consistent with a view of belief as a binary propositional
attitude. One who wishes to save propositional objects of
belief might, for example, want to analyze Heimson's belief

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[18]See Perry (1977), pp. 487-8.

[19]Lewis (1983a), p. 141.

as a relation to a proposition that is true at just those worlds in which Heimson does many of the things that Hume actually did - e.g., writing a book called the **Treatise**, loving literary fame, etc. (Heimson need not be called 'Hume' at such worlds, although he might be.)[20]

Lewis's account of the Heimson case also avoids mention of the empty proposition. He analyzes Heimson's believing himself to be Hume simply as Heimson's self-ascribing the property of being Hume, a possible property that Hume actually had.[21] The fact that Heimson could not have this property does not entail that he cannot self-ascribe it. (We may take the property of being Hume, in this context, to be the set of Hume and all of his counterparts. Since Heimson is not in this set, and since none of Heimson's counterparts is in this set, Heimson could not have this property.)

Lewis goes on to give the second problem with taking the object of Heimson's belief to be a proposition, which involves the sense in which Hume and Heimson believe the same thing when each believes himself to be Hume:

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[20]Stalnaker, I think, would opt for a treatment along these lines. See chapter 5.

[21]See Lewis (1983a), pp. 141-2. Note that Lewis does not hesitate to say that it is possible that we should self-ascribe non-qualitative properties. However, the analysis of belief in terms of the self-ascription of properties would be just as plausible if, e.g., we were to claim that Heimson could not self-ascribe a non-qualitative property such as that of being (identical to) Hume.

The second problem arises when we ask why Heimson
is wrong. He believes he is Hume. Hume believed
that too. Hume was right. If Hume believed he
was Hume by believing a proposition, that
proposition was true. Heimson believes just what
Hume did. But Hume and Heimson are worldmates.
Any proposition true for Hume is likewise true for
Heimson. So Heimson, like Hume, believes he is
Hume by believing a true proposition. So he's
right. But he's not right. He's wrong, because
he believes he's Hume and he isn't.[22]

Lewis obviously supposes that Heimson believes just

what Hume did. If Heimson believed the same proposition

that Hume did, however, his belief could not be false. But

he does falsely believe himself to be Hume. So the object

of both Hume's and Heimson's beliefs is not a proposition:

both of them, rather, self-ascribe the property of being

Hume.

One who favors propositional objects of belief, then,

must say that Hume and Heimson do not, strictly speaking,

believe the same thing. In itself this is not especially

problematic - Hume believed a proposition about himself, and

Heimson believes one about himself. But, as Lewis observes,

"there had better also be a central and important sense in

which Heimson and Hume believe alike."[23] After all, we may

say correctly that each one of them believes himself to be

Hume.

We have seen that on Perry's view two distinct entities

account for the ways in which Hume and Heimson do, and do

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[22]Lewis (1983a), p. 142.

[23]Ibid.

not, believe the same thing: Hume and Heimson believe different (singular) propositions, but each of them is in the same belief state. For Perry, perhaps, each of their dispositions to utter sincerely a token of the sentence 'I am Hume' (or something similar) suffices for their being in the same belief state.

It seems to me that even someone like Stalnaker, who maintains that belief is analyzable as a binary relation between a subject and a proposition, can provide an account of how Hume and Heimson both believe the same thing. Of course, they can't believe the same proposition; but nevertheless the account could go as follows: suppose that two people, say, A and B, believe two propositions, P and Q, respectively. Then A and B believe the same thing (in the relevant sense) if and only if there is a property H such that necessarily, P is true if and only if A has H and Q is true if and only if B has H.

Lewis's solution is simpler because, for example, it implies that any two people believe the same thing (in the relevant sense) if and only if the objects of their beliefs are identical.[24] However, since Hume and Heimson believe the same thing but one is right and the other wrong, Lewis must say that Heimson falsely believes what Hume truly

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[24]If Lewis were to recognize a sense in which Hume and Heimson believe **differently**, he must say that it just reduces to the fact that they are different people: Hume self-ascribes a property to Hume, and Heimson self-ascribes the same property to Heimson.

believes. Insofar as our ordinary practice of belief attribution dictates that to falsely believe something is just to believe something that is false, this is fairly striking.

The property of being Hume, of course, is neither true nor false. So, what Heimson believes, according to Lewis, when he believes himself to be Hume, is not something that is either true or false:

> The solution is that the object is not a proposition at all. It is a property: the property of being Hume. Hume self-ascribes this property; he has it; he is right. Heimson, believing just what Hume does, self-ascribes the very same property; he lacks it; he is wrong.[25]

On Lewis's view, then, to believe falsely is not necessarily to believe something that is false in any absolute sense. Of course, there is a range of cases - viz., cases of **de dicto** belief - in which (near enough) believing falsely just is having a false object of belief, and believing truly just is having a true object of belief. Lewis could just give the following definition:

(T1) y is a true object of x's belief $=_{df.}$ y is a

property that corresponds to a true proposition,

and x self-ascribes y.

Lewis could also maintain that the fact that our beliefs are true of us is what explains why we believe truly, and could give the following more general definition:

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[25]Lewis (1983a), p. 143.

(T2) y is a true object of x's belief =$_{df.}$ x self-

ascribes y, and x has y.

As a result, even the god living on the tallest mountain,
who self-ascribes every property that corresponds to a true
proposition and no property that corresponds to a false one,
could still believe something that isn't true, e.g., he may
self-ascribe the property of living on the coldest mountain.

3.2 Chisholm and Direct Attribution

In his book **The First Person**, Chisholm presents and
defends a view of belief that is essentially the same as the
one endorsed by Lewis. In this section, I discuss the
problem that leads Chisholm to posit a fundamental relation
between persons and properties, in terms of which all of our
ordinary discourse about belief may be understood.

Understanding belief as a relation between a believer
and a property, according to Chisholm, is the simplest way
to solve a problem about the logical relations between the
following attributions of belief:

> (P) The tallest man believes that the tallest man
>   is wise.

> (Q) There is an **x** such that **x** is identical with
>   the tallest man and **x** is believed by **x** to be
>   wise.

> (S) The tallest man believes that he himself is
>   wise.[26]

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[26]Chisholm (1981), p. 18.

Each of these sentences is possibly true. The problem
is to account for their logical form in such a way that the
entailment relations between them are preserved. (Lewis
might object to this way of stating the problem, since he
maintains that the semantics of belief sentences is a topic
distinct from that of assigning objects of belief.) The
facts about the logical relations that interest us here are
as follows: P does not imply S, and S does not imply P; and
S implies Q, although Q does not imply S. Chisholm
describes a case in which S would be false but Q would be
true:

> In this case the tallest man cannot sincerely say:
> 'I believe that I am wise'. Suppose, however,
> that he reads the lines on his hand and takes them
> to be a sign of wisdom; he doesn't realize the
> hand is his; and he is unduly modest and entirely
> without conceit. He arrives at the belief, with
> respect to the man in question, that he is
> wise....[27]

Perhaps various accounts of belief and belief sentences
could provide an adequate solution to the problem. After
reviewing some of these, including his own earlier view,
Chisholm maintains the following:

> The simplest conception, I suggest, is one which
> construes believing as a relation involving a
> believer and a property - a property which he may
> be said to attribute to himself. Then the various
> senses of believing may be understood by reference
> to this simple conception.[28]

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[27]Ibid., p. 19.

[28]Ibid., p. 27.

It should be clear that the present strategy is identical in important respects with Lewis's. Rather than constructing properties, by means of sets, out of possible individuals, however, Chisholm takes a Platonistic view of them. In particular, he takes as primitive the notions of exemplification and **de re** modality, and defines a property as something that is possibly such that something exemplifies it. I will avoid the finer points of this view unless they are essential to the present discussion.[29]

Chisholm uses the phrase 'direct attribution' to refer to the relation of self-ascription between a person and a property. Although he takes this relation to be primitive, he also affirms the following two principles concerning the capabilities of believers to think directly about themselves:

> P1 For every **x**, every **y** and every **z**, if **x** directly attributes **z** to **y**, then **x** is identical with **y**....
>
> P2 For every **x**, every **y** and every **z**, if **x** directly attributes **z** to **y**, then **z** is a property.[30]

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[29]For example, Chisholm also affirms two principles about properties that imply that they are qualitative, in a way, e.g., that individual essences are not (see his pp. 7-8). Hence Chisholm cannot treat the Hume/Heimson case analogously to Lewis, who (at least in his discussion of the case) makes use of the property of being Hume. Neither view of properties, of course, is essential to the general thesis of the Property Theory.

[30]Chisholm (1981), p. 28.

Like Lewis, Chisholm wants to say that there are cases of believing that can be (best) accounted for only by taking belief to relate believers and properties. I will not review more examples here. These cases typically may be described in terms of the 'he himself' locution. Chisholm gives the following definition:

> D1   x believes that he himself is **F** = Df. The property of being **F** is such that **x** directly attributes it to **x**.[31]

The logical structure that Chisholm gives to sentence S above will be along the lines of D1.

What about **de re** belief, an example of which, perhaps, is sentence Q? Chisholm, like Lewis, wishes to analyze **de re** belief in terms of direct attribution. He writes:

> I make you my object by attributing a certain property to myself. The property is one which, in some sense, singles you out and thus makes you the object of an **indirect** attribution.[32]

On this account, a person attributes a property to another thing in virtue of directly attributing a certain property to himself. This latter property is somewhat complex: it implies that there is exactly one thing to which the person bears a relation that enables him somehow to single out that thing, and that the thing to which he bears the relation has

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[31]Ibid. Another matter of terminology: Chisholm uses the term 'content' to describe the attributed property, and reserves the term 'object' for the individual to which it is attributed.

[32]Ibid., p. 29.

the other relevant property. (Chisholm would explain this by saying that the directly attributed property is necessarily such that whatever exemplifies it bears the relation uniquely to something that exemplifies the other, former property.)

Chisholm defines this notion of indirect attribution with the following pair of definitions:

> D2   y is such that, as the thing that x bears R
> to, x indirectly attributes to it the
> property of being F = Df. x bears R to y
> and only to y; and x directly attributes to x
> a property which entails the property of
> bearing R to just one thing and to a thing
> that is F....
>
> D3   y is such that x indirectly attributes to it
> the property of being F = Df. There is a
> relation R such that x indirectly attributes
> to y, as the thing to which x bears R, the
> property of being F.[33]

Presumably, the right-hand side of D3, after the quantifying phrase 'There is a relation R such that', is equivalent to the left-hand side of D2. We might wish to constrain in some way the kind of relation that the subject bears to the **res**: e.g., we may require it to be a certain relation of causal acquaintance. I discuss this issue in the next section of this chapter.

Now that Chisholm has posited the relation of direct attribution - between subjects and properties - to underlie our true attributions of belief, and has defined the relation of indirect attribution in terms of it, he is ready

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[33]Ibid., p. 31.

to solve the problem of the logical relations between the sentences Q and S, shown earlier. The task was to represent the two sentences in such a way that S implies Q, although Q does not imply S.

According to Chisholm, S and Q are essentially abbreviations for the following two attributions of belief, respectively:

> S' There is an **x** such that **x** is identical with the tallest man, and the property of being wise is such that **x** directly attributes it to **x**.

> Q' There is an **x** such that **x** is identical with the tallest man, and the property of being wise is one such that **x** directly or indirectly attributes it to **x**.[34]

Given the definitions of direct and indirect attribution, it is clear that Q' does not imply S', although S' implies Q'. On Chisholm's view, as on Lewis's, belief is the purely intentional relation that makes ordinary language belief sentences true, and so it is the reflexive relation of directly attributing a property to oneself.

Indirect attribution is also explained in terms of this relation. Hence, **de re** belief (more precisely, the purely psychological part of **de re** belief) is reduced to direct attribution. Moreover, Chisholm would account for the **de dicto** sentence P roughly as Lewis would - also by analyzing it in terms of the direct attribution of a property (in the case of P, the property of being such that the tallest man

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[34]Ibid., p. 34.

is wise). In this way, the claims that P does not imply S, and that S does not imply P, can reasonably be maintained.

3.3 Lewis and **De Re** Belief

Lewis defends a view of **de re** belief in terms of the notions of self-ascription and of a relation of causal acquaintance between a subject and a concrete individual. According to Lewis, **de re** beliefs - our beliefs **about** objects, in some intuitive sense of 'about' - are certain states of affairs that obtain only partly in virtue of the subject's self-ascriptions, and as a result are not **beliefs** properly so called. On this narrowly psychological view of belief, our self-ascribed properties are all of our beliefs:

> Beliefs are in the head; but ... beliefs **de re**, in general, are not. Beliefs **de re** are not really beliefs. They are states of affairs that obtain in virtue of the relations of the subject's beliefs to the **res** in question.[35]

The relations that Lewis has in mind are those of causal dependence, and he calls them 'relations of acquaintance'. In order for someone to have **de re** beliefs about something - i.e., to ascribe a property to an object, or, in Chisholm's terms, to indirectly attribute a property to it - her being in the particular mental state that she is in must depend in a peculiar way upon some prior state of the object. As Lewis puts it:

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[35]Lewis (1983a), p. 152.

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I and the one of whom I have beliefs **de re** are so
related that there is an extensive causal
dependence of my states upon his; and this causal
dependence is of a sort apt for the reliable
transmission of information.[36]

The phrase 'extensive causal dependence' reflects the
vagueness of **de re** belief attributions. According to Lewis,
it is impossible to specify precisely the sorts of relation
that must hold between a subject and an individual in order
for the subject to ascribe any property to the individual.
(Just when, for example, would the detective believe **de re**,
of the murderer, that he was wearing shoes of a certain
type, or that he weighs over two hundred pounds?)

Lewis's strategy is similar in broad respects to
Chisholm's. He first proposes an account of what it is for
someone to believe something about an object under some
description of that object, or, as Lewis says, to ascribe a
property to an individual under a description - where a
description is taken to stand in for a relation between the
believer and the individual: e.g., the relation expressed in
English by the expression 'person whose crime I am
investigating'. Here is Lewis's definition:

> A subject ascribes property X to individual Y
> under description Z if and only if (1) the subject
> bears the relation Z uniquely to Y, and (2) the
> subject self-ascribes the property of bearing
> relation Z uniquely to something which has
> property X.[37]

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[36]Ibid., p. 155.

[37]Ibid., p. 153.

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The account of belief **de re** uses the notion of a relation of acquaintance: a relation between a conscious subject and a **res** that holds exactly when there is an extensive causal dependence, of the sort suitable for the transmission of information, of the subject's mental states upon certain states of the **res**. We can now state Lewis's account of **de re** belief (or, in his terminology, the ascription of a property to an individual) as follows: a subject ascribes a property X to an individual Y if and only if there is some description Z such that Z is a relation of acquaintance between the subject and Y; and the subject ascribes X to Y under Z.[38]

In Chapter 7, I discuss some problems for Lewis's attempt to reduce **de re** beliefs to **de se** self-ascriptions together with relations of acquaintance. In the remainder of this section, I would like to point out some of the consequences of this kind of reduction - in particular, its effect on belief attributions in cases that perhaps are not paradigm examples of **de re** belief.

Consider Tony, an ordinary earthling who believes that aluminum is ductile, but who is unfamiliar with the atomic facts about aluminum: that its atomic number is 13, its atomic weight about 26.98, and so on. Does Tony believe the

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[38]I have ignored one of Lewis's sufficient conditions, viz., that the description Z "captures the essence" of the **res** Y. Lewis observes that "it is unclear that anything is gained by providing for essence-capturing descriptions as well as relations of acquaintance." Cf. ibid., p. 155.

proposition - call it 'Al' - semantically associated with the English sentence 'aluminum is ductile'? (Let us assume that aluminum is only contingently ductile, and therefore that Al is not the necessary proposition.)

Consider now a counterfactual situation containing a near-duplicate of Earth and a microphysical duplicate of Tony (viz., Twin-Tony).[39] Twin-Tony's planet is just like Earth except for the fact that there is no aluminum there; rather, the metal that is called 'aluminum' by those who speak what is called 'English' where Twin-Tony lives has quite a different structure than aluminum: its atomic number is not 13, and so on. However, the metal in Twin-Tony's world - 'twaluminum', we may as well say - is qualitatively almost exactly like aluminum, and is used in exactly the way aluminum is used here on Earth.

Like Tony, Twin-Tony assents to his sentence 'aluminum is ductile', and to many other sentences about twaluminum: 'some houses have aluminum siding', 'aluminum is abundant in the Earth's crust', and so on. Indeed, throughout their lives, Tony and Twin-Tony have always had qualitatively identical thoughts, perceptions, and experiences. Since they are psychologically and physically similar in this way, Tony and Twin-Tony self-ascribe all of the same properties.

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[39]I assume familiarity with Putnam-style thought experiments. For my purposes here, I do not suppose that the planet upon which Twin-Tony lives is a this-worldly counterpart of Earth. Cf. Putnam (1975).

To return to our question: does Tony believe Al? Since Tony and Twin-Tony self-ascribe all of the same properties, on Lewis's view Tony believes Al if and only if Twin-Tony believes Al also. To believe Al, on Lewis's view, is to self-ascribe the property of inhabiting a world in which aluminum is ductile. But Twin-Tony is clearly in no position to self-ascribe such a property, simply because he has had no causal interaction whatsoever with aluminum. (Alternatively, we might imagine that there is some aluminum in Twin-Tony's world - although of course it is not called 'aluminum' - and that it is not ductile there, and also that Tony knows this. Hence, he would not self-ascribe the property of inhabiting a world in which aluminum is ductile.)

Since Twin-Tony does not self-ascribe this property, neither does Tony. According to Lewis, then, Tony doesn't believe Al.[40] Nevertheless Tony believes that aluminum is ductile. How can this be? Lewis would say that the sentence 'Tony believes that aluminum is ductile' is not wholly about Tony's system of belief; instead it is partly about his psychology, and partly about his environment and

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[40]This is not a peculiarity of Lewis's view. Stalnaker, for example, would also say that Tony does not believe Al. There is simply a loose connection between Tony's beliefs and the meanings of the sentences that he would most naturally use to express them.

his relationship to it.[41] The most natural way to treat this sentence, from the perspective of the Property Theory, is to view it as involving implicit quantification over relations of acquaintance, making it equivalent to the following: 'There is a relation of acquaintance R, such that Tony bears R to aluminum, and only to aluminum, and Tony self-ascribes the property of bearing R to something ductile'.

It seems to me that Lewis should have to say similar things about almost all of our ordinary attributions of belief. Only when we know the essences that natural kind terms (and perhaps names) express, it appears, may we be in a position to believe the propositions expressed by natural language sentences containing those terms.

It might be argued against Lewis's view that it makes the following, clearly valid, inference come out invalid:

1. Tony believes that aluminum is ductile.

2. Twin-Tony believes everything that Tony believes.

3. Therefore, Twin-Tony believes that aluminum is ductile.

The first premise is true since, as Lewis might put it, there is some relation of acquaintance R such that Tony bears R only to aluminum and self-ascribes the property of bearing R to something ductile. (R might be, for example,

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[41]Cf. Lewis (1986), pp. 33-4. There Lewis discusses the sentence 'Ralph believes that Bernard is a spy' (fn. 25).

the relation of having heard of something under the name 'aluminum'.) The second premise is true because Tony and Twin-Tony self-ascribe all of the same properties, and our self-ascribed properties exhaust all of our beliefs. However, the conclusion is obviously false.

This is clearly not a devastating objection, however, to the view that properties are the objects of belief. If Lewis wanted to save inferences of this sort, he could reply that premise (2) is equivocal. On one reading, it does assert that Twin-Tony self-ascribes every property that Tony self-ascribes, in which case the inference does indeed turn out to be invalid. But there is another reading of premise (2), according to which it asserts that if Tony believes, **de re**, of an object, that it has any property, then Twin-Tony also believes **de re**, of that object, that it has the same property. (In Lewis's terms: if Tony ascribes a property to any individual (or kind of individual), then Twin-Tony also ascribes the property to that individual. Using Chisholm's helpful terminology: any property that Tony indirectly attributes to an individual is such that Twin-Tony indirectly attributes it to the same individual.) On this reading, Lewis can claim that the inference is indeed a valid one; however, on this reading, premise (2) turns out to be false. Tony ascribes ductility to aluminum, but Twin-Tony does not ascribe ductility to aluminum (he ascribes it to twaluminum instead).

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Much of the remainder of this thesis will be a defense
of the Property Theory as an account of the objects of the
attitudes, and a revision of the way in which Lewis applies
it to **de re** belief. In chapter 6, I defend the Property
Theory against various objections that have been raised
against it in the literature. In chapter 7, I consider the
Property Theory in the light of some arguments and issues
concerning **de re** belief. In the next chapter I turn to a
discussion of the relation between the Property Theory and
the Triadic View.

CHAPTER 4

BELIEF STATES AND SELF-ASCRIBED PROPERTIES

A reputable tradition in twentieth-century Philosophy of Mind takes belief to be the paradigmatic propositional attitude - i.e., as ultimately some sort of relation between the believer and a proposition. The word 'proposition' is a technical term, and usage does vary. I suppose that there are propositions, and make only one assumption about their nature: each one is either true or false, and its truth value is not relative to a person, a time, a language, etc. (although it may be relative to a possible world or situation).

Perhaps believing a proposition may be understood as being disposed to behave as if it were true; perhaps it may be understood as conceiving or grasping the proposition in some way, and accepting it to some degree. Regardless, the traditional view that belief is a propositional attitude has recently come under fire. There is a persuasive argument against the view that belief is a binary relation between a subject and a proposition (I suppress mention of the fact that believing is something that is done at a time, and so that a time might also be one of the relata). As we have seen in chapter 2, the argument is implicit in some of Perry's work on indexical or self-locating belief.[1]

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[1]See especially Perry (1979), reprinted in Salmon and Soames (1988).

One of the argument's premises requires an account of how a subject's beliefs can explain her behavior. In the first section of this chapter, I sketch an account that should suffice for our purposes. I discuss a version of the argument in the second section. Consideration of this argument (or something like it) has led some philosophers to reject the view that belief is in general a propositional attitude, and to replace it with alternatives. In the third section, I briefly review two recent alternatives: the Triadic View and the Property Theory. It may appear at first that these alternatives are incompatible. However, I argue in the fourth section that they are consistent with one another. I also try to show that, on fairly plausible assumptions, the two views are actually equivalent.

4.1 Explanatory Attribution of Belief

Perry presents his now familiar case of the messy shopper in the following way:

> I once followed a trail of sugar on a supermarket floor, pushing my trolly down the aisle on one side of a tall counter and back along the aisle on the other, seeking the shopper with the torn bag to tell him he was making a mess. With each trip around the counter, the trail became thicker. But I seemed unable to catch up. Finally it dawned on me. I was the shopper I was trying to catch.[2]

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[2]Salmon and Soames (1988), p. 83.

To be kind to Perry, let us suppose that the messy
shopper is someone else: call him 'Felix'. Felix is
generally a neat person, and has a standing desire to avoid
making messes. We may even suppose (as Perry suggests) that
before it finally dawned on him that he himself was the
messy shopper, Felix had seen a reflection of a man in a
supermarket mirror and, without realizing that he was
looking at himself, had thought that he had glimpsed the
shopper whom he was trying to catch.

Felix's epiphany is a change in belief - this much, I
think, is uncontroversial. Somehow, this change in belief
explains his subsequent change in behavior: Felix stops
following the trail of sugar, and stops making a mess (by
rearranging the torn bag of sugar in his grocery cart). Let
us say that someone's change in belief explains his
subsequent behavior if the statement that attributes a new
belief to him is one of the premises of a sound, deductive-
nomological argument, the conclusion of which is the
statement that he behaves in the relevant way.

On this conception of psychological explanation, we can
explain why Felix stops making a mess as follows:

(P1) Felix believes himself to be making a mess.

(P2) Felix desires to avoid making messes.

(P3) Felix would intend to bring it about that he stops
making a mess, if he both desired to avoid making
messes and believed himself to be making one.

(P4) For all agents **a** and states of affairs s, if **a**
     intends to bring it about that s, then ceteris
     paribus a brings it about that s.

(P5) **Ceteris paribus** conditions hold for Felix's
     intention.
     _____
(C) Felix brings it about that he stops making a mess.

In the above explanation, (P1) attributes to Felix the
new belief, i.e., the belief that he comes to have when the
truth finally dawns on him. We have assumed that Felix has
a standing desire to avoid making messes, and this desire is
attributed to him by (P2). Premise (P3) presents a
dispositional fact about Felix - perhaps it is an instance
of a generalization over a larger domain of agents.

Premise (P4) is a hedged, folk-psychological law
connecting agents' intentions to bring about states of
affairs with their bringing about those states. The law is
hedged by **ceteris paribus** conditions: conditions that,
along with the antecedent, are sufficient for the
consequent. Such conditions might be (i) that the agent is
able to bring about the state of affairs in question, (ii)
that the agent has no intentions that override the one given
in the antecedent, (iii) that no heavy object falls on the
agent's head before she can bring about the state of
affairs, and so on. (P5) states that in the case of Felix's
intention to stop making a mess, all such conditions hold.

On this conception of adequate psychological explanation, the proposition that Felix (brings it about that he) stops making a mess is a logical consequence of some empirical propositions and at least one relevant law. One of the propositions is expressed by an attribution of belief to Felix - premise (P1). The present-tense sentence that expresses this proposition becomes true at the time of Felix's change in belief. For our purposes in this chapter, Felix's change in belief explains his mess-assuaging behavior since the new belief attribution is a premise of a sound, deductive-nomological argument, the conclusion of which states that Felix behaves in such a way that he stops making a mess.

4.2 The Argument from Explanatory Attribution

Now that we have some idea as to how someone's coming to believe something can explain some interesting feature of her behavior, we may take a look at the argument against the view that coming to believe something is necessarily coming to believe a new proposition. The reasoning behind each of the premises should already be somewhat clear from the preceding chapters. The whole argument can be stated simply as follows:

(1) If belief[3] is a binary relation between an agent and a proposition, then there is a proposition such that Felix's coming to believe it explains why he stops making a mess.

(2) There is no proposition such that Felix's coming to believe it explains why he stops making a mess.

(3) Therefore, belief is not a binary relation between an agent and a proposition.

Call this 'the argument from explanatory attribution'. I do not know whether Perry himself would consider this argument to be uncontroversially sound.[4] However, as we have seen in chapter 2, he does use something like the argument from explanatory attribution to motivate a new view about the nature of the belief relation.

Premise (1) of the argument is obviously true if we admit that sometimes our behavior is explainable partly in terms of our beliefs (given the proviso in footnote 3). If Felix's belief that he himself is making a mess is just (a relation between Felix and) a proposition, then his coming to believe this proposition explains, in virtue of the argument in section 4.1, why he stops making a mess.

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[3]The word 'belief' in this premise is intended to refer to whatever relation makes true our true belief-attributions in natural language. E.g., if Salmon's account of belief sentences (see chapter 2) is correct, then it refers to the relation called 'BEL'; even if Salmon refuses to call this relation 'belief'.

[4]See, e.g., the section entitled 'Limited Accessibility' in Perry (1979).

The second premise is somewhat less obvious and somewhat more controversial; nevertheless, Perry gives us some reasons to believe it. Premise (2) says that there is no proposition such that Felix's coming to believe it explains his behavior. The most plausible candidate for such a propositional object of Felix's belief appears to be the proposition that Felix is making a mess. (Whatever sort of entity this proposition is, it is true if Felix is making a mess, and false otherwise.) Perhaps it is belief in this proposition that we attribute to Felix when we say that he believes himself to be making a mess.

However, it seems that Felix's coming to believe this proposition - whatever it is - does not explain why he stops making a mess. As Perry remarks, this is because whatever sort of thing this proposition is, it seems that Felix could believe it without believing that he himself is making a mess: e.g., when he looked into the supermarket mirror, pointed to himself, and thought '**he** is making a mess'.

One way to put this point is to say that belief in the proposition that Felix is making a mess explains Felix's behavior only given the additional information that he believes **himself** to be Felix (which of course re-introduces the problem). In terms of the deductive-nomological explanation in section one, if it is merely belief in the proposition that Felix is making a mess that premise (P1) of the argument attributes to Felix, then (P3) turns out to be

false. After he looks into the mirror, for example, Felix himself does not intend to stop making a mess; rather, he keeps on chasing the messy shopper. Perhaps, to claim that this proposition is the one that Felix comes to believe as of his epiphany is to mistakenly think that he was previously lacking merely **de re** beliefs about himself, rather than genuine **de se** ones.

If there were a more or less qualitative way in which Felix picked himself out in his thought, this might show that there is indeed a proposition such that his coming to believe it explains why he stops making a mess. The trouble, however, is that Felix has to pick himself out **as himself**, so to speak, and not merely as something that he believes to have a certain property. Perry makes this point as follows:

> even if I was thinking of myself as, say, the only bearded philosopher in a Safeway store west of the Mississippi, the fact that I came to believe that the only such philosopher was making a mess explains my action only on the assumption that I believed that I was the only such philosopher....[5]

Returning to the case of Felix and the earlier explanation of his behavior, premise (P1) says that Felix believes himself to be making a mess. If this premise means that for some more or less qualitative property X, Felix believes the proposition that the thing that has X is making a mess - e.g., the proposition that the only bearded

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[5]Salmon and Soames (1988), p. 88.

philosopher in a Safeway store west of the Mississippi is making a mess - then line (P3) again turns out to be false. Felix could believe any such proposition, it seems, and desire to avoid making messes, but fail to intend to stop making a mess.

The case for premise (2) of the argument from explanatory attribution, then, goes something like this: if Felix's coming to believe a certain proposition explains his behavior, then the proposition must be either qualitative or non-qualitative; but neither alternative yields a plausible candidate, since all such candidates are consistent with a lack of genuine self-belief; so there is no proposition such that Felix's coming to believe it explains, in the appropriate way, why he stops making a mess.

4.3 Belief States vs. Self-ascribed Properties

Both the Triadic View and the Property Theory of belief are consistent with the soundness of the argument from explanatory attribution. I have discussed them, respectively, in chapters 2 and 3. In this section, I briefly review these two alternatives to the view that belief (or whatever makes belief attributions true) is ultimately a binary relation between a subject and a proposition.

The Triadic View says that what often explains someone's behavior is her believing a certain proposition by being in a particular belief state. People who are in the same belief state - e.g., the group of people each of whom believes himself to be making a mess - will, given some other similar attitudes, behave alike in a way that is of central importance to commonsense psychology. On the Triadic View, the similarity of such behavior is explained not by which propositions are believed, but instead by the fact that everyone involved is in the same belief state. (More precisely, everyone involved is in the same **partial** belief state.) Belief states, then, are individuated by the role that they play with respect to purposeful behavior and the prediction and explanation of such behavior.

Given the metaphysical view, a question about the English word 'belief' arises: does it express the three-place relation (viz., BEL) between believer, proposition, and belief state (believing a proposition by being in a belief state); or the two-place relation between believer and proposition believed (or, perhaps the relation between the believer and whatever characterizes the belief state)? I discussed this question briefly in Chapter 2, but I will avoid it here by stating the Triadic View in a way that is neutral as to whether belief is a binary or a tertiary relation, as follows:

(TV) Necessarily, a subject S believes something if and
     only if there is a proposition p and a belief
     state x such that BEL (S, p, x).

Salmon's BEL relation is familiar from chapter 2 - to
say more about it requires an elucidation of the concept of
a belief state, which is one of the tasks of this chapter.
According to (TV), it is the tertiary relation BEL that
makes our belief attributions true.

Most proponents of the Triadic View maintain that the
propositional relata of BEL are structured entities, that
they have absolute truth values, and that it is possible for
two or more people to stand in BEL to the same proposition
while being in different belief states (and perhaps the same
belief state). In addition to these Fregean claims, most
proponents of the Triadic View maintain that it is possible
for someone to stand in BEL to a singular proposition.
Unlike general propositions, singular structured
propositions have at least one constituent which is not a
property or relation of some order: e.g., an ordinary
physical object like a person; or, a time; etc.

Let's return briefly to the case of Felix in the light
of the Triadic View. Since every proposition is such that
Felix could believe it without coming to intend to stop
making a mess, his new intention and subsequent behavior may
be explained only by a change in his belief state. Let us
suppose that Felix believed the singular proposition that

Felix is making a mess even before he realized that he himself was the mess-maker. What explains his rearranging the torn bag of sugar, then, is his coming to be in a new belief state, in virtue of which he believes the selfsame singular proposition.

What is it about this new belief state that gives it such explanatory force? The answer to this question should depend on a more precise characterization of belief states. For the time being, let us appeal to the fact that the belief state is of the sort that, in chapter 2, I called an **I-guise**: necessarily, any subject x who is in this belief state will believe the singular proposition that x is making a mess, in virtue of being in it.

The Property Theory has also been proposed to solve Perry's problem. This view implies that what often explains someone's behavior is her self-ascribing a certain property, and that the binary relation of self-ascription between a subject and a property is what makes our belief attributions true. I might, for example, self-ascribe the property of being left-handed, and thereby believe myself to be left-handed; or I might self-ascribe the property of watching a spy in virtue of watching Ortcutt and only Ortcutt, and thereby believe that Ortcutt is a spy.

We may formulate the general claim of the Property Theory as follows:

(PT) Necessarily, a subject S believes something if and
only if there is a property F such that S self-
ascribes F.

The meaning of (PT) depends in part upon what the word
'property' means. In chapter 3, I considered two versions
of the Property Theory, due to Chisholm and Lewis. Despite
the differences in their views about properties, both
philosophers are happy to make use of such properties as the
property of being left-handed, of having heard of someone as
a philosopher called 'Hume', of being such that anything
extended has mass, and so on.

The Property Theory applies straightforwardly to the
case of Felix. At the time of his epiphany, Felix comes to
self-ascribe the property of making a mess; whereas before
that time, he had only self-ascribed a property such as
looking at someone in the next aisle who is making a mess,
or following the sugar trail of the shopper who is making a
mess. On this view, premise (P1) of the earlier deductive-
nomological argument must mean that Felix self-ascribes the
property of making a mess, and it is this self-ascription
that explains the change in his behavior. Earlier, he had
in fact ascribed the property of making a mess to himself;
but this ascription was indirect, obtaining only because he
happened to be the one at whom he was looking in the mirror,
and the one whose trail of sugar he had been following. So,

there is a difference between (indirectly) ascribing a
property to oneself, and self-ascribing a property.

4.4 <u>Belief States and Self-ascribed Properties</u>

In this section, I want to make a case for the claim
that in some strong sense, the Triadic View and the Property
Theory are not actually rival theories of belief. I shall
argue that on certain very plausible assumptions (which, if
true, are necessarily true), the two views are actually
equivalent, in the sense that each one entails the other.
Finally, I will attempt to show that the entities posited by
the Triadic View to play a semantic role in theorizing about
belief - viz., believed-true propositions - may be defined
and used by the Property Theory in a systematic way. In
essence, we can take the Property Theory to be a theory of
belief states, which play a theoretical role with respect to
the explanation of behavior, and then define any other
entities that might be needed to play other theoretical
(e.g., semantic) roles. I shall suggest, however, that the
Property Theory enjoys a methodological advantage over the
Triadic View in that it does not need to posit propositions
to explain the sorts of phenomena they are supposed to
explain.

Let us recall from chapter 2 the first characterization
of belief states as propositional functions. This was

Lewis's suggestion in his paper "Attitudes De Dicto and De Se," where he interprets Perry's version of the Triadic View to imply that there are two objects of belief, viz., (1) structured propositions, and (2) belief states. In that paper, Lewis also evaluates Perry's view with respect to his own version of the Property Theory. He writes:

> Perry's proposal must work at least as well as mine, because mine can be subsumed under his. Whenever I say that someone self-ascribes a property X, let Perry say that the first object of his belief is the pair of himself and the property X. Let Perry say also that the second object is the function that assigns to any subject Y the pair of Y and X.[6]

We may take this passage to be an argument for the conclusion that the Triadic View and the Property Theory are consistent, since Lewis is maintaining that if the Property Theory is true, then the Triadic View is also true. Hence, if Lewis's remarks are plausible, we have a reason to think that it is possible for both of the views to be true.

However, these remarks appear to be incompatible with some of what Perry and Salmon, for example, say about the Triadic View of belief (or, at least, Lewis's suggestion seems to be incomplete). For clear cases of de se belief, Lewis's translation schema works well enough: e.g., if I self-ascribe the property of being left-handed, then (1) the proposition that I believe is the proposition that Feit is left-handed, and (2) the belief state that I am in is the

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[6]Lewis (1983a), p. 151.

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function that takes any subject S into the proposition that S is left-handed - and so the belief state is a way of being related to a singular proposition about oneself. On the other hand, Lewis's suggestion seems to leave out some of what the proponents of the Triadic View say about **de re** belief, and in particular some of what they say about the BEL relation.

Let's suppose that I am in direct perceptual contact with Ortcutt - e.g., I am watching him - so that on most any view I can have **de re** beliefs about him. On the version of the Triadic View favored by Perry and Salmon, for example, to have a **de re** belief about an individual is to stand in BEL to a singular proposition about that individual, and a belief state or propositional guise. If I am watching Ortcutt, then, I can easily come to stand in BEL to a singular proposition about him. So let us suppose that it is the proposition that Ortcutt is a spy, and hence that I believe **de re** of Ortcutt that he is a spy.

The way in which Lewis accounts for this **de re** belief, as we have seen in chapter 3, is as follows: I am watching Ortcutt and only Ortcutt, and I self-ascribe the property of watching exactly one person who is a spy. Since watching is a suitable relation of acquaintance, I thereby believe **de re** that Ortcutt is a spy. If Perry were to follow Lewis's translation schema, however, he would have to say that the proposition that I believe is the proposition that Feit is

watching one and only one spy, or, the pair of myself and the property of watching a unique spy. Perry might well want to say this, indeed he should want to say it. The point is, however, that Lewis's translation procedure gives Perry no way to say what he clearly wants to say in this case, viz., that the singular proposition that Ortcutt is a spy is an object of my belief.

Since the proposition that Ortcutt is a spy and the proposition that Feit is watching a spy do not have the same truth conditions, the difference is not trivial. I am not arguing that Lewis has not shown that his view is "subsumed" under the Triadic View. I think that Lewis has shown this. I am arguing that Lewis's procedure by itself does not let the proponent of the Triadic View say everything that he wants to say about the objects of belief, since it cannot generate believed-true singular propositions about any individual other than the subject of belief. Can Lewis's suggestion be modified in order to incorporate such propositions as **relata** for the BEL relation? I shall discuss this question shortly, since I think that a worked-out answer to it will be necessary for any attempt to argue that the Triadic View and the Property Theory are in a strong sense equivalent.

Lewis proposed that a belief state is a function that takes the subject as an argument, and delivers as a value the proposition that the subject believes. We may not have

to abandon a general view of belief states along these lines, but there is now reason to think that we ought to look for another characterization of a belief state. (There is also the problem from chapter 2 for an account of belief states as functions from subjects into propositions: the two sentences 'Twain is Twain' and 'Clemens is Twain' characterize two different belief states, but the belief states are ways of believing the same singular proposition, and so representing them as functions from subjects into propositions would wrongly conflate them.) Before we look for another account, however, I think that it will be helpful to review briefly some other attempts to say either what a belief state is, or just when two subjects are in the same belief state.

I am not concerned with whether belief states are, or are reducible to, types of brain states or other possibly disjunctive physical states; although I do think that as a matter of fact what belief state one is in is determined by one's intrinsic physical state. Since belief states are supposed to play a theoretical role with respect to information-acquisition and the explanation of behavior, one might be tempted to view them as relations to things that have semantic or quasi-semantic properties. With this in mind, we might think of belief states as relations to sentences, such as the sentence 'I am making a mess'.

We have seen that Perry at least entertains such a view when he suggests that sincere, articulate adults are often in the same belief state if and only if they are disposed to utter the same or similar sentences. We have also seen that this view is implausible, if it is intended as an analysis of the concept of a belief state, since it denies belief states to creatures without language, and implies that two subjects who do not speak the same language cannot be in the same belief state. (Of course, the proposal is useful as a heuristic device and as a characterization for creatures speaking the same language.)

Perhaps we could avoid these difficulties by thinking of belief states as relations to sentences (i.e., things with some kind of syntactic structure) of a so-called language of thought. This may be the view of philosophers such as Hartry Field and Jerry Fodor, although they do not use the terminology of the Triadic View.[7] I would rather not commit myself to the existence of a language of thought, and moreover, it seems plausible that not all belief needs to be "tokened" in the head like the sentences of a language of thought. Regardless, it seems that this view would suffer at least some of the problems of the previous one, especially if sentences of the language of thought are understood as mental tokens of natural language sentences. This is hardly a thorough look at the language of thought

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[7]See, e.g., Field (1978) and Fodor (1981).

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hypothesis; however, some other conception of a belief state would be appropriate, I think, even if it turns out to be correct.

A tentative proposal about when two subjects are in the same belief state is given by A. J. Chien.[8] The proposal is that subjects are in the same belief state if and only if they are disposed to utter sentences that (1) have the same character (in roughly Kaplan's sense), and (2) contain pure indexicals or demonstrative terms of the form 'that F'.[9] This suggestion fares somewhat better than the one that required subjects to be speakers of the same natural language in order to share belief states. However, it appears to be implausible for a few reasons.

First, it seems too restrictive to say that subjects are in the same belief state only if they are disposed to utter sentences containing indexical or demonstrative sentences. Perry himself maintains that belief states may be classified by sentences without indexicals. For example, the indexical-free sentences 'Twain is Twain' and 'Clemens is Twain' serve to classify distinct belief states. Second, and more important, this view of belief states still denies belief states to creatures without dispositions to utter sentences, which surely is untenable.

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[8]Chien (1985).

[9]See ibid., especially pp. 285-87.

With this is mind, the next move is perhaps to forget about dispositions to utter sentences and focus on sentence-meanings, or characters. Some of Kaplan's remarks suggest that a belief state is a relation between a subject and a character.[10] This is more plausible than the previous views, since it is at least reasonable to think that an intentional state of a subject without language could nevertheless be characterized by a **meaning**. Perhaps sentences are not the only means of being related to sentence-meanings.

On the present view, Felix believes the proposition that he is making a mess in virtue of being related to a certain character, which happens to be the character of the sentence 'I am making a mess'. In this case the character is a function from possible contexts into propositions, where the value for any context is the singular proposition about the agent of the context to the effect that he or she is making a mess.

We have seen in chapter 2 that Salmon argues for the conclusion that belief states cannot in general be taken to be characters of sentences. (I will not review the argument here; but the point is that taking belief states to be characters would conflate distinct belief states, since a subject could in effect understand the very same sentence, and hence the same character, in different ways.) Salmon

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[10]See Kaplan (1977), published in Almog et. al. (1989).

himself does not offer much in the way of a positive characterization of belief states; however, this is because he is primarily interested in the logic, rather than the metaphysics, of belief. Salmon's claim is that there is more to the logical form of belief attributions than a two-place relation of assent between a subject and a proposition (the relation that Salmon calls 'belief').

In his paper "What is a Belief State?" Curtis Brown proposes that we take belief states to be relations between subjects and the properties that they self-ascribe. "Following David Lewis and Roderick Chisholm," Brown writes, "I suggest that belief states are best characterized by properties."[11] Although neither Lewis nor Chisholm employs the terminology of belief states, perhaps this is an explicit statement of their original, general view, i.e., that (the object or content) of a subject's belief state is not some mysterious indescribable entity; but rather is a property that the subject self-ascribes.

I would like to argue that the assumption that the objects of belief states are properties is correct, and hence that the Triadic View and the Property Theory are equivalent. (This will not affect the characterization of belief states given in chapter 2, before we had discussed the Property Theory, since that characterization in terms of propositional functions is trivially equivalent to the one

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[11]Brown (1986), p. 358.

in terms of properties.) The technical notion of being in a belief state is left unanalyzed (but, hopefully, understood) by Perry, as is the technical notion of self-ascribing a property by Lewis and Chisholm. There is good reason to think that there really is only one notion at stake.

For example, being in the belief state that disposes a sincere, articulate speaker of English to utter 'I am making a mess' seems to be the same thing as self-ascribing the property of making a mess. In fact, taking belief states to be self-ascribed properties **explains** why two (articulate, sincere) people who are in the same belief state may be disposed to utter similar sentences of this form, a fact that Perry does not explain. This is because a sentence of the form 'I am such-and-such' is typically used by a speaker to express a self-ascription. So, if Smith and I are both disposed to utter 'I am left-handed', this may be explained in terms of the fact that we both self-ascribe the same property - viz., being left-handed. This explains our dispositions in a way that merely saying that we are both in the belief state that disposes people who are in it to say 'I am left-handed' does not.

Taking belief states to be self-ascribed properties also accounts for the way in which belief states are individuated. Self-ascribed properties play the same theoretical role in explanation that belief states are supposed to play. If we can explain, for example, why Felix

rearranges the torn bag of sugar in his grocery cart by appealing to the fact that he is in the belief state that disposes one to say 'I am making a mess', then we can also explain this behavior by appealing to the fact that he self-ascribes the property of making a mess (and vice versa). We ought to conclude, then, that self-ascriptions play exactly the same theoretical role that belief states are expected to play.

We have just argued for the claim that if any subject s self-ascribes a property x, then x characterizes s's belief state; and if x characterizes s's belief state, then s self-ascribes x. More precisely (taking 'B*' to denote the relation between a subject and the object of her belief state), we may affirm the following principle: necessarily, for all subjects s and for any x, B*(s, x) if and only if s self-ascribes x. (The weaker claim that there is a trivial one-one correspondence between self-ascribed properties and belief states would do just as well.) This, together with one other item, will let us show that the Triadic View and the Property Theory are equivalent, in the sense that (TV) implies (PT), and (PT) implies (TV).

The other item is the claim that when one is in a belief state, there is always a proposition that one believes. This may be stated precisely with the following: necessarily, for all subjects s and all belief states x, if B*(s, x), there is a proposition p such that BEL(s, p, x).

This is accepted as axiomatic by proponents of the Triadic View, who consider belief states to be a sort of means of grasping propositions. Moreover, earlier we saw that Lewis has shown that the claim is true: if I, for example, self-ascribe a property f (if I am in a belief state that is characterized by the property f), then I will believe the singular proposition that I have f. A subject will always have such access to a singular proposition about himself. So, even if we do not think that this second principle is analytic, we may note that what makes it true is the fact that if B*(s, f), then BEL(s, <s,f>, f).

On these very plausible assumptions, it is easy to see that (TV) and (PT) are equivalent. We can show that they are equivalent if we can show that necessarily, for all subjects s, there is a proposition p and a belief state x such that BEL(s, p, x) if and only if there is a property f such that s self-ascribes f. This follows from the two principles just mentioned (together with the fact that if BEL(s, p, x) then B*(s, x), for any s, p and x).

Property theorists say that we self-ascribe various sorts of properties, e.g., the properties of being left-handed, being such that anything extended has mass, and looking at one and only one person who is a spy. Proponents of the Triadic View maintain that we believe various sorts of propositions, e.g., the propositions that anything extended has mass, and that Ortcutt is a spy. The truth or

falsehood of the proposition, on this view, is what makes for believing truly or believing falsely. Believed-true propositions may also account for (one kind of) shared belief - if I believe that London is pretty and so do you, then what we share is belief in the same proposition - and for continued belief over time - if I believed in 1988 that I was a ski bum, and if I remember that fact for the rest of my days, then I will have continued to believe the same proposition, viz., that I was a ski bum in 1988.

The Property Theory by itself has the means to account for these phenomena. However, if the property theorist wishes to join the proponent of the Triadic View and explain them in terms of believed true propositions, it would be nice to be able to do so. In the remainder of this section, I will try to show how the property theorist can do this, by giving some general principles connecting facts about a given subject's self-ascriptions and, when necessary, the situation in which she is located, with facts about which proposition or propositions she thereby believes.

Given the various explanations offered by proponents of the Triadic View, it appears that the identity of any believed-true proposition must depend upon the particular sort of property that the subject self-ascribes. For example, if I self-ascribe the property of being an uncle, then I believe the singular proposition that I am an uncle; but if I self-ascribe the property of being such that there

are spies, then I believe the general proposition that there are spies (as well as the singular proposition that I am such that there are spies, which is not logically equivalent to the general one).

Let us proceed by distinguishing properties that correspond to propositions from those that do not. Again, if I self-ascribe the property of being such that not all swans are white, then the proposition that I believe to be true, according to the Triadic View, is the corresponding proposition that not all swans are white. We may note that actually, if something happens to be such that not all swans are white, then everything else also is such that not all swans are white. With this in mind, we may locate a certain class of properties, which for lack of a better term I will call **de dicto** properties, by means of the following definition:

(DD) property f is **de dicto** $=_{df.}$ necessarily, if there
    is an x such that x has f then for any y, y has f.

Some examples of **de dicto** properties are the properties of being such that there are spies, and being such that not all swans are white. Each of these properties also has a proposition that corresponds to it: in general, the proposition that corresponds to a **de dicto** property is the proposition that, of necessity, is true if and only if something has the property. I should note that (DD) implies that properties like being red or not red, or being round

and square, are **de dicto** properties, the former because it is a necessary truth that everything has it, and the latter because it is impossible that something should have it.[12]

We will want to say that if someone self-ascribes a **de dicto** property, then she has the corresponding proposition as an object of belief. Since not all properties are **de dicto**, however, we must consider the cases in which someone self-ascribes a non-**de dicto** property. One such property is the property of watching one and only one spy - someone can have this property while someone else lacks it. I will call a property like this a **de re** property, and I suggest the following definition:

(DR) property f is **de re** $=_{df.}$ f is not **de dicto**; and necessarily, for all x, if x has f then there is a y such that x bears a relation of acquaintance to y.[13]

I have discussed the notion of a relation of acquaintance in chapter 3. To the extent that it is a vague notion, (DR) is also vague; but this should not be troublesome here. For

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[12]This will be inconsequential to my project in the rest of this chapter. We could rule out such properties by requiring a **de dicto** property to be contingent; but this move would exclude from the class of **de dicto** properties such ones as the property of being such that no bachelors are married.

[13]The first clause of the **definiens** is needed to rule out properties like being such that everyone is watching someone. Intuitively, this property is **de dicto**; but whoever has it does indeed bear a relation of acquaintance (viz., watching) to someone.

convenience, I will not consider identity to be a relation of acquaintance.

Finally, we will need the notion of a **de se** property. If a subject self-ascribes such a property, then he has as an object of belief the singular proposition, about himself, to the effect that he has the property. We may give the following simple definition:

> (DS) property f is **de se** =$_{df.}$ f is neither **de dicto** nor **de re**.

Clearly, (DD), (DR) and (DS) divide the class of properties into three exhaustive and exclusive groups.

It will be helpful, I think, to list some properties in order to show where they fall under this classification scheme. Consider the following six properties:

1. being wise

2. being an uncle

3. watching someone who is a spy

4. looking at someone whose sister I remember

5. being such that anything extended has mass

6. being such that there are sticks and stones.

The first property is **de se**, since someone could have it while someone else lacks it, and someone could have it at a time without bearing a relation of acquaintance to anything at that time. The second is also **de se**, even though anyone who has it does bear some sort of relation to someone else. The third is **de re**, since anyone who has it is watching

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someone, and watching is a relation of acquaintance. The fourth is also **de re**, and it implies the holding of two distinct relations of acquaintance. The fifth is **de dicto**, but does not imply the existence of anything apart from that which has it (there might be a world without extension in which a single Cartesian mind has this property). Finally, the sixth is also **de dicto**, although no conscious subject could have it without there also being some things in existence apart from the subject.

Suppose now that the Property Theory says that a given subject s self-ascribes any property f. The property f will either be **de se**, **de dicto**, or **de re**: it must belong to one of these classes, and it cannot belong to more than one of them. So, let us consider each of them in turn. First, suppose that s's self-ascribed property f is a **de se** property. In this case, we let the Triadic View say that the believed-true proposition is the singular proposition that s is f. This accords with what the proponents of the Triadic View maintain about such a case. We now have the first of our three principles: if s self-ascribes f, and f is **de se**, then BEL(s, <s,f>, f).

Second, suppose that s's self-ascribed property f is a **de dicto** property. In this case, we let the Triadic View say that s believes the proposition that s has f, and the proposition that corresponds to the **de dicto** property. Call this latter proposition 'p$_f$': necessarily, for any **de dicto**

f, p_f is true if and only if something has f. So, if f is the property of being such that there are sticks and stones, then p_f is the proposition that is true if and only if something is such that there are sticks and stones, which is the proposition that there are sticks and stones.[14]

We can now affirm the second of our three principles connecting the Triadic View to the Property Theory: if s self-ascribes f and f is **de dicto**, then (1) BEL(s, <s,f>, f) and (2) BEL(s, p_f, f). If f is **de dicto** in virtue of being a necessary or impossible property, then p_f will either be necessary or impossible as well. For example, if I self-ascribe the property of being human or not human, then this propositional object of my belief will be true if and only if something is either human or not human, and hence will be the necessary proposition. Again, those who maintain that there are many distinct necessary propositions may wish to say that in this case I believe only one of them, perhaps one that can be recovered from the property that I self-ascribe. Another possibility would be to claim that if f is **de dicto** but either necessary or impossible, then a subject who self-ascribes f need not believe the proposition p_f.

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[14]It may also be the proposition that there are stones and sticks, which, although necessarily equivalent to the first, is distinct from it on most views of propositions favored by Triadic View theorists. I will basically ignore such complications in this chapter. p_f could be taken to be a class of equivalent propositions, all of which the subject believes to be true. Then again, if the property f itself is a structured entity, there may be some non-arbitrary way to find a unique corresponding proposition.

However, I am not much interested in cases having to do with believing the necessary or impossible.

Finally, suppose that s's self-ascribed property f is a **de re** property. This case is somewhat more complicated than the previous two, for a few reasons. First, it seems that most proponents of the Triadic View will want to say that which propositions are believed depends upon whether or not a **res** is actually present, i.e., whether or not s really does bear a relation of acquaintance to something. And second, some **de re** properties imply multiple acquaintance relations - e.g., the property of looking at an x and remembering a y such that y is the sister of x - which can get a bit messy. For simplicity, I suppose here that all **de re** properties have the following sort of form: bearing R to just one thing and to something that has the property g.[15]

On this simplifying assumption, if s self-ascribes f and f is **de re**, then f will be a property like: bearing R to exactly one thing that has g. I might, for example, self-ascribe the property of watching one and only one spy. On the pictures of **de re** belief sketched by philosophers who hold the Triadic View, if I really happen to be watching a spy, then one of the things that I believe - propositionally

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[15]R is a relation of acquaintance, as required by the definition (DR) in the text. An example of a property of this form is the property of watching a (unique) spy - where R is the relation of watching and g is the property of being a spy. This form should be familiar from the discussion of Chisholm and Lewis in chapter 3.

speaking - is the singular proposition about the individual x whom I am watching, to the effect that x is a spy. Like Macbeth and his dagger, however, it might happen that I self-ascribe the property of watching a spy without actually watching anybody - i.e., without actually bearing the acquaintance relation to anything that I could conceivably believe to be a spy. I might hallucinate, for instance. In such a case, it seems that I do not believe a singular proposition about any x distinct from myself to the effect that x is a spy. What, then, do I believe? Let us consider these cases in turn.

The first case is that in which I do bear the relation of acquaintance to a res.[16] If someone self-ascribes a property of the form: bearing R to something that has g, let us call R 'the self-ascribed relation of acquaintance'. From the above discussion of this case, if our subject s bears the self-ascribed relation of acquaintance to an individual, then s believes, according to the Triadic View, a singular proposition about that individual. With respect to cases in which a subject does not bear the self-ascribed relation of acquaintance to anything, we must say only that he believes a singular proposition about himself, to the

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[16]It might be argued that even when I am hallucinating a spy, I am still watching something: perhaps a location in space, or a portion of the atmosphere. I cannot address this argument here; although I do think that either it can be refuted, or else the problems it raises can be handled plausibly.

effect that he has the self-ascribed property (just as in
the other cases). So, if I self-ascribe the property of
watching a spy without watching anything, then I believe
only the singular proposition that I am watching a spy.[17]

When a property f has the form: bearing R to something
that has g, I will call g 'the indirect property of f', or
'Ind(f)'.[18] We may now give the third principle connecting
the self-ascription of properties with the believing of
propositions by being in belief states: (a) if s self-
ascribes f, and f is **de re**, and there is an object o such
that s bears the self-ascribed relation of acquaintance to
o, then (1) BEL(s, <s,f>, f) and (2) BEL(s, <o,Ind(f)>, f);
and (b) if s self-ascribes f, and f is **de re**, but it is not
true that there is an o such that s bears the self-ascribed
relation of acquaintance to o, then BEL(s, <s,f>, f).[19]

If the previous simplifying restriction on the form of
de re properties were dropped, the treatment would have to
be generalized to cover the more complex sorts of these

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[17]There may be other plausible ways to handle such
cases. Some might want to say, for example, that what I
believe is a singular proposition involving some of my sense
data or some item of mental experience, such as a visual
image.

[18]After Chisholm's notion of indirect attribution.

[19]The antecedent of part (a) would be true if s stood
in the relation of acquaintance to several things, or to
each of several things, instead of just one. For now, let
us assume that if a subject bears a relation of acquaintance
to something, then she bears it only to that thing. I
discuss **de re** beliefs about pluralities and the individuals
of pluralities in chapter 7.

properties. It seems to me that the generalization would be fairly straightforward, if somewhat tedious, and so would raise no new issues with respect to the project of finding believed-true, singular propositions to correspond to self-ascribed **de re** properties.[20]

Finally, I would like to take another look at the case of Felix in the light of these considerations. It may have been the case, when Felix first noticed the trail of sugar on the floor, that he had a merely **de dicto** belief to the effect that the shopper with the torn bag was making a mess. (It **may** have been the case, perhaps; but more likely Felix identified the shopper in relation to himself, as the person who created the trail of sugar he was following, and so had a **de re** belief about himself.) When Felix sees himself in the mirror, he clearly has a **de re** belief about himself. He looks at himself (without self-ascribing the property of being an x who is looking at x), and says something like 'he is making a mess!'.

From the point of view of the Property Theory, along with the principles just discussed, Felix at this point self-ascribes a property such as looking at exactly one

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[20]We may also want principles that generate other **de re** beliefs in certain cases. For example, if I self-ascribed the property of looking at a globe that is orange all over, in virtue of looking at a globe that is orange all over, then perhaps I would believe, of the top half of the globe, that **it** is orange, and so on. But would I also believe a **de re** proposition about the back half of the globe, which I do not even see?

person who is making a mess - and, in virtue of the facts that the property is **de re** and he is looking at himself and nobody else, he believes the singular proposition that he is making a mess.

Why, then, doesn't he begin to tidy up, or at least check to see what the problem is? The answer to this question is that Felix does not yet self-ascribe the property of making a mess: he thus believes the singular proposition by self-ascribing a **de re** property, rather than a **de se** one. From the fact that he believes the proposition that Felix is making a mess we cannot infer anything about his behavior; regardless of how much we know about his physical abilities and his desire for cleanliness.

When the truth finally dawns on him (when he comes to self-ascribe properties like being an x such that x saw x in the mirror, and having made a trail of sugar on the floor), Felix comes to self-ascribe the **de se** property of making a mess. This, and not his believing a singular proposition, is what explains why he rearranges his bag of sugar. (Of course, from the first principle above, he could not self-ascribe this property without believing the proposition that he is making a mess.) The change in belief that explains his subsequent behavior, then, must be a change in self-ascription, and need not be a change in believed-true propositions at all.

CHAPTER 5

PROPOSITIONS RECONSIDERED

In the last few chapters, we have considered some
alternatives to the doctrine of propositional objects of
belief. These alternatives were proposed to handle problems
about indexical belief in general, and **de se** or self-
locating belief in particular. In the present chapter, I
wish to consider an attempt to solve these problems within
the framework of the view that takes belief to be (or to be
ultimately analyzable in terms of) a binary relation between
a conscious subject and an abstract proposition. For the
moment, let us assume only that propositions are things that
are either true or false; and not merely true or false for a
person, at a time or a place, and so on.

Although many philosophers maintain that all of our
beliefs about ourselves are beliefs in propositions, I will
focus on the work of one philosopher, Robert Stalnaker, who
has considered the allegedly problematic **de se** cases in some
detail, and who argues that the doctrine of propositional
objects of belief is amenable to the data concerning
indexical belief. I will discuss only briefly the views of
others who share Stalnaker's general thesis. In the last
section of the chapter, I consider what I take to be an
important test case for, and an argument against, the
doctrine of propositional objects of belief: this is
Lewis's puzzling case of the two gods (see chapter 3).

5.1 The Doctrine of Propositions and De Se Belief

Stalnaker focuses on John Perry's case of the amnesiac lost in the library. Perry writes as follows:

> An amnesiac, Rudolf Lingens, is lost in the Stanford library. He reads a number of things in the library, including a biography of himself, and a detailed account of the library in which he is lost.... He still won't know who he is, and where he is, no matter how much knowledge he piles up, until that moment when he is ready to say,
>   **This** place is ... Main Library, Stanford.
>   I am Rudolf Lingens.[1]

Distinguishing what this man Lingens believes or knows, on the one hand, from what he doesn't, on the other, Stalnaker glosses the example thus:

> He ... knows quite a bit about Rudolf Lingens. He knows, for example, that Lingens is a distant cousin of a notorious spy. But he does not know that **he** is Lingens - that **he** is a distant cousin of a notorious spy. No matter how complete the biography, it will not by itself give him the information he lacks.[2]

The problem for Stalnaker has two parts. The first part is to identify the proposition that the amnesiac Lingens believes, say, when he believes that Lingens is a cousin of a spy. The second is to identify the distinct proposition that Lingens would come to believe, were he to learn that he himself is a cousin of a spy. Distinguishing these two propositions is important because, on the view

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[1]Perry (1977), p. 492. Lingens is a character in Gottlob Frege's "Thoughts," in Salmon and Soames (1988). Cf. the case of the war hero in Castaneda (1968).

[2]Stalnaker (1981), p. 130.

that propositions are the objects of belief, the fact that Lingens comes to believe the second proposition may explain some interesting feature of his behavior, something that his believing the first proposition could not explain. For example, we may suppose that when Lingens learns from the biography that Lingens is currently lost in Main Library, he just continues to read; but when he to comes to believe that he himself is lost in Main Library, he consults the detailed account of the library in search of a way out.

We should at this point consider Stalnaker's concept of a proposition in somewhat greater detail. On Stalnaker's view, a proposition is a function from possible worlds into truth values: propositions "are ways of dividing a space of possibilities - ways of picking out some subset from a set of alternative ways that things might be."[3] This conception of a proposition lets Stalnaker say that to believe something is directly to rule out certain possibilities while retaining others. The object of a belief is, roughly, a rule for doing this.

According to the present view, "propositions are not structured entities with concepts, objects or senses as parts; they are not complexes which reflect the grammatical or semantic structure of the sentences that express them."[4] What about possible worlds, in terms of which propositions

[3]Ibid., p. 134.

[4]Ibid.

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are defined? Stalnaker takes these to be abstract entities of some sort, "something like maximal properties that the world might have, or might have had."[5]

Stalnaker seems to maintain that just as context helps to determine the attributed proposition in a belief report, it also helps to determine what counts as a possible world in the very beliefs of the subject. He writes:

> The alternative possibilities used to define propositions must be exclusive alternatives which are maximally specific, relative to the distinctions that might be made in the context at hand. But one can make sense of this requirement even if there is no ultimate set of possibilities relative to which any possible distinctions might be made.[6]

Consider, for example, Perry's case of the messy shopper. On Stalnaker's view, there may be a time - e.g., when Perry points to a reflection of himself in the mirror and says "he is making a mess!" - at which Perry believes a proposition that is true at a unique world in which Perry himself is pushing around a very tidy grocery cart, while someone else is leaving a sugary trail. This state of affairs counts as a possible world, with respect to Perry's beliefs, even though it is not specific about many things - for example, about whether or not the messy shopper is a philosopher, or has any children. This point will be relevant to the proposal considered in the next section.

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[5]Ibid., pp. 134-5. In this thesis I do not consider issues about the ontological status of possible worlds.

[6]Ibid., p. 135.

5.2 Stalnaker's Solution

With Stalnaker's view of propositions in mind, let us return to the case of Lingens lost in the library. If each of Lingens's beliefs is a relation between Lingens and some proposition, then there is a proposition that he believes when, while lost in the library, he believes that Lingens is a cousin of a spy. Which proposition does he believe?

Stalnaker proceeds by enumerating the possible worlds that are relevant to attributing to Lingens the belief that Lingens is a cousin of a spy. He gives an illustrative account of the example, according to which there are three such worlds - called i, j and k. Two of these worlds are compatible with everything that Lingens believes. The other possible world, however, is not one of Lingens's "belief worlds": he rules out this world when he believes that Lingens is a cousin of a spy. Stalnaker writes: "in all possible worlds compatible with Lingens's beliefs, there is a person named 'Lingens' about whom a biography was written.... [T]he subject of this biography is a distant cousin of a notorious spy."[7]

The possible worlds or situations i, j and k are described by Stalnaker as follows:

> Situation i is the actual situation. Lingens, the amnesiac, is the subject of the biography, and is a cousin of a spy. But in situation j, the

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[7]Ibid., p. 136.

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biography correctly describes, and was written about, a different person - call him 'Lingens 2.' Our Lingens, the amnesiac, has a different name, and is not a cousin of a spy in situation j. Situation k is just like situation j, except that in k the biography of Lingens 2 makes some false claims. Lingens 2's cousin is not a spy in k.[8]

In the actual situation, Lingens comes to believe that Lingens is a cousin of a spy as a result of reading a token of the sentence 'Lingens is a cousin of a spy'. This sentence expresses in English a certain proposition. Stalnaker writes that "this token exists, not only in the actual situation, but also in the other two possible situations I have described."[9] This observation might make one wonder just which proposition is expressed in each possible world, by the token that occurs in that world.

In order to determine which proposition is expressed by a token of 'Lingens is a cousin of a spy', Stalnaker assumes that a certain semantic account of the sentence is true. This account implies that the name 'Lingens' designates rigidly a certain individual, and that the predicate 'is a

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[8]Ibid., p. 137. Stalnaker wants worlds i and j to be compatible with Lingens's beliefs. He writes that "in the original story, Lingens does not believe that he is **not** Lingens. He doesn't have an opinion one way or the other about who he is" (p. 136). World k is supposed to be incompatible with Lingens's beliefs, and hence it cannot characterize any proposition that he believes. Presumably Stalnaker includes world k in order to show which sorts of worlds are ruled out by the proposition Lingens believes.

[9]Ibid. Stalnaker notes that even if the sentence tokens in the different possible situations are distinct, it suffices that they "are epistemic counterparts for Lingens" (fn. 14).

cousin of a spy' expresses a certain relational property, such that the proposition expressed by the entire sentence is true if and only if the designated individual has the property expressed by the predicate.

Here is how Stalnaker evaluates the token of the sentence in the actual world:

> in situation i, the name 'Lingens' rigidly designates Lingens - our Lingens, the amnesiac. This person is a cousin of a spy in situation i, but is not a cousin of a spy in j or in k. So the proposition expressed by the sentence is the one that is true at i, but false at the other two situations.[10]

Stalnaker continues to evaluate the sentence token as it occurs in the other two possible worlds that are relevant to attributing belief to Lingens:

> in situation j, the occurrence of 'Lingens' in question rigidly designates a different person, Lingens 2. This man is a cousin of a spy at j, but presumably does not exist at all at i, and is not a cousin of a spy in k. Hence the proposition expressed by the token as it occurs in j is the one that is false at i, true at j, and false at k. In k, the name also rigidly designates Lingens 2, so the same proposition is expressed as is expressed in j.[11]

In "Indexical Belief," Stalnaker uses what he calls a **propositional concept** to help summarize the facts that he has given above about the propositions expressed by the sentence 'Lingens is a cousin of a spy'. In an earlier paper, "Assertion," he gives the following definition: "[a]

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[10]Ibid., pp. 137-8.

[11]Ibid., p. 138.

propositional concept is a function from possible worlds into propositions, or, equivalently, a function from an ordered pair of possible worlds into a truth value."[12] The propositional concept for the sentence 'Lingens is a cousin of a spy' is represented in the following matrix:

	i	j	k
i	T	F	F
j	F	T	F
k	F	T	F

In the matrix, the horizontal lines represent the proposition that is expressed by the sentence 'Lingens is a cousin of a spy' in each of the relevant possible situations. So, the proposition expressed by the sentence in world i is true at i but false at j and k, and so on, as Stalnaker has claimed. Since the same proposition is expressed in j and k, only two propositions are represented horizontally in the matrix.

This sort of approach to the example starts with a question about just which possibilities are, or are not, compatible with Lingens's beliefs. Stalnaker uses the propositional concept above to try to determine the content of the belief we attribute to Lingens when we say, while he is still lost in the library, that he believes that Lingens is a cousin of a spy:

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[12]Stalnaker (1978), p. 318.

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it is clear from the description of the example
that Lingens does not know whether he is in
situation **i** or situation **j**, although he does
believe that he is not in **k**, since he believes
that what the biography says is true. It follows
that he does not believe either of the two
propositions represented by the rows of the
matrix. It also follows that he does not know
which of the two propositions the sentence in the
biography expresses. But he does believe this:
whichever proposition the sentence expresses, it
is a true one. This is why he can safely assent
to the statement in the biography.[13]

According to Stalnaker, Lingens's belief that Lingens
is a cousin of a spy does not enable him to exclude either
world **i** or world **j** from the set of worlds compatible with
his beliefs. For all he believes, either of these worlds
might be actual. If Lingens believed either one of the
propositions represented horizontally in the matrix,
however, he would be able to exclude one world or the
other - since neither proposition is true at both worlds.
So, Lingens does not believe either one of these
propositions.

On the other hand, Lingens's belief that Lingens is a
cousin of a spy does allow him to exclude world **k** from the
set of worlds compatible with his beliefs. This is because
in **k** the subject of the biography is not a cousin of a spy.
Stalnaker thinks that we should conclude from all of this
that the object of Lingens's belief is the proposition that
is true at both **i** and **j** but false at **k**. This proposition is
(equivalent to) the proposition that the sentence 'Lingens

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[13]Stalnaker (1981), p. 138.

is a cousin of a spy' expresses a truth (evaluated at the world in which it occurs). Stalnaker writes:

> This is a different proposition from either of the ones represented by rows of the matrix, but it is represented on the matrix: it is the **diagonal proposition**, the proposition that is true at **x** (for each **x**) if and only if the proposition expressed in **x** is true at **x**. This proposition, I suggest, is the belief that Lingens expresses when he says 'Lingens is a cousin of a spy,' and the belief we ascribed when we wrote that Lingens believes that Lingens is a [cousin of a] spy in describing the example.[14]

Saying that the diagonal proposition is the object of Lingens's belief that Lingens is a cousin of a spy will allow Stalnaker to say that, were Lingens to learn that he himself is a cousin of a spy, he would come to believe the proposition represented in the first row of the matrix. If we don't restrict the class of possible worlds to the three in question, then presumably this proposition is equivalent to the singular proposition, about Lingens, to the effect that he is a cousin of a spy. Only when he learns this proposition is he ready to exclude world j from the set of worlds compatible with his beliefs.

Let me now summarize Stalnaker's approach to the problem of reconciling the doctrine of propositional objects of belief with the phenomena involving indexical belief. The problem, with respect to the Lingens case, is somehow to distinguish two different propositions that can plausibly serve as the objects of Lingens's beliefs: first, his

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[14]Ibid., pp. 138-9.

"third-personal" belief that Lingens is a cousin of a spy;[15] and second, his "first-personal" belief that he himself is a cousin of a spy. On the view that belief is a binary relation between a conscious subject and an abstract proposition, these two propositions must be different, since Lingens behaves differently when he comes to believe the second in addition to (or rather than) the first.

According to Stalnaker, the context of our discourse in general - and our discourse about the psychological states of others in particular - often restricts the domain of possible worlds in which we are interested. Stalnaker, in his discussion of the Lingens example, makes the simplifying assumption that the case requires us to consider only three possible worlds. The relevant propositions, then, are functions from each of these three worlds into truth values. There are many ways in which the biography that Lingens reads might have been written about someone else - some other person who happens to be the cousin of a spy. One of these is world j; but there are countless others. Likewise, there are many ways in which Lingens's belief might have turned out to be false. One of these is world k; but again, there are others: the subject of the biography might have

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[15]Stalnaker, it seems to me, does not want to say that this is a **de re** belief, or a belief **about** Lingens (see esp. (1981), p. 136). I find many of Stalnaker's remarks on **de re** belief puzzling (e.g., pp. 140-41), and partly for this reason I will not discuss the issue here. See also Austin (1990), chapter 5 (esp. pp. 93-97).

been a cousin of an electrician, or nobody's cousin at all.
The differences between these possibilities, Stalnaker
presumes, are not relevant to Lingens's beliefs or to the
context in which we are attributing belief to Lingens.

In order to attribute a belief to Lingens, Stalnaker
says, we need to know something about how Lingens conceives
the world. Three different possibilities are relevant to
this example: in the first, he himself is the subject of
the biography; in the second, someone else is; and in the
third, the subject of the biography, whoever he is, is not
actually a cousin of a spy. For all that Lingens believes,
the first situation might be actual. The same goes for the
second situation. We have seen, however, that Lingens has
ruled out the third possibility.

According to Stalnaker, the propositional object of the
belief that we attribute to Lingens, when we say that he
believes that Lingens is a cousin of a spy, is true at the
first possible situation, true at the second, and false at
the third - it is the diagonal proposition of the matrix
shown earlier. We might compare this with a Fregean view
according to which the sense Lingens associates with the
name 'Lingens' is something like the individual concept:
being the person named 'Lingens' who is the subject of a
certain biography.

If someone were to tell Lingens that **he** is Rudolf
Lingens, a cousin of a notorious spy, then he would come to

believe (assuming that he would believe what he was told) a proposition that is true at the first situation above, but false at the other two. There may be some question as to whether the proposition represented by the first row of the matrix - i.e., the one semantically associated with the English sentence 'Lingens is a cousin of a spy' - would be the object of Lingens's new belief that he himself is a cousin of a spy. I discuss this issue in the next section of the chapter.

It might be helpful to contrast briefly Stalnaker's view of the example with two other recent and influential theories about the objects of belief and other attitudes.[16] According to a theory like the Triadic View, Lingens does not come to believe a new proposition when he learns or infers that he himself is a cousin of a spy. Lingens (we may assume) believes all along the singular proposition consisting of Lingens and the property of being a cousin of a spy, under some guise or other, or in virtue of being in some belief state or other. Rather, when he comes to believe that he himself is a cousin of a spy, Lingens believes the same proposition in a new way: by being in a different belief state, or believing it under a different

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[16]Stalnaker is careful to avoid giving a theory about the semantics for belief sentences. In a footnote to (1981), he warns that "I am not proposing the hypothesis that in general **x believes that p** is true if and only if x believes the diagonal proposition of the propositional concept for the expression **that p**" (fn. 16).

guise - an I-guise. Perhaps this guise is to be identified with the meaning, or character, of the sentence 'I am a cousin of a spy'. The new way in which Lingens comes to believe the same proposition explains the subsequent change in his behavior, so that change in belief is not necessarily change in believed-true propositions.

According to a theory like the Property Theory, the object (or, using Chisholm's terminology, the content) of someone's belief is a property rather than a proposition. A person has the various beliefs that he or she has in virtue of self-ascribing, or directly attributing to himself or herself, certain properties - entities that are neither true nor false. (In chapter 4, I argued that the theory of belief states and that of self-ascribed properties are not really different theories.)

On Lewis's version of this view, for example, all along Lingens has ascribed (indirectly) to Lingens the property of being a cousin of a spy; but of course Lingens has not yet **self-ascribed** this property. Rather, Lingens must have self-ascribed some such property as the property of reading a biography of someone named 'Lingens' who is a cousin of a spy. Since Lingens was in fact reading about himself, he did ascribe (or indirectly attribute, as Chisholm would say) the property of being a cousin of a spy to himself. However, self-ascribing this property not the same thing as merely ascribing it, in this indirect way, to himself - and

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Lingens self-ascribes the property of being a cousin of a spy only when he discovers himself to be Lingens, the subject of the biography.

A number of philosophers maintain that belief is a binary relation between a subject and a proposition, and would maintain with Stalnaker that the object of Lingens's belief that Lingens is a cousin of a spy is a proposition, and the object of his belief that he himself is a cousin of a spy is another, distinct proposition. Some of these philosophers are neo-Fregeans who encounter the problem of **de se** belief by working on the semantics of belief reports. Graeme Forbes, for example, follows Frege in saying that each of us has a mode of presentation of himself, which is inaccessible to anybody else and which plays an essential role in self-belief.[17]

Consider the sentence 'Ralph believes that he (himself) is making a mess'. Forbes represents this as follows:

$$B(Ralph, [self]_{Ralph} {}^{\wedge} \lceil making\ a\ mess \rceil).$$ [18]

In this regimentation, '$[self]_{Ralph}$' denotes a mode of presentation of Ralph such that only Ralph could use it in thought. According to Forbes, this is a token of the first-person **type** of mode of presentation, so that if I, for example, were to believe myself to be making a mess, I would

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[17]See Forbes (1987), especially pp. 18-23. Cf. Frege's "Thoughts," in Salmon and Soames (1988).

[18]Forbes (1987), p. 23.

employ a different token of the same type, which accounts for the way in which Ralph and I would believe alike.[19] (The corner quotes are "sense quotes," and the symbol '^' stands for the way in which senses are concatenated to form a single complex sense.)

It seems that Forbes and Peacocke must say that only Ralph could grasp the very thought that he expresses when he says 'I am making a mess'. For suppose that someone else - call her 'Alice' - thinks a thought with the very same sense. Then Alice employs a constituent sense which is at the same time a mode of presentation of Ralph, and, by hypothesis, a mode of presentation of herself - since it is a token of the first-person type of mode of presentation. This does not seem to be possible, since it leads to the logical absurdity that her thought is possibly such that it is both true and false. Since nothing that Stalnaker says about propositions entails that certain of them are in principle inaccessible to certain subjects, perhaps there is a reason to prefer his view to the one just considered.[20]

Some other accounts of **de se** belief may also be classified as versions of the doctrine of propositional

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[19]Cf. Peacocke (1981). Peacocke suggests that only a thought made up of token senses can play the dual role of truth-value bearer and object of an attitude.

[20]See Markie (1988) for more discussion (especially pp. 579-83).

objects of belief.[21] However, I take Stalnaker's view as a
paradigm and consider it, in the next section, in the light
of an objection based on a case developed by David Lewis.
Lewis's argument can, I think, be applied in one way or
another to each of the views alluded to in this section.

5.3 <u>Propositions and the Case of the Two Gods</u>

I would like now to consider, in greater detail,
Stalnaker's treatment of **de se** beliefs - the beliefs that we
normally express in English with sentences of the form 'I am
such-and-such' - e.g., there is the belief that Lingens
comes to have when he learns that he himself is a cousin of
a spy. I shall consider some arguments against Stalnaker's
version of the doctrine of propositional objects of belief,
and suggest that the Property Theory is to be preferred. I
find these arguments to be compelling; needless to say, some
may find them to be inconclusive.

David Lewis has objected that Stalnaker's view cannot
account for self-locating belief properly so called, and
instead accommodates merely **de dicto** belief. Lewis presents
an example that, he alleges, shows that the objects of some
beliefs cannot be propositions, and hence that we should not
in general consider belief to be a binary relation between

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[21]See, e.g., Markie (1988), Schiffer (1978), Zemach
(1985), and Boer and Lycan (1986).

subjects and propositions. The example is the case of the
two gods, discussed in chapter 3. Here again is what Lewis
says:

> Consider the case of the two gods. They inhabit a
> certain possible world, and they know exactly
> which world it is. Therefore they know every
> proposition that is true at their world. Insofar
> as knowledge is a propositional attitude, they are
> omniscient. Still I can imagine them to suffer
> ignorance: neither one knows which of the two he
> is. They are not exactly alike. One lives on top
> of the tallest mountain and throws down manna; the
> other lives on top of the coldest mountain and
> throws down thunderbolts. Neither one knows
> whether he lives on the tallest mountain or on the
> coldest mountain; nor whether he throws manna or
> thunderbolts.[22]

Lewis claims that the situation is a possible one, and
is thus a legitimate test case for our views about knowledge
and belief. He also suggests that the gods might lack the
beliefs that they do because "they have an equally perfect
view of every part of their world, and hence cannot identify
the perspectives from which they view it."[23] Since the
gods believe all of the propositions true at their world,
but nevertheless could believe more than they in fact do,
according to Lewis, the objects of the missing beliefs could
not be propositions.

Lewis's solution, as discussed earlier, is to say that
the objects of belief and other attitudes are properties
rather than propositions. On his view, belief is also a

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[22]Lewis (1983a), p. 139.

[23]Ibid.

binary relation, but not between a subject and a truth-value bearer in any absolute sense. If the god on the tallest mountain were to learn that he himself lived on the tallest mountain, he would not come to believe a new proposition; rather, he would self-ascribe a new property: viz., the property of living on the tallest mountain. This property does not correspond to any proposition, since the god who lives on the tallest mountain is the only one in his world who has it.

Stalnaker, on the other hand, maintains that the god on the tallest mountain would indeed come to believe a new proposition, were he to learn that he himself lives on the tallest mountain - just as Lingens would, were he to learn that he himself is a cousin of a spy. This view, Stalnaker holds, follows from the doctrine of Haecceitism - the view that facts about non-qualitative aspects of individuals may distinguish between the (representative features of the) qualitatively indiscernible worlds that they inhabit.

According to Stalnaker, Lewis has misdescribed the case of the two gods by claiming that the gods are omniscient with respect to all propositions, and hence that they know exactly which possible world they inhabit. This reply allows Stalnaker to maintain that the gods, in each possible world in which they live, are really ignorant of some of the propositions that are true there. He writes that Lewis's example is

> a case of ignorance of which of two indiscernible
> possible worlds is actual. One of these possible
> worlds is the actual world (assuming that the
> theologian's story is true), while the other is
> like it except that the god who is in fact on the
> tallest mountain is instead on the coldest
> mountain, with all the properties which the god on
> the coldest mountain in fact has.[24]

In the other world, of course, the god on the coldest

mountain has all of the **qualitative** properties that the god

who is in fact on the coldest mountain has; but they must

have distinct non-qualitative haecceities. Thus for all

that the god on the tallest mountain believes, either one of

two qualitatively indiscernible possible worlds might be

actual.

For convenience, let us give some names to these gods

and the putative worlds that they inhabit. Let us call the

actual (we are assuming) world 'W' and the other possible

world, in which the gods have traded places, 'V'. And let

'G1' name the god who is on the tallest mountain in W and on

the coldest mountain in V, and 'G2' name the god who is on

the coldest mountain in W and on the tallest mountain in V.

The context of the case, Stalnaker would say, is such that W

and V are the only worlds that are relevant to attributing

beliefs to G1 and G2.

Let us focus arbitrarily on god G1 and world W.

According to Stalnaker, G1 is ignorant as to whether W or V

is the actual world. When G1 wonders whether he is on the

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[24]Stalnaker (1981), p. 143.

tallest mountain, the object of his wondering is the
proposition that is true at W but false at V. G1 believes
the proposition containing W and V - the one that is true at
each of these worlds - but he doesn't believe the one
containing W alone - the one that is true at W but not at V.
If G1 somehow were to learn that he himself lives on the
tallest mountain, Stalnaker says, he would thereby come to
believe the proposition containing W alone. On this view,
his coming to believe that he himself lives on the tallest
mountain gets analyzed as his coming to believe this
proposition.

Suppose that G1, in his state of ignorance, looks upon
the world and notices the god on the tallest mountain, then
thinks to himself 'he throws down manna'. G1 believes,
correctly, that this sentence is true. Stalnaker must
maintain that G1 does not know which proposition his
sentence expresses, since he believes that the sentence is
true but fails to believe the proposition that it expresses,
viz., the one that is true at W but false at V. The object
of G1's belief that he [demonstrating himself] throws down
manna, on Stalnaker's view, is the proposition that contains
both W and V. This follows from Stalnaker's views on
diagonalization.

In W, when G1 says 'he throws down manna', his use of
'he' rigidly designates (and directly refers to) G1, who
throws down manna in W but not in V. But the sentence token

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occurs in world V also. In V, G1's use of 'he' rigidly
designates G2 - the god atop the tallest mountain there -
who throws down manna in V but not in W. On this view,
then, the object of the belief that G1 expresses by 'he
throws down manna' is the diagonal proposition represented
in the following propositional concept:

	W	V
W	T	F
V	F	T

Now for Lewis's objection to Stalnaker. Lewis argues
that Haecceitism does not do the job that it was intended to
do, and therefore that there are some beliefs for which
propositional objects will not account, even if non-
qualitative propositions are countenanced. He writes as
follows:

> Let's grant, briefly, that the world W of the gods
> has its qualitative duplicate V in which the gods
> have traded places. Let the god on the tallest
> mountain know that his world is W, not V. Let him
> be omniscient about all propositions, not only
> qualitative ones. How does that help? Never mind
> V, where he knows he doesn't live. There are
> still two different mountains in W where he might,
> for all he knows, be living.[25]

This may seem like a plea for a more complete account
of the matter rather than an argument against the view that
Haecceitism helps to solve the problem about the gods'

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[25]Lewis (1983a), p. 141. In fact, Lewis's paper
precedes Stalnaker's. Lewis here argues against a standard
Haecceitist view, which Stalnaker favors.

beliefs. But Lewis's point, I think, is this: it is possible that G1 should believe the proposition containing W but not V, and at the very same time wonder about whether or not he lives on the tallest mountain - i.e., he could know exactly which world is the actual world, without knowing where he is located within it. Since this is possible, it is incorrect to analyze his coming to believe that he himself lives on the tallest mountain as his coming to believe the proposition containing W alone instead of the one containing both W and V.

Stalnaker replies that Lewis's argument begs the question against his view. "One cannot just stipulate that the god knows that he is in W, and not in V," he writes, "for on the proposed explanation, that amounts to the assumption that he knows which mountain he is on."[26] According to this reply, in the first premise of Lewis's argument it is illegitimately assumed that the (still ignorant) god knows the proposition containing W alone - on Stalnaker's account of the case, to assume that the god knows this proposition is to assume that he knows that he lives on the tallest mountain rather than the coldest one. Stalnaker, then, maintains that one can know **exactly** which world is actual only if one knows one's own place within it - so that if G1 is ignorant about his location, as Lewis says, he cannot know the proposition containing W alone.

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[26]Stalnaker (1981), p. 144.

What is going on here? Stalnaker's reasoning must go
somewhat as follows. Lewis has assumed that G1 has ruled
out world V as a world in which he might be living. If G1
knows that he lives in one, rather than the other, of two
qualitatively indiscernible worlds, then he must know which
mountain he lives on top of, since by hypothesis he must be
able to discern the purely haecceitistic differences between
the two worlds. Hence, Lewis's assumption is not consistent
with the claim that G1 still doesn't know that he himself
lives on the tallest mountain.

   This claim also follows from Stalnaker's views on
diagonalization. In world W, G1's utterance of 'I live on
the tallest mountain' expresses the proposition that is true
at W but false at V, since his use of 'I' rigidly designates
himself, and he lives on the tallest mountain in W but not
in V. (So, if we assume that G1 is still ignorant as to
which world he inhabits, then he does not know whether his
sentence is true or false.) In world V, G1's utterance of
'I live on the tallest mountain' also expresses the
proposition that is true at W but false at V, since his use
of 'I' again rigidly designates himself. The propositional
concept for the god's sentence is therefore as follows:

	W	V
W	T	F
V	T	F

Presumably, this is why Stalnaker claims that Lewis begs the question. Suppose that G1 knows all of the propositions that are true at his world, not only the qualitative ones, and as a result that he knows that he lives in W rather than V. Since G1 knows the proposition containing W alone, according to the matrix above he knows (and thus believes) that he himself lives on the tallest mountain. This proposition would be the object of his thought that he himself lives on the tallest mountain, and so if he knows it he thereby knows which mountain he is on. Lewis, the objection goes, has already assumed that the god in question has the knowledge that he allegedly lacks.

All of this may follow from Stalnaker's claims about diagonalization, but it does not show that diagonalization gives the right account of the example in the first place. According to Stalnaker, that G1 believes that he himself lives on the tallest mountain follows from the fact that he can discern the purely haecceitistic differences between the two worlds - or, at least, from the fact that he believes the haecceity **being (identical to) G1** to be instantiated by the god on top of the tallest mountain. The value of diagonalization in this case, and as a tool for accounting for belief in general, is based upon the validity of this inference; however, there is good reason to think that the inference does not go through.

Let us assume that G1 knows the proposition containing W alone - i.e., exactly which world is actual. Since he knows that world V - qualitatively indiscernible from the actual world - is not actual, it follows that he can distinguish between the worlds in virtue of their haecceitistic differences alone. This ability to discern the differences between the worlds is the ability to know where the haecceities in question are instantiated. So, G1 knows that the property of being (identical to) G1 is instantiated atop the tallest mountain and the property of being (identical to) G2 is instantiated atop the coldest mountain, and not vice versa.

This, however, is just where Lewis's point comes in. G1's knowledge seems to be consistent with his not knowing that the property of being (identical to) G1 is **his very own** individual essence or haecceity, rather than that of G2. Therefore, his knowing that W is actual and V is not seems to be compatible with his failing to believe that he himself lives on the tallest mountain. He might still wonder 'is **my** essence **being G1**, or is it **being G2**'.

We have been assuming that there is a fact of the matter as to which of the omniscient perspectives belongs to which of the individuals atop the two mountains. Such an assumption might be disputed. But even if it is disputed, the objection remains, since either of the gods could still wonder whether he lives on the tallest mountain or on the

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coldest one, even though there is no fact of the matter about which one it is.

I have suggested that there is good reason not to identify beliefs about one's own haecceity with beliefs about oneself; but I do not claim to have shown that these sorts of belief **must** be distinguished. Nevertheless, it still seems to me to be correct to claim that, for example, if G1 knows precisely which world is actual, then he knows exactly when and where his own haecceity is instantiated but he need not know **that** the haecceity in question is his own. From the fact that G1 can discern the worlds based upon their purely haecceitistic differences, it does not follow that he knows that he himself lives on the tallest mountain. It seems, then, that we should conclude that the approach taken by Stalnaker cannot account for some beliefs, and therefore that he has not succeeded in his attempt to solve the problem of indexical belief within the framework of the view that belief is a binary relation between a conscious subject and an abstract proposition.

Probably, what has been said so far would do little to persuade someone like Stalnaker, who would likely stick to his guns and identify a subject's beliefs about herself with her beliefs about her own haecceity. I am not at all sure that one could show that such beliefs must be distinguished. If it could be shown that the beliefs play different roles with respect to the explanation of behavior, then Stalnaker

would clearly be in trouble; but again, I am not sure that this could be done. Let me take one more shot, however, at arguing against a view like Stalnaker's. What follows is an argument very similar to the preceding one, and it is also based upon an argument suggested by Lewis, in a footnote to his paper "Individuation by Acquaintance and by Stipulation."[27]

Consider logical space - the class of all logically possible worlds. Suppose that we have a particular class P of propositions, themselves total functions from logically possible worlds into truth values (or, sets of possible worlds), such that (1) P contains some contingent propositions, and (2) P is consistent (all propositions p in P could be true together). Then, P determines a class W of possible worlds, such that for any world w, w is in W if and only if every p in P is true at w.

In each world w in W, there are various individuals with various properties, standing in various relations to one another. Let us suppose, along with Stalnaker, that the same individual may exist in more than one possible world, and that qualitatively indiscernible worlds may differ with respect to the way in which they represent the identities of particular individuals, i.e., with respect to which individuals are which.

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[27]Lewis (1983b), pp. 24-25 (fn. 16).

Now, suppose that the following is true:

(A)   There is a subject x such that, for all
      propositions y, x believes y if and only if y is
      in P.

According to Stalnaker, one's believed-true propositions
exhaust all of one's beliefs, and so (A) gives a complete
characterization of someone's doxastic state. In other
words, if (A) is true, then there is someone whose belief
state is characterized completely by P (and hence by W).
For example, (A) implies either that there is someone who
believes that there are sticks and stones, or that there is
someone who does not believe that there are stick and stones
(which one it implies depends of course upon whether or not
the attributed belief is in P).

   If Stalnaker's view is true, then if (A) above gives a
complete characterization of a subject's belief state, then
it should also entail exactly one of the following:

(B)   There is a subject x who believes himself or
      herself to be left-handed

or

(C)   There is a subject x who does not believe himself
      or herself to be left-handed.

   If there is someone who believes all and only the
propositions in P, and propositions are the only objects of
belief - so that nothing is left out - then either (B) or
(C) should follow from (A): again, which one does follow

must depend upon the details of P, and hence of W. However, (A) entails neither (B) nor (C). Even if there is an individual i at every world in W, and i is left-handed at every world in W, and no other individual is left-handed at every world in W, it still does not follow from (A) that there is someone who believes himself or herself to be left-handed. This is because (A) does not give any information about the identity of the subject who makes it true - in particular, whether or not the subject is i.

To summarize the argument: if Stalnaker's view is correct, then (A) implies either (B) or (C); but (A) implies neither (B) nor (C); so the view is not correct. What should be a complete characterization of a subject's belief state (of "the world according to the subject"), on Stalnaker's view, turns out not to be. The problem, it seems, is that Stalnaker's view requires that a belief state cannot be characterized completely without information about the identity of the subject whose state it is. The identity of a given subject of beliefs, however, seems irrelevant to the characterization of a belief state - of a way that the world might be, according to a possible subject of beliefs.

Stalnaker could change his view and maintain that, with respect to a subject's total belief state, the subject is the only individual that is identical across the possible worlds in the state. I do not know whether Stalnaker would want to make this move, but he explicitly denies it in the

paper under discussion here. In effect, this result is achieved by a view like Forbes's, according to which some propositions are such that they could only be believed, desired, considered, etc., by a single subject. I cannot explore this view to the extent that it deserves, but I suggest that, in addition to being significantly more complicated than the Property Theory, it leaves certain mysteries unsolved.[28]

Even if these mysteries can be solved, there are at least two reasons to prefer the Property Theory as a view of belief and the other attitudes. First, a property theorist need not accept the controversial metaphysical thesis of Haecceitism in order to give an account of our beliefs about ourselves. Second, the Property Theory is simpler than any view like Stalnaker's. There seems to be no good reason to say that my belief that I am sitting, for example, is a proposition that entails that something exemplifies a certain haecceity, viz., the property of being me, when it is open to say that my belief is just the property of being seated, which I self-ascribe.

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[28]For one thing, why are certain propositions inaccessible to certain subjects, and why isn't this a barrier to communicating them? (Might there be a God who thinks of me in the same way in which I think of myself? Cf. Nozick (1981), p. 72). For another, just why is my acquaintance with myself such as to allow me to be the only individual to appear throughout my belief worlds (on one way of stating the theory)?

Of course, there would be reason to say that my belief is a proposition, if there were a good argument against the self-ascription view. In the next chapter, however, I review some of the arguments in the literature against the Property Theory, including one presented by Stalnaker, and find each of them to be unsound. Finally, in chapter 7, I consider some general problems about **de re** belief from the perspective of the self-ascription view. These are problems that any account of **de re** belief will have to face, and I try to show that they can be handled within the framework of the Property Theory.

CHAPTER 6

DEFENDING THE PROPERTY THEORY

In this chapter I give a partial defense of the
Property Theory by considering, and objecting to, some
arguments that have been presented against it. Arguments
against the Property Theory in the literature are few and
far between, and persuasive ones are even rarer. Some of
them raise interesting issues; but it seems to me that all
of them can be defeated plausibly.

The arguments that I shall discuss are general
arguments against the self-ascription view, and are not
merely intended to refute one particular version of it,
while leaving another unaffected. For example, I will not
discuss arguments that pertain to Chisholm's version of the
Property Theory but not to Lewis's - say, because of the way
in which Chisholm individuates properties.[1] I will, on the
other hand, consider arguments that have been directed
against a particular self-ascription theorist, if they are
also applicable to the Property Theory in general.

6.1 The Property Theory and Self-Awareness

Some have argued that the Property Theory cannot give a
plausible account of self-consciousness, on the grounds that
it cannot distinguish one's thoughts that are about oneself

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[1]See, e.g., Villanueva (1991).

from thoughts that are not about oneself. Allegedly, the flaw in the Property Theory is its reduction of **de dicto** belief to **de se** belief, i.e., the claim that to believe a certain proposition p is by analysis to self-ascribe the property that is necessarily such that anything has it if, and only if, p is true. So, to borrow an example from Lewis, believing the proposition that cyanoacrylate glue dissolves in acetone is self-ascribing the property of being such that cyanoacrylate glue dissolves in acetone.[2]

Consider the following passage from Peter Markie's paper "Multiple Propositions and 'De Se' Attitudes":

> This reduction of **de dicto** beliefs to **de se** ones keeps the theory from giving an adequate treatment of self-consciousness. On Monday, Hume is working in his laboratory and is so lost in thought as to be unaware of himself. The only thoughts going through his head are chemical equations, descriptions of chemical reactions and the like. He comes to the conclusion that cyanoacrylate dissolves in acetone. On Tuesday, he is back in his laboratory but cannot concentrate on his work. He keeps thinking about himself. The thoughts going through his head all concern himself as he comes to the conclusion that he needs to find a new career. There is a clear difference between the two cases. Hume is conscious of himself on Tuesday in a way in which he is not conscious of himself on Monday. **De se** property theorists cannot explain this difference.[3]

Markie clearly thinks that the reason why the Property Theory cannot explain the difference between the thoughts on Monday and the thoughts on Tuesday is the reduction of de

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[2]See Lewis (1983a), p. 137.

[3]Markie (1988), p. 593.

dicto to de se belief. One natural way to explain the difference would be to say that on Monday, Hume comes to have a de dicto belief about chemistry; whereas on Tuesday, he comes to have a de se belief (about himself). Markie thinks that this natural explanation is unavailable to the property theorist, who must claim that on Monday Hume also comes to have a de se belief.

I will soon maintain that the natural explanation is ultimately available for use by the Property Theory. Markie entertains that property theorists might respond to his objection in another way, but he rejects the response:

> They might say that Hume is forming de se beliefs on each occasion, but it is only on Tuesday that he is consciously aware of the fact that he is doing so.... We have no reason to assume that Hume is this reflective on Tuesday. On that occasion, he does not just think about chemistry; he thinks about himself, but that is not to say he takes the extra step of thinking about the fact that he is thinking about himself.[4]

Markie may be right to reject such a reply. Even if it usually happens that we have such second-order attitudes when absorbed in thought about ourselves - e.g., that Hume, on Tuesday, self-ascribes the property of self-ascribing the property of needing to find a new career - it may be that such attitudes are not essential to this sort of thinking. So the reply might not yield a plausible way to distinguish Hume's thoughts on Tuesday from his thoughts on Monday.

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[4]Ibid., p. 594.

However, even supposing the above sort of reply to be inadequate, the property theorist can distinguish any differences there may be between Hume's mental states, in virtue of the contents of those states. The property that Hume self-ascribes on Monday (being such that cyanoacrylate dissolves in acetone) is of a quite different sort than the one he self-ascribes on Tuesday (needing to find a new career). The former property, for a start, corresponds to a proposition - i.e., it is necessarily such that if something has it, then everything has it - and in this sense it is **de dicto**. We can thus distinguish it from the latter property, which is not **de dicto**, and explain the difference in Hume's states in the natural way, by saying that on Monday, Hume has a **de dicto** belief, and on Tuesday, he has a **de se** (non-**de dicto**) belief. If this does not suffice to distinguish the way in which Hume is conscious of himself on Tuesday, we could also point to the fact, say, that the property of needing to find a new career is necessarily such that whoever has it is a conscious subject with beliefs, desires, projects, and so on.

Of course, it might be complained that the same sort of distinction between mental states is also relevant when we compare **de re** attitudes with irreducibly **de se** ones.[5] For example, we may want to say (although I do not think that we are forced to say) that when I believe myself to be sitting

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[5]Cf. Castaneda (1980).

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down, I am conscious of myself in a way in which I am not conscious of myself when I see myself seated in a mirror, but fail to realize that the person who I see is me (or when I see anyone else sitting down, for that matter). But the same sort of explanation is open to the property theorist in this case as well: self-ascribing the property of sitting down is quite different from self-ascribing, for example, the property of seeing someone who is sitting down. The latter property is necessarily such that whoever has it bears a relation of acquaintance to something, and in this sense it is **de re**. The former property is not **de re**, and so we may explain the difference between the states by saying that one of them is a **de re** belief about the person in the mirror, while the other is a **de se** (non-**de re**) belief about me.

Markie raises a similar objection when he complains that the Property Theory cannot allow for the possibility that "some thinkers (perhaps animals, children, or computers) could be capable of **de dicto** attitudes but lack the sort of self-awareness involved in **de se** ones."[6] It appears, however, that Markie misinterprets the Property Theory by maintaining that one must be consciously aware of oneself, in some intuitive sense, in order to have a **de se** belief. There is no reason to think that more than a special subclass of **de se** beliefs require such self-

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[6]Markie (1988), p. 594.

awareness. The Property Theory, it seems to me, easily allows for the possibility that a creature could be capable of self-ascribing properties that correspond to propositions while lacking the sort of self-awareness required to self-ascribe other sorts of properties (for example, those associated with second-order beliefs).

The philosopher who wishes to object along these lines to the Property Theory must show that there is a need to distinguish belief in a proposition p from self-ascription of the property of being such that p. I do not think that there is any such need: Markie has not shown that the latter requires any kind of self-awareness not required by the former, and it does not seem that they play different roles in the explanation of behavior. So, I suggest that when subject to examination the general argument discussed in this section does not carry much force against any version of the Property Theory.

6.2 <u>The Contingent Existence of the Subject</u>

In an earlier paper, Markie presented another sort of objection to the general framework of the Property Theory. This objection involves issues having to do with the existence and possible nonexistence of a given subject of attitudes. Although Markie directs the objection specifically against Chisholm's version of the Property

Theory, he clearly intends it to be applicable to all versions of the general view. When discussing Markie's argument, I shall try to make my remarks such that they may be incorporated by either Chisholm's or Lewis's version of the theory.

Markie introduces the argument as follows:

> Sometimes we adopt an attitude **de dicto** and the content is an impossibility; sometimes we adopt an attitude **de dicto** and the content is a possibility that includes our nonexistence. Chisholm's theory fails to capture this distinction because it requires that each **de dicto** instance of an attitude involves a **de se** one.[7]

Markie gives an example of the distinction with a pair of sentences, which attribute the attitude of considering something. Here are the two sentences:

(1) Descartes considers its being the case that two and two does not equal four.

(2) Descartes considers its being the case that he neither exists nor has any properties but someone is wise.[8]

The consideration attributed to Descartes in (1) is an impossibility, since of necessity 2 + 2 = 4; but the consideration attributed in (2) is a possibility that happens to entail the nonexistence of Descartes.

Now, to consider something is not to believe it, and so self-ascription does not come into play here. (Presumably, it would never be correct to attribute to someone the **belief**

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[7]Markie (1984), p. 236.

[8]Ibid. (I have renumbered Markie's sentences.)

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that he does not exist.) A property theorist, however, will want to say in general that all attitudes are relations between subjects and properties. In particular, consideration will be analyzed as a relation between subjects and properties. Markie calls this relation 'direct consideration', and gives the following property-theoretic versions of (1) and (2):

> (1a) Descartes directly considers ... being such that two plus two does not equal four.

> (2a) Descartes directly considers ... being such as to neither exist nor have any properties but to be such that someone is wise.[9]

Markie claims that although (1a) captures the fact that (1) involves Descartes' considering something impossible, (2a) fails to capture the fact that (2) involves Descartes' considering something possible: it attributes to Descartes the direct consideration of an impossible property. (Let us call the property attributed in (2a) 'F' - nothing could have F, it seems, since if something had F it would have at least one property, and hence would not exemplify F.)

There seems to be a bit of trickery going on here; but before we attempt clearly to expose it, let us consider a direct reply to Markie's objection. All that the property theorist must do, in order to handle the problem raised by Markie, is provide a plausible interpretation of (2) that attributes to Descartes a property that something could

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[9]Ibid. (Again, I have renumbered the sentences.)

exemplify. Such an interpretation may be available, along
the lines of the following:

> (2b) Descartes directly considers: being possibly such
> that he neither exists nor has any properties
> while someone is wise.

However, it might be objected that the consideration
attributed to Descartes in (2) is something that is not
actually the case, since Descartes does in fact exist;
whereas the consideration attributed in (2b) is a property
that is actually exemplified by Descartes. The objection is
even more weighty in the case of desiring (wishing, wanting)
nonexistence.[10] Any subject who wishes not to exist (never
to have existed) is certainly not wishing to have a property
that he or she actually has - like possible nonexistence -
so an account of such a desire along the lines of (2b) will
misdescribe the facts of the case.

With this in mind, we might wonder why Markie did not
simply use an example having to do merely with the
nonexistence of the subject, such as

> (3) Descartes considers its being the case that he
> doesn't exist (never has existed or will exist),

for which he could have given a property-theoretic
formulation along the lines of the following:

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[10]What is at issue here is the omnitemporal sense of
'nonexistence'. Cases of wanting not to exist as of some
time in the future, for example, are easily handled by the
Property Theory.

(3a) Descartes directly considers: not existing.

Why doesn't the same problem arise for (3) and (3a), given that the consideration attributed in (3) is clearly possible while the one attributed in (3a) seems not to be? How could the property of being such as not to exist ever be exemplified by something?

Markie must think that the Property Theory can somehow plausibly account for (3) but not for (2). I will argue, however, that any plausible property-theoretic account of (3) carries over to (2) as well. How then can we give a plausible interpretation of (3) (or of the case in which a subject desires nonexistence)? We might take the object of the consideration of (or the wish for) one's nonexistence to be the property of being nonidentical with oneself (which is to be distinguished from the property of being non-self-identical). This would yield the following interpretation of (3):

(3b) Descartes directly considers: being nonidentical
        with Descartes,

as well as an analogous account of the desire not to exist.

Such a treatment of attitudes involving one's own nonexistence would yield the desired result that the consideration attributed to Descartes in (3) is a possibility, insofar as it is a property that something could exemplify. Indeed everything save Descartes actually has the attributed property. However, this fact may give

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rise to a related and familiar problem: the consideration attributed in (3) is something that is not actually the case; whereas the property that is attributed in (3b), as we have noted, is exemplified by many things that actually exist.

If this objection has some force (and I am inclined to think that it does), we may replace (3b) with a nearby alternative that has at least as much plausibility, as follows:

(3c) Descartes directly considers: being such that
      everything is nonidentical with Descartes.

(3c) has an advantage over (3b) in that the property it attributes is not actually exemplified by anything, which corresponds to the fact that the consideration attributed in (3) does not actually obtain. As in (3b), however, the property attributed in (3c) is one that something could exemplify: it is had by everything in possible situations in which Descartes does not exist.[11] I suggest, therefore, that we take (3c) to give the property-theoretic analysis of (3), since it has all of the advantages and none of the disadvantages of (3b).

We can now extend this analysis to cover Markie's original objection that the Property Theory cannot give an

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[11]A counterpart theorist such as Lewis could take the attributed property to be the one that is exemplified by something in a world w if and only if there is no counterpart of Descartes in w.

adequate account of attribution (2), in which Descartes is said to consider someone's being wise while he himself neither exists nor has any properties. The property theorist is not forced to make the implausible claim that sentence (2) attributes to Descartes the consideration of an impossible property; such as the property that seems to be attributed by (2a), viz., being such as to neither exist nor have any properties but to be such that someone is wise.

A property-theoretic account of attitudes involving merely the nonexistence of the subject (along the lines of (3c) above) can easily be extended to account for examples of more complicated attitudes like the one attributed to Descartes in (2). The following interpretation of (2) seems to me to get things right:

(2b) Descartes directly considers: being such that everything is nonidentical with Descartes and nothing that is identical with Descartes has any properties and someone is wise.

Some philosopher might wish to claim that it really is impossible for something that actually exists to have no properties whatsoever; if only because of the idea that, for example, if I were to fail to exist, I would have the property of not being human (since I would clearly fail to have the property of being human). Such a philosopher might want to distinguish a "basic" property like being human from a "nonbasic" one like not being human, and then insert the

term 'basic' before the word 'properties' in (2b). Or, one might maintain that the part of (2) that implies that Descartes considers his not having any properties does not add anything to the meaning of the rest of the attribution, and so that (2) can be rendered adequately as follows:

(2c) Descartes directly considers: being such that everything is nonidentical with Descartes and someone is wise.

Regardless of whether (2b) or (2c) is chosen as the analysis of (2), it is clear that the property theorist can avoid Markie's objection. Both (2b) and (2c) capture the fact that (2) attributes to Descartes the consideration of something possible that excludes his existence: in both cases the property attributed is such that something could exemplify it but Descartes could not.

6.3 Stalnaker and the Exchange of Information

In this section, I would like to discuss an argument presented by Robert Stalnaker, in his paper "Indexical Belief," against the view that properties are the objects of belief and other attitudes. The argument is based upon the example of Rudolf Lingens, the amnesiac who is lost in the library and reads a biography of himself, discussed earlier in chapter 3. Although Stalnaker's objection is directed

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against Lewis's version of the Property Theory, it applies
straightforwardly to any version of the general view.

Stalnaker imagines the following auspicious ending to
the Lingens saga:

> Lingens, still lost in the Stanford Library,
> meets Ortcutt. "I've lost my memory and don't
> know who I am," says Lingens. "Can you tell me?
> Who am I?" "You're my cousin, Rudolf Lingens,"
> replies Ortcutt.
> This seems to be a simple case of direct and
> successful communication. Lingens requested a
> certain piece of information; Ortcutt was able to
> provide it, and did. Ortcutt was sincere - he
> believed what he said - and Lingens believed what
> he was told. Furthermore, Ortcutt's reply was
> direct: he did not just say something from which
> Lingens was able to infer the right answer to his
> question. He **told** him the answer.[12]

On Stalnaker's view, the objects of belief and the
other attitudes are propositions. Stalnaker accounts for
our beliefs in much the same way that he accounts for our
assertions, the objects of which, for him, are also
propositions. Roughly, before Ortcutt replies to Lingens
there is a set of possible situations that represents the
shared background knowledge of the two people. Ortcutt's
answer then expresses a certain proposition that narrows
down the members of this set by distinguishing between them
(presumably, between the situations in which Lingens is the
subject of the biography he has read and is the cousin of
Ortcutt and is called 'Lingens', on the one hand, and those
in which these things do not obtain, on the other).

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[12]Stalnaker (1981), p. 146.

According to Stalnaker's account, Lingens has requested a certain bit of propositional information, which Ortcutt's reply subsequently expresses. The proposition expressed by Ortcutt's assertion is the very one that Lingens then comes to believe. Stalnaker argues that Lewis cannot account for the case in this relatively simple and straightforward way, as follows:

> If Lewis holds that the objects of speech acts, as well as of attitudes, are properties - that to make an assertion is also to ascribe a property to oneself - then he will have to describe the case in something like the following way: Lingens asks which of a certain set of properties is correctly ascribed to himself. Ortcutt responds by ascribing a **different** property to **himself**. Lingens is then able to infer the answer to his question from Ortcutt's assertion.... The answer to the question is thus quite indirect, and this is not a special feature of this example. The account I am putting into Lewis's mouth must hold that **all** answers to questions are indirect in this way. If assertions are always self-ascriptions of properties, then people talk only about themselves.[13]

It seems, however, that it is open to Lewis, as a property theorist, to claim that the objects of speech acts and the objects of the attitudes are of different sorts: in particular, that although the latter are self-ascribed properties, the former are propositions. But Stalnaker has an argument against this move as well:

> Alternatively, Lewis might hold that speech acts, unlike attitudes, have propositions rather than properties as objects. But then he must deny that speech is a straightforward expression of thought - that what a person says, when he

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[13]Ibid., pp. 146-7.

believes what he says, is what he believes. If
Lewis makes this move, then he may save the
intuition that Ortcutt's reply is a direct answer
to Lingens's question, but he cannot say that the
content of the answer is the information that
resolves Lingens's doubt.[14]

Stalnaker's argument appears to be at least partly a
methodological one: it concerns the balancing of pre-
theoretic intuitions about the flow of information with the
utility of more systematic accounts of it. I think that it
will be helpful, for purposes of evaluation, to have at hand
a more precise formulation of the argument. Consider the
following reconstructed version.

(1) If the Property Theory of belief is true, then
    either the objects of assertions are self-ascribed
    properties, or else they are propositions.

(2) If the objects of assertions are self-ascribed
    properties, then people talk only about
    themselves.

(3) If people talk only about themselves, then all
    exchanges of information are indirect.

(4) If the objects of assertions are propositions,
    then assertion is not a straightforward expression
    of thought.

(5) If assertion is not a straightforward expression
    of thought, then all exchanges of information are
    indirect.

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[14]Ibid., p. 147.

(6) Therefore, if the Property Theory of belief is
    true, all exchanges of information are indirect.

(7) Some exchanges of information are direct.
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(8) Therefore, the Property Theory of belief is not
    true.

It seems that Stalnaker wishes to maintain premise (7),
and that he offers the exchange between Ortcutt and Lingens
as a case in point. An exchange of information from a
speaker to a hearer is direct, it seems, if and only if what
the hearer comes to believe (or, at least, part of what she
comes to believe), in virtue of what the speaker asserts, is
the very object (or perhaps one of the objects) of the
speaker's assertion. Otherwise, the exchange is indirect -
what the hearer comes to believe is somehow **inferred** from
what the speaker says (i.e., the object of the speaker's
assertion) and facts about the context of the utterance.

How might the property theorist in general, or Lewis in
particular, object to this version of Stalnaker's argument?
I would like to consider a pair of plausible objections.
Probably, Lewis would want to say that the objects of
assertion, like the objects of belief, are properties. In
this way we could express properties that we self-ascribe
but that do not correspond to propositions. He might,
however, wish to deny that this view entails that every
conversational exchange of information is indirect. Let
this be the first objection.

One way of making such an objection is to claim that there is some equivocation in the meaning of the word 'about' in premises (2) and (3). Let us distinguish two possible meanings that the word might have, a "stronger" one and a "weaker" one. To say that people talk only about themselves in the strong sense is to say that in virtue of our assertions we ascribe properties only to ourselves, and, in so doing, never ascribe them to others. If the word 'about' is used in this sense, Lewis can reasonably claim that premise (2) is false. Indeed, we have seen that Lewis has an account of how we ascribe properties to things other than ourselves, and hence talk about things other than ourselves, by self-ascribing properties to ourselves.

On the other hand, to say that people talk only about themselves, in the weak sense, is to say that self-ascribed properties are the objects of assertions, but assertions are sometimes used by certain speakers to ascribe properties to individuals distinct from themselves. If 'about' is used in this sense, premise (2) seems to be true. But what about premise (3)? Could Lewis maintain that premise (3) is false when 'about' is interpreted in this way; i.e., could there be some direct exchanges of information if people talked only about themselves, in the weak sense of 'about'?

Given the notion of a direct exchange of information, the answer to this question appears at first to be negative. For example, if Ortcutt self-ascribes a property when he

says 'you are Lingens', he ascribes something like the property of looking at exactly one person (and at a person) who is Lingens. Even if we suppose that Ortcutt is talking only about himself in the weak sense here, and not in the strong one, the purpose of his remark is not to get Lingens to self-ascribe the property of looking at exactly one person who is Lingens; rather, it is to get him to self-ascribe the property of being Lingens. This is not Ortcutt's self-ascription, however, and so it appears that Lewis must admit that the exchange is indirect.

In order to undermine premise (3) on Lewis's behalf, we might claim that although self-ascribed properties are objects of assertions, so are properties that are ascribed to other things. Ortcutt's remark, on this view, would have two objects: the property of looking at exactly one person who is Lingens, which he self-ascribes; and the property of being Lingens, which he ascribes to Lingens himself (the individual at whom Ortcutt is looking). We might want to say, along with Chisholm, that the latter property is the **indirect** object of the assertion.

According to the present view about assertion, the property that Lingens comes to self-ascribe (viz., the property of being Lingens) just is one of the objects of Ortcutt's assertion, and hence, the exchange of information between them turns out to be direct. So premise (3) can be denied on the weak reading of the word 'about'. However,

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this line of reasoning has some problems: first, the strategy of positing multiple objects of assertions, simply for the sake of making possible direct exchanges of information, seems somewhat **ad hoc**; and second, we have not yet given any reason why Lingens comes to self-ascribe (and is intended to come to self-ascribe) just one of the objects of Ortcutt's assertion and not the other. No doubt this could be done, but I think that a more promising objection to Stalnaker's argument is open to Lewis, as well as to any property theorist.

The strategy of the next objection is to concede that Lewis's view of belief entails that information exchanges are indirect - i.e., that line (6) of the argument is true - but to deny premise (7). Could Lewis plausibly deny that some exchanges of information are direct? It seems to me that he could.[15] All that is needed to accompany this position is an adequate explanation of how the relevant sort of indirectness is in no way an impediment to successful communication. I will try to sketch a plausible account, in terms of the intentions and beliefs of the subjects, without

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[15]Clear cases of expression of **de dicto** beliefs would be an exception: for some proposition p, the speaker would self-ascribe the property of being such that p in order to get the hearer to self-ascribe the very same property. We must, therefore, put into Lewis's mouth the somewhat weaker claim that such cases are the **only** cases of direct exchanges of information. The case under discussion is not of that sort: Stalnaker here worries that Lewis's view implies that **de re** exchanges of information are indirect.

going into issues having to do with what sort of mechanisms underlie the relevant exchange of information.

We might give such an explanation, for the present case, in the following sort of way. Ortcutt says to Lingens "You're my cousin, Rudolf Lingens," and the unique object of his assertion is a certain property that he self-ascribes. Along the lines of our previous characterization, this property is necessarily such that whoever has it is looking at exactly one person who is his cousin and is Rudolf Lingens.

Now, it is probably the case that Lingens doesn't know exactly which property Ortcutt ascribes to himself; but he must know that it is one of a class of similar properties, each of which is necessarily such that whoever has it is in a position to point, say, to his cousin Lingens. As a result, Lingens comes to believe that Ortcutt (the person with whom he is talking) self-ascribes a property of this sort. But Lingens knows much more than this, since he knows that Ortcutt has just addressed him with the English word 'you' and he knows that Ortcutt is looking at him and only at him. So, Lingens comes to believe that whichever relation of acquaintance plays a role in Ortcutt's self-ascription, he himself is the unique person to whom Ortcutt is so related.

Lingens is therefore in a position to self-ascribe the property that Ortcutt intends him to self-ascribe. After

all, Lingens knows that Ortcutt's self-ascription entails
that **whoever** is at the other end of the relation of
acquaintance is Lingens, and he knows that he himself is the
only person at the other end of the relation, whichever it
is. So, believing Ortcutt to be sincere, Lingens self-
ascribes whatever properties Ortcutt's self-ascription
entails that this other person has: viz., he self-ascribes
the property of being Lingens. The description of the
exchange may seem complicated; but there is no good reason
to think that it should be much simpler, and the complexity
of the description does not preclude the naturalness and
ease with which the information is actually exchanged.

The fact that the object of Ortcutt's assertion is not
identical with the information that Lingens had requested,
therefore, does not prevent Lingens from easily acquiring
it. The intuition that many conversational exchanges of
this sort are direct in the sense intended by Stalnaker -
i.e., are such that the object of the speaker's assertion
itself becomes an object of the hearer's belief - can
reasonably be discarded. This is made even more plausible
when it is remembered that only certain technical senses of
the terms 'direct' and 'indirect' are presently at issue.
In fact, it seems that Stalnaker's own account of such
exchanges (in terms of the diagonal propositions expressed
by the various assertions - see chapter 5) should have to be
much more complicated than he suggests in the passage under

consideration here. I conclude that Stalnaker's argument,
like the ones discussed earlier, does not constitute a
serious objection to the view of the attitudes taken by
proponents of the Property Theory.

CHAPTER 7

SELF-ASCRIPTION AND BELIEF **DE RE**

The Property Theory of belief is the view that, as a
matter of some sort of necessity, someone believes something
if and only if there is a property such that he or she self-
ascribes it. In this chapter, I evaluate the Property
Theory with respect to some issues concerning **de re** belief.
I intend both to defend the theory as a view about the
attitudes in general, and to point out, and try to resolve,
some problems about **de re** belief for the view defended in
particular by David Lewis.

In the first section, I review the general account of
de re belief given by Lewis. Some remarks by Kripke in
Naming and Necessity suggest that no such account of **de re**
belief will work. I discuss Kripke's argument in the second
section. The next two sections of the chapter contain
discussions of more arguments against Lewis's property-
theoretic account of **de re** belief: in the third I object to
an argument presented by Thomas McKay, and in the fourth I
present what I think is a stronger argument against Lewis's
view. I also attempt to modify the Property Theory in light
of the objection to one version of it. Finally, in the
fifth section, I turn to some issues having to do with **de re**
beliefs about pluralities and the individuals contained
within them.

7.1 De Re Belief and the Property Theory

I think that there is a kind of pre-analytic notion of believing something of, or about, an object or collection of objects. Such believing is typically attributed with sentences like the following:

> Ash believed to be from a great explosive eruption that buried the Minoan colony on the island of Santorini 36 centuries ago has been extracted from deep in an ice core retrieved last year from central Greenland.[1]

This sentence entails that some people, presumably experts, believe, of a certain bit of volcanic ash recently taken from a certain ice core, that it came from a certain place at a certain time. The logical features of relevantly similar sentences have received much recent attention.

Sentences like the example above do not convey much information about how the subject or subjects would express the attributed belief. Suppose for simplicity that the sentence attributes belief to just one person, say, Sarah. We do not know, then, in virtue of knowing that the sentence expresses a truth, how Sarah thinks of the ash in question, and hence we do not know how she might express her belief: she might be in a position to point to the sample of ash, and so might express it by saying (if she speaks English) 'that ash comes from Santorini...'; or, she may think of it as the ash that Sasha sent her, and so might say 'the ash

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[1] **The New York Times**, Tuesday, June 7, 1994, page C8.

Sasha sent me comes from Santorini...'; or she might have named the sample 'Sam' and so might express her belief by saying 'Sam comes from Santorini...'.

What appears to make this sort of belief attribution true is, roughly, a state of affairs in which the denoted subject thinks of the **res** - in this case, the ash - in some way or other and thinks of it as having whatever property is expressed in the attribution. Moreover, it seems that the subject can think of the **res** in this way only if she has had some sort of interaction or epistemic contact with it; even if it is the sort of interaction that is mediated by the attitudes and behavior of others.

Some philosophers are skeptical about the notion of **de re** belief. One of them is Daniel Dennett, who argues that there is no principled way to distinguish **de re** belief as a "subvariety" of belief proper (a concept about which Dennett is also skeptical). Consider the following passage:

> Suppose I am sitting in a committee meeting, and it occurs to me that the youngest person in the room (whoever that is - half a dozen people present are plausible candidates) was born after the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Call that thought of mine **Thought A**. Now in the weak sense of 'about', Thought A is about one of the people present, but I know not which. I look at each of them in turn and wonder, e.g., 'Bill, over there - is it likely that Thought A is **about him**?' Call **this** thought of mine **Thought B**. Now **surely** (one feels) Thought B is **about Bill** in a much more direct, intimate, strong sense than Thought A is, even if Thought A does turn out to be about Bill. For one thing, I **know** that Thought B is about Bill. This is, I think, an illusion. There is only a difference in degree between Thought A and Thought B and their relation to Bill. Thought B

is (weakly) about whoever is the only person I am looking at and whose name I believe to be Bill and ... for as long as you like. Bill, no doubt, is the lone satisfier of that description, but had his twin brother taken his place unbeknownst to me, Thought B would not have been about Bill, but about his brother.[2]

We might agree with Dennett that there is no subvariety of belief called **'de re** belief', if only because **de re** belief involves more than just psychological content, or belief proper. It seems, however, that Dennett wants to make a stronger claim - viz., that the notion of **de re** belief doesn't make sense. Dennett backs this claim up by arguing that there are no plausible grounds for holding that Thought B is a **de re** thought about Bill, whereas Thought A is not.

The obvious reply is to claim that Thought B is caused by Bill (in some ordinary sense) but Thought A is not. One who favors the Property Theory might want to add to this the claim that Thought A does not involve or imply a relation of acquaintance that Dennett bears to Bill (since 'the youngest person in the room' expresses no such relation, even though it denotes Bill), whereas Thought B does imply a relation of acquaintance that Dennett bears to Bill (e.g., the relation expressed by 'the person I am looking at' or 'the person who I am now attending to').

It seems to me that this reply is more or less correct; but Dennett might wish to respond by maintaining that the

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[2]Dennett (1982), p. 84.

notion of a relation of acquaintance is vague, and that any
distinction between a relation of acquaintance and a mere
description will be a matter of degree and will not mark a
difference in kind. As to this second point, we may note
that sometimes a difference in degree can make for a
difference in kind. For example, the difference between
Smith's skill level in carpentry and Jones's may just be a
difference in degree; but in virtue of this difference it
might be the case that Smith is a master and Jones is a
journeyman. These are kinds that may be very useful for
certain purposes.

It may also be true that the notion of **de re** belief is
infected with vagueness. However, this would not entail
that one ought to be skeptical about the very notion, since
there may still be clear cases in which subjects have **de re**
beliefs. This is not to say anything about the theoretical
fruitfulness of the concept in question, which is another
matter about which Dennett entertains some doubts.[3] I am
not much concerned with this issue here; rather, I am trying
to make a pre-theoretical notion somewhat more precise. But
as we shall see below, a concept of **de re** belief might be
useful for certain purposes, e.g., in accounting for one of
the ways in which subjects can be said to share beliefs.

The Property Theory implies that the belief attributed
by any belief sentence, even one with a **de re** reading -

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[3]See, e.g., ibid. p. 86-87.

i.e., a mental state of affairs needed to make the sentence
true - is of the same kind as all other belief: it is a
relation between a subject and a property that the subject
self-ascribes. We can, however, distinguish a few different
sorts of property in order to find the one that is generally
associated with **de re** belief, i.e., ascribing a property to
an object.[4] First of all, **de re** self-ascriptions do not
correspond to propositions - e.g., excluded are such
properties as the property of being such that every elm is
deciduous. The properties that we seek are not necessarily
such that if something has one of them, then everything else
also has it. Those properties are used (fairly, I think) by
the Property Theory to account for propositional (**de dicto**)
belief.

Next, **de re** self-ascriptions generally imply that the
subject bears a relation of acquaintance to some object or
other.[5] For example, if I were to believe something that I
might express by saying 'that man is a spy', then according

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[4]It might be said that on the self-ascription view, all
beliefs are **de re**, insofar as they are about the subject, or
ascribed to the subject. In the sense outlined in the text,
however, a subject may have **de se** beliefs without believing
anything, **de re**, of himself. (See also chapter 4.) Of
course, we are familiar with cases in which someone (the
messy shopper, or Rudolf Lingens) has a **de re** belief about
himself without having what we might call a corresponding **de
se** belief.

[5]Such relations have been discussed, e.g., in chapters
3 and 4. Of course, to have a **de re** belief it is not enough
to merely self-ascribe a property of this sort; one must
also bear the relation in question to a **res**.

to the Property Theory my belief is a self-ascription of a
property - e.g., the property of looking at a man who is a
spy - that has the following feature: it is necessarily
such that whatever has it bears a relation of acquaintance
to something or other. In this way, **de re** beliefs may be
distinguished from **de dicto** beliefs and **de se** ones (which,
in the sense intended here, are neither **de dicto** nor de re).

Lewis takes belief to be a relation that obtains
between a subject and a property in virtue of some intrinsic
state of the subject - the objects in one's environment are
not directly relevant to the individuation of one's beliefs:

> The main purpose of assigning objects of attitudes
> is, I take it, to characterize states of the head;
> to specify their causal roles with respect to
> behavior, stimuli, and one another. If the
> assignment of objects depends partly on something
> besides the state of the head, it will not serve
> this purpose. The states it characterizes will
> not be the occupants of the causal roles.[6]

I am inclined to agree with Lewis. Even if we think that
objects of belief, to be properly so-called, must play
another role - e.g., a semantic role - that is determined in
part by the identities of the things in a given subject's
environment, we may stick with the Property Theory and
define the needed objects of belief.[7]

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[6]Lewis (1983a), pp. 142-43.

[7]See chapter 4. For example, if you believe that
London is pretty and I believe that too, we may want to say
that we share an object of belief, viz., the proposition
that London is pretty. This may be the case even if we are
acquainted with London in different ways and hence if we
self-ascribe distinct properties.

It is this commitment to a narrowly psychological view of belief, perhaps, that leads Lewis to make the paradoxical remark that **de re** beliefs are not really beliefs. According to Lewis, "they are states of affairs that obtain in virtue of the relations of the subject's beliefs to the **res** in question."[8] The relevant beliefs, in this case, are self-ascribed properties that have a form in common: anybody who has one of them stands in an acquaintance-relation to exactly one thing that has a certain attribute.

On Lewis's view, a **de re** belief (sticking with the simple case of ascribing a property to a single individual) is a state of affairs in which (1) the subject does in fact self-ascribe a property that entails standing in some relation to something that has a particular attribute, and (2) the relation in question is a suitable relation of acquaintance that the subject bears uniquely to the **res**. For example, there is the state of affairs in which (1) Ralph self-ascribes the property of watching a spy, while (2) Ralph is watching Ortcutt and nobody else. (Again, a relation of acquaintance is a more or less extensive causal dependence of the states of the subject upon those of the **res**.)

In the analysis above, condition (1) is the psychological part of the compound state of affairs, and

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[8]Lewis (1983a), p. 152.

condition (2) is the non-psychological part.[9] The present
account of **de re** belief may be restated more clearly, as
follows: a subject S believes of an object O that it has
property P if, and only if, there is a relation of
acquaintance R such that S bears R to O and only to O, and
self-ascribes the property of bearing R to something that
has P. (The Property Theory could also be used to sketch a
semantics for **de re** belief attributions. For example,
consider the (**de re** reading of the) sentence 'Pierre
believes that London is pretty'. We could say that the
sentence is true if and only if there is a relation of
acquaintance R such that Pierre bears R to London and only
to London, and self-ascribes the property of bearing R to a
thing that is pretty. We might also want to posit a
contextually supplied restriction on the domain of relations
of acquaintance.)

On Lewis's view, then, **de re** reduces to **de se**: i.e.,
the object of the subject's belief, in a **de re** belief state
of affairs, is a property that the subject self-ascribes.
Moreover, the property will not in general correspond to a
proposition, since it could be true of one inhabitant of a
possible world and false of another. In the next section, I

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[9]Some may complain that condition (1) leaves out part
of the psychological description of the subject - e.g., that
the **res** itself enters into the psychological content. I do
not wish to address this issue here, in part because it
seems to me that it might be to a large extent a
terminological one. Perhaps Dennett's phrase 'organismic
contribution to belief' would be helpful here.

would like to discuss a point made by Kripke before the self-ascription view was even put forward, but which he seems to want to use against the view of reference implied in the present account of **de re** belief.

7.2 De Re Belief and Identifying Descriptions

Consider the following passage, in which Kripke seems to be maintaining that someone may succeed in referring to something even if he, the subject, does not know of any description that is true of it, the **res**, and of nothing else:

> Someone, let's say, a baby, is born; his parents call him by a certain name. They talk about him to their friends. Other people meet him. Through various sorts of talk the name is spread from link to link as if by a chain. A speaker who is on the far end of this chain, who has heard about, say Richard Feynman ... may be referring to Richard Feynman even though he can't remember from whom he first heard of Feynman or from whom he ever heard of Feynman. He knows that Feynman is a famous physicist. A certain passage of communication reaching ultimately to the man himself does reach the speaker. He then is referring to Feynman even though he can't identify him uniquely.[10]

Kripke implies that someone can believe that Feynman is a famous physicist (have a thought about him, say something about him) without being able to identify Feynman uniquely. If this were correct, it would refute the views put forward by Lewis and Chisholm. On Lewis's view, for example, I can

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[10]Kripke (1980), p. 91.

believe that Feynman is a famous physicist only if there is a suitable relation R between myself and Feynman (and nobody else) such that I self-ascribe the property of bearing R to a famous physicist. It seems impossible to deny that if I cannot identify Feynman uniquely, I cannot self-ascribe any such property. If I can still believe that Feynman is a famous physicist, then something is wrong with Lewis's view.

Kripke might want to hold that in the case envisaged, the man would have **de dicto** beliefs about Feynman, but not any **de re** ones.[11] This may come from a suspicion about the very notion of a **de re** belief, or of a **de re** reading of an attribution of belief. I will not discuss Kripke's views on this issue, in part because it seems to me that we do have a clear enough notion of **de re** belief, even if it does not apply to borderline cases. For example, if we think that more than mere reference is necessary for having a **de re** belief about something, then there may be no determinate answer to the question whether a certain four-year-old, say, has **de re** beliefs about Aristotle.

Before discussing Lewis's reply to the worry raised by Kripke's remarks, I would like to consider an inadequate one. The reply runs as follows: in the above case, I do not refer to Feynman, and hence do not have any beliefs about him, even though the name 'Feynman' refers to him and

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[11]See Kripke (1979); e.g., Salmon and Soames (1988), pp. 104-06.

is part of my vocabulary. This claim may perhaps rest upon the idea that for obvious reasons I have a less than adequate mastery of the name. So, the reply goes, contrary to Kripke's assumption, I do not really know (and hence believe) that Feynman is a famous physicist.

Another way of stating this reply might be to say that in this case I do not have a **concept of** Feynman. Perhaps one who favors such a reply might also claim, for example, that I lack the concept of a beech or an elm, and so cannot have any beliefs about these. This sort of reply, however, is clearly inconsistent with ordinary usage. In the case that Kripke describes, it is surely right to say that the man in question believes that Feynman is a famous physicist. (Of course, we are not thus committed to any particular analysis of this attribution of belief.) To claim otherwise would lead one to say that a great many of our ordinary attributions of belief (which presumably would typically be considered true by English speakers) are simply false. Such a position is untenable and should be avoided, if possible.

Lewis wishes to maintain that, when the man in Kripke's example believes that Feynman is a famous physicist, this is in virtue of there being some relation of acquaintance R between him and Feynman such that the man self-ascribes the property of bearing R uniquely to a famous physicist. In this case, R is probably the relation expressed by 'having heard of under the name of "Feynman"'. The fact that the

man can identify Feynman with a description that mentions his name is ready to be exploited. So, according to Lewis, it turns out that the man in question can identify Feynman uniquely after all, in relation to himself. Consider Lewis's remark on a similar example:

> If I have a belief that I might express by saying "Hume was noble," I probably ascribe nobility to Hume under the description "the one I have heard of under the name of 'Hume'." That description is a relation of acquaintance that I bear to Hume. This is the real reason why I believe **de** re of Hume that he was noble.[12]

Probably, Lewis would maintain that the relation between the man and Feynman is a suitable relation of causal acquaintance, for roughly the same reason that Kripke gave in support of the claim that the man **refers** to Feynman: "A certain passage of communication reaching ultimately to the man himself [Feynman] does reach the speaker [the man]." The relation expressed by 'having heard of under the name of "Feynman"' obtains between the man and Feynman just in case some present state of the man (presumably, his current self-ascription) depends causally, in the appropriate sort of way, on some prior state of Feynman (e.g., an extrinsic state like his baptism).

Perhaps I can identify something uniquely if I have a purely qualitative description of the thing that fits it and nothing else. Clearly, I can identify something uniquely if

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[12]Lewis (1983a), p. 155. Schiffer makes a similar point in his (1978), see especially pp. 198-99.

I am in a position to look at it under good conditions and, say, point to it. But Lewis claims that other sorts of relation between a subject and an object will suffice to allow the subject to have **de re** beliefs about the object. Consider the following passage from **On the Plurality of Worlds**:

> A relation of acquaintance needn't be so very direct and perceptual. Other relations will do, so long as they afford channels for the flow of information. For instance there is the relation which obtains when one has heard of something by name. Let us say that one is '**Londres**'-acquainted with something when one has heard of it under the name '**Londres**'. Each of Pierre's doxastic alternatives is '**Londres**'-acquainted with a pretty city; Pierre himself is '**Londres**'-acquainted with London; thereby Pierre ascribes prettiness to London; and that is how he believes that London is pretty.[13]

Lewis, then, has an answer to Kripke's puzzle about belief, with which I assume familiarity.[14] Pierre, having some French names in his English vocabulary, is ready to say something like 'Although **Londres** is pretty, London is not'. Pierre's doxastic alternatives are those possible men who self-ascribe, and have, every property that Pierre actually self-ascribes: they inhabit worlds that, for all Pierre believes, are actual. Pierre happens to be '**Londres**'-acquainted and '**London**'-acquainted with the same city; however, this is not the case with any of his doxastic alternatives.

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[13]Lewis (1986), p. 33.

[14]See Kripke (1979).

Analogously, on Lewis's view, the man who believes that Feynman is a famous physicist does so in virtue of (1) being 'Feynman'-acquainted with Feynman and only with Feynman, and (2) self-ascribing the property of being 'Feynman'-acquainted with someone who is a famous physicist. It doesn't really matter whether or not we wish to say, in virtue of the fact that the man is 'Feynman'-acquainted with Feynman, that he can thereby identify Feynman uniquely; perhaps he can in one sense and can't in another. Either way, it seems that Lewis is able to give a plausible account of the kind of case that Kripke has in mind, in which one has heard of something by name but is presumably unable to produce a certain kind of qualitative description that fits the thing uniquely.

We should note that the descriptions that Lewis prefers to use in cases of this sort make essential reference to the person who, so to speak, employs them in thought: e.g., I have a belief about Feynman by thinking of some relation that I bear to him, for instance by thinking of him as the person of whom I have heard under a certain name. Hence, on Lewis's view, the object of an attitude in which such a description occurs is still irreducibly **de se**: I self-ascribe the property of having heard of someone under the name 'Feynman'....

Nevertheless some complications arise. I might have heard of two or more distinct people under a single name,

say 'Bach', and I might be fully aware of this. Probably, then, I am not 'Bach'-acquainted uniquely with anyone; but this fact can hardly prevent me from having **de re** beliefs about the various Bachs with whom I am acquainted. In a typical case, the name in question can be disambiguated by means of more or less qualitative descriptions of the things that bear it. For example, if the description 'the one I have heard of under the name of "Bach"' could express a relation of acquaintance between two people, then 'the composer named "Bach" who wrote the Brandenburg Concertos' could also.[15]

It is less clear that there could be cases in which a subject believes something **de re** of an object, but has no linguistic description of it that picks it out uniquely. But perhaps this is possible. Perhaps I could believe something about Bach, as the composer I have heard of under the name 'Bach', without being able to produce a qualitative description that disambiguates (or somehow yields the bearer of) his name.

In an extreme case of this sort, it seems that we need to depend upon something like the notion of the causal role played by "a token of a name in a person's head," i.e., a

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[15]As is well known, a name that has only one bearer (let us suppose) may also be disambiguated (wrongly) by a subject who thinks that two or more things share the name: thus the descriptions 'the musician I have heard of called "Paderewski"' and 'the politician I have heard of called "Paderewski"'.

self-ascription of a property that implies that someone or something bears the name in question. We need to assume, roughly, that in virtue of the various causal roles played by different name tokens, the tokens may be classified into types, in such a way that tokens of the same public-language type or that are in some sense syntactically identical (e.g., would sound the same if uttered or would look the same if written) may be tokens of distinct types. Any theory of belief, it appears, will have to make a similar assumption in order to handle such extreme cases.

Mark Richard has used the locution 'representational type' when discussing this sort of classification of mental tokens.[16] He suggests, roughly, that two name tokens (e.g., of the name 'Bach') are of the same representational type for a certain subject if and only if they are of the same public-language word type, and the subject groups them together or uses them as if they named the same thing.

Richard considers two different name tokens to be of the same word type only if they have the same bearer, so that two tokens of 'Bach' may be of different word types. The justification for this is essentially the causal theory of naming, according to which a given token of a name denotes its bearer in virtue of its place in a causal chain of name tokens going back in time, perhaps to some sort of

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[16]See Richard (1990), pp. 182-85. Richard's notion of a mental term token is not quite the same as the one being used here.

baptism of the bearer or some other reference-fixing use of the name.[17] We may employ something like Richard's account to the sort of case under consideration.

Suppose that I am 'Bach'-acquainted with two composers but that I cannot disambiguate the name(s) by means of descriptions, and that I have **de re** beliefs about each of them (for example, I believe of each one that he was a famous composer). Now suppose that I self-ascribe the property of being 'Bach'-acquainted with someone who was a distinguished organist. In this case, my self-ascription implies that someone is named 'Bach', and it (i.e., my self-ascription) is a node in a causal chain that ultimately goes back to one of the two men with whom I am 'Bach'-acquainted. This, then, is the one whom I believe to be a distinguished organist.

What makes my belief about one Bach rather than another is therefore a matter of what goes on outside of my head, of which events caused my self-ascription. What makes it the case that **I believe that** I have heard of two distinct individuals called 'Bach' is a matter of my psychology - somehow, in my thought I manage to track certain occurrences of the name 'Bach', grouping some of them together as a name of one person, and some others together as a name of someone

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[17]This is all quite rough and vague, but the topic of naming is far from central to the thesis. Of course, the causal relations that constitute the chain must be of the sort appropriate to preserve reference. See Kripke (1980), especially around p. 96.

else. As a result the various name tokens will play one of two different causal roles, so to speak, in my head.

7.3 <u>McKay's Objection to Lewis</u>

If Lewis's account of **de re** belief is correct, then a subject's beliefs about an object are individuated by a relation of acquaintance that she bears uniquely to it, even if it is the relation of having heard of something under a certain name. According to Lewis, a subject has a **de re** belief about a certain thing if and only if there is some suitable relation of acquaintance R that she bears uniquely to the thing, such that she self-ascribes the property of bearing R uniquely to something that is such-and-such.

In his paper "**De Re** and **De Se** Belief," McKay presents an argument against Lewis's view of **de re** belief. The argument is based upon an example, which McKay describes as follows:

> Smith can stand in a relation of acquaintance to Wilson, yet believe that he (Smith) stands in that relation to Jones. Thus Wilson might be hatless and visible to the left of Smith; Smith might also see Jones, who is on his right, and believe (correctly) that Jones is wearing a hat. If Smith confuses left and right, the following will be true.
>
> (i) Wilson (and only Wilson) is perceived from the left of Smith
>
> (ii) Smith self-attributes perceiving someone from his left who is wearing a hat.

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> Yet Smith's belief is about Jones, not Wilson,
> contrary to Lewis's analysis.[18]

I take it that McKay is arguing against Lewis's view
both as a sufficient and as a necessary condition for **de re**
belief: the former because (i) and (ii) may be true even if
Smith does not have a belief about Wilson; and the latter
because Smith can have a belief about Jones even if he does
not self-ascribe a property which implies a relation of
acquaintance that he actually bears to Jones. The argument
does not seem to me to succeed, however. I think that it
rests upon a confusion between Smith's belief, on one hand,
and the way in which Smith would express his belief, on the
other. McKay's claim (ii) about the property self-ascribed
by Smith, I shall suggest, is unwarranted because it does
not follow from the earlier assumption that Smith confuses
left and right.

The only way to make sense of someone's confusing left
and right is to construe it as some sort of linguistic
mistake: he somehow uses or understands the word 'left',
for example, to mean what the word 'right' in fact means, or
vice-versa. (It thus requires the distinction between
linguistic meaning and speaker (or thinker) meaning.) So,
in the example above, although Smith might **express** his
belief by saying 'the person on my left is wearing a hat',

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[18]Austin (1988), p. 209. McKay uses the term 'self-
attributes' where Lewis would use 'self-ascribes' and
Chisholm would use 'directly attributes'.

it does not follow that he **self-ascribes** **the** **property** of perceiving someone from his left who is wearing a hat. In virtue of confusing left and right, Smith would incorrectly express the property that he in fact self-ascribes.

Suppose we accept McKay's premise that Smith believes that Jones is wearing a hat. It is then open to Lewis - and it seems to me that this is correct - to maintain that Smith really does self-ascribe the property of perceiving someone from his **right** who is wearing a hat, and that this is how he believes **de re**, of Jones, that he is wearing a hat (given that Smith does actually see Jones from his right). Since (ii) is not true, moreover, Lewis's account does not entail the falsehood that Smith believes **de re**, of Wilson, that he is wearing a hat.

Although more could be said about the issues raised by the present argument and objection to it, I think that I have shown that McKay's argument does not go through. It seems to me that something about it (or about the intuition behind it) is correct, however, and so I shall try to locate exactly what it is in the next section. In particular, I shall attempt to describe a case in which Lewis's account implies that a subject has **de re** beliefs about a particular object (a person), when in fact the subject does not believe anything **de re** of this person (but instead has **de re** beliefs about somebody else).

7.4 The Case of the Shy Secret Admirer

The example to be presented in this section raises general problems about **de re** thought, and views of belief other than the Property Theory could be tested against it. However, it is my intention to apply it here to Lewis's version of the Property Theory, and to make some suggestions about how one might modify the theory in order to give a plausible account of the case. Along the way I will make some reference to other discussions of **de re** belief; but it is not my purpose to evaluate these other views here.

Suppose that Fran has a shy secret admirer, Frank. Frank engages a friend of his, Fred, to write letters on his behalf to Fran, signed only 'A secret admirer'. Frank, let us suppose, sometimes tells Fred what to write but sometimes he doesn't. Whenever Frank has Fred write things about him to Fran, they are true. Moreover, what Fred writes about Frank on his own is also mostly true. No description in any of the letters, however, identifies Frank uniquely. One of the things that Frank has Fred convey to Fran is his fondness for French films.

Like the detective who has **de re** beliefs about the suspect being traced (after a bit of investigation, of course), or like the messy shopper, who has **de re** beliefs about the person whose trail of sugar he is following, Fran has **de re** beliefs about her secret admirer, Frank. We may

suppose that given the information she already has, she could more or less easily follow the trail back, through Fred or otherwise, to Frank. One such belief is her belief, of Frank, that he is fond of French films. An English sentence such as the following could be used to attribute this belief:

Frank is believed by Fran to be fond of French films.

This sentence is true partly in virtue of what Fran believes, in virtue of her psychology. Of course, Fran would not express her belief by saying 'Frank is fond of French films', since she does not think of Frank under the name 'Frank'. Instead, she thinks of Frank as her secret admirer, and if she were to express her belief in English she might say something like 'my secret admirer is fond of French films'. But all of this does not make the above sentence false. Moreover, Fran believes truly, because Frank does in fact like French films. She also has some false beliefs about Frank, however: one of them is her belief, of Frank, that he wrote the letters she received.

We should note that the relation expressed by the phrase 'my secret admirer' (or, more precisely, 'x is the secret admirer of y') is not a suitable relation of causal acquaintance. Hence, if it must be the case that some relation of causal acquaintance is part of the content of Fran's belief, then the relation of being someone's secret admirer will not do the job. So Fran cannot believe that

Frank is fond of French films simply in virtue of self-ascribing the property of being secretly admired (uniquely) by someone who is fond of French films.[19]   A different object must therefore be assigned to her self-ascription.

What, then, makes it the case that Fran can believe things **de re** of Frank? The answer is fairly clear. Fran has read some letters about Frank, most of which have their origins in his own intentions. Indeed Frank is ultimately responsible for all of the letters that Fran has read. In this way Fran is acquainted with her secret admirer, and in virtue of this acquaintance she has acquired a fair bit of information about him.

There is a way in which the case of the secret admirer is similar to the cases that Donnellan used to illustrate the distinction between referential and attributive uses of definite descriptions.[20] In such cases, a speaker succeeds in saying something about a particular individual with a

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[19]One possible response to this problem might be to adopt a view along the lines of the one suggested in Kaplan (1968). According to such an account, there are cases in which a subject has beliefs about an object with whom she is **en rapport** where no part of the content of the belief is a relation of acquaintance that she bears to the object. Instead, what makes the belief **de re** (in our terminology) is a condition on the subject's representation of the object: it must be a sufficiently "vivid" name of the object for the subject. One could adapt this solution to the framework of the Property Theory, but there are good reasons to include relations of acquaintance as part of the content of belief. In particular, a subject's dispositions to behavior will in general depend upon such relations.

[20]See, e.g., Donnellan (1966).

sentence containing a definite description, even though the description does not literally denote that individual (and indeed may denote something else). In the present sort of case, one of a subject's self-ascriptions implies a relation of acquaintance that the subject bears to something (e.g., Fred); but in virtue of the self-ascription the subject has a belief about something else (Frank), a thing to which the subject in some sense intends to refer.

We are now in a position to raise a problem for Lewis's view of **de re** belief. Suppose that Fran self-ascribes the property of having read some letters written by someone who is fond of French films.[21] Since the relation expressed by 'x has read some letters written by y' is a suitable relation of causal acquaintance that Fran in fact bears to **Fred**, Lewis's view implies that Fran believes **de re**, of Fred, that he is fond of French films. But the facts of the case, I suggest, are such as to make Fran's **de re** beliefs about her secret admirer beliefs about Frank; she does not have any such beliefs about Fred. It seems to me, as a result, that Lewis has not presented adequate sufficient conditions for belief **de re**: a subject may bear a relation of acquaintance R to an object, and self-ascribe bearing R to something that has a certain property F, without thereby

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[21]The word 'written' is probably ambiguous between 'inscribed' and 'authored'. Since Fran thinks that her secret admirer has inscribed the letters himself, it will be convenient for us to use the former reading.

having a **de re** belief about the object to the effect that it has F.

What rules out Fred as an individual about whom Fran may have **de re** beliefs? To answer this question, we could if we wished exploit the conception of propositions as sets of possible worlds and talk about Fran's "belief worlds," the set of possible worlds at which all of the propositions that she believes are true. The Property Theory implies that her belief worlds do not completely characterize her system of beliefs, however, since surely some of her self-ascriptions do not correspond to propositions (see chapter 3). So let us for the moment talk about Fran's doxastic alternatives, viz., the possible individuals who self-ascribe, and have, all and only the properties that Fran actually self-ascribes.

Each of Fran's doxastic alternatives has received letters written by a unique secret admirer who is fond of French films, and each of her alternatives bears a number of relations of acquaintance to her secret admirer: e.g., having read about him, having read letters authored by him, having read letters written by him, etc. When we consider Fran herself, we notice that she does not bear all of these relations to the same person. As a result, in the actual world there are two people, Frank and Fred, who are similar to the secret admirers of Fran's doxastic alternatives with respect to the relations of acquaintance between them.

In terms of doxastic alternatives, my claim about the
case goes roughly as follows: the relations of acquaintance
between Fran and Frank are more similar to the relations of
acquaintance between her alternatives and their secret
admirers, than are the relations between Fran and Fred.
Given the fact that Frank and Fred have somehow been merged
or identified in Fran's beliefs, this is what makes it the
case that she ascribes the property of being fond of French
films to Frank, rather than Fred, when she ascribes it to
the person who wrote the letters that she has read. (We
cannot just compare the intrinsic qualities of Frank, Fred
and the alternative secret admirers here, since for example
Frank might have conveyed a lot of misinformation about
himself in the letters to Fran.)

For convenience, let us introduce two relations called
'R_{frank}' and 'R_{fred}'. R_{frank} is one of the relations of
acquaintance that Fran actually bears to Frank, e.g., the
relations of having read about him, or having read letters
of which he is ultimately the author. R_{fred} is one of the
relations of acquaintance that Fran bears to Fred, like the
relation of having read letters written (inscribed) by him.
Let us also use 'F' for the moment to denote the property of
being fond of French films. Finally, let us define a class
of acquaintance relations, called '$R_{admirer}$', such that for
any relation r, r is in $R_{admirer}$ if and only if Fran self-
ascribes the property of bearing r and R_{frank} (or R_{fred}) to the

same thing. We have already pointed out some of the
relations in $R_{admirer}$, like the relations of having read
certain letters about someone and having read certain
letters written by someone.

Fran self-ascribes the property of bearing R_{fred} to
someone who has F. Why then is her belief about Frank
rather than Fred (to whom she bears R_{fred})? (Compare: why
does the speaker refer to the man drinking water by using a
description - e.g., 'the man drinking a martini' - that does
not denote him?) I suggest that the answer, in this case,
goes as follows: (a) there is a relation of acquaintance -
viz., R_{frank} - that Fran bears to someone other than Fred,
such that (b) she self-ascribes the property of bearing it
and R_{fred} to the same thing, and (c) the relations between
her and Frank are more similar to the relations in $R_{admirer}$
than are the ones between her and Fred.

This, I think, is what rules out Fred as an object of
Fran's belief, and what accounts for the fact that, were
Fran to come to learn that she bears R_{frank} and R_{fred} to
distinct people, she would continue to self-ascribe bearing
R_{frank} to someone who has F, but would no longer self-ascribe
bearing R_{fred} to someone who has F. Needless to say, the
notion of similarity between relations being employed here
is quite vague, and I have not discussed it at anything more
than an intuitive level. What follows, then, may be viewed
as a sketch of a modified theory of **de re** belief within the

framework of the Property Theory, a sketch in need of a more detailed account of the relevant notion of similarity.

How can we modify Lewis's account in the light of the case of the secret admirer? I suggest the following, with a new technical term to be defined below:

(DR) A subject s ascribes a property F to an object x if and only if there is a relation of acquaintance R such that (1) s bears R uniquely to x, and s self-ascribes the property of bearing R uniquely to something that has F; and (2) for any object y distinct from x, if there is a relation of acquaintance R' such that s bears R' uniquely to y, and self-ascribes the property of bearing R and R' to the same thing, then y is ruled out as an object of belief for s.

In order to define the consequent in (2) in terms of the notion of overall similarity between relations of acquaintance, it will be useful to introduce the notion of what I shall call an **identification class** of relations (of which $R_{admirer}$ above is an example), or a class of relations of acquaintance that a subject believes herself to bear to the same thing. Here is a definition:

(IC) C is the identification class of R for s =$_{df.}$ s self-ascribes the property of bearing R uniquely to something, and for all relations of acquaintance r, r is in C if and only if s self-

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ascribes the property of bearing r and R to the same thing.

We may now say what it is for something to be ruled out as an object of someone's beliefs:

(RO) y is ruled out as an object of belief for s $=_{df.}$ there is an object x distinct from y such that (i) there are relations of acquaintance R and R' such that s bears R uniquely to x and s bears R' uniquely to y, and (ii) s self-ascribes the property of bearing R and R' to the same thing, and (iii) the relations of acquaintance that s bears to x are more similar to the identification class of R (or R') for s than are the relations of acquaintance that s bears to y.

(DR) gives the following account of the case of the secret admirer: Fran ascribes the property of being fond of French films to Frank, since conditions (1) and (2) obtain (in particular, Fred is ruled out as an object of belief for Fran); but Fran does not ascribe this property to Fred, since, although condition (1) obtains, condition (2) does not: Frank is not ruled out as an object of belief for Fran. It seems to me that (DR) gives a fairly plausible treatment of cases in which a subject bears many different relations of acquaintance to distinct objects, but wrongly thinks that she bears them to a single res.

Any account of **de re** belief should have something to say about the general problem raised by examples like the case of the secret admirer. For example, a view couched in terms of singular propositions - like the Triadic View of Kaplan, Perry, Salmon and others - must give an account of how and why Fran refers to Frank, so as to grasp a singular proposition about him rather than one about Fred. Some of the groundwork for such a view was discussed in chapter 2; but as I have said, here I am only considering the problem with respect to the Property Theory of belief.

7.5 <u>Pluralities and **De Re** Belief</u>

In this section, I would like to discuss some issues concerning plurally **de re** beliefs, and how they relate to individually **de re** beliefs. I will make some remarks about a few different types of cases illustrated by different examples, and will try to give some plausible general principles, within the framework of the Property Theory, that govern the various cases. The account from the previous section - viz., (DR) - may have to be revised in order to account for the examples to be discussed here. Although I will not present a fully detailed modified view, I will try to say something about how such a modification would go.

First, suppose for example that Mary is a knowledgeable lover of violin music who is listening, through a single speaker, to a solo being played by Peter, who is a skilled violinist. Suppose that she is auditioning violinists by listening to demo tapes on which they play certain solos. We may stipulate that Mary stands in a suitable relation of acquaintance uniquely to Peter - the one expressed by 'x is listening to a violin solo played by y' - and that she self-ascribes the property of listening to a violin solo being played by a virtuoso. Hence, on the analysis given by the Property Theory, Mary ascribes virtuosity to Peter: i.e., she believes **de re** that Peter is a virtuoso.

Now, suppose that we change the example somewhat. Instead of listening to Peter play a violin solo, Mary is listening to virtuoso-level violin music being piped through a single speaker; however, what Mary now hears is the music of two distinct people, Peter and Paul, simultaneously playing the piece. Their timing is so precise that Mary cannot tell that what she hears is the music of two players, and so she mistakenly thinks that she is listening to a single violinist. We may suppose Mary to be in the same (narrow) psychological state as in the previous example - in particular, she self-ascribes the property of listening to a violin solo being played by a virtuoso. Overtly, she might say something like 'this candidate is really a virtuoso!'.

Since the non-psychological facts about Mary have been
changed, she now does not bear the relation expressed by
'listening to music being played by' uniquely to anyone at
all (i.e., she does not bear it to some person **and only to
that person**; although she does bear it to Peter and Paul).
According to the property-theoretic accounts of **de re** belief
discussed so far - Lewis's original view and (DR) above -
then, Mary does not have any **de re** beliefs either about
Peter or about Paul. (According to these views, she may
have some **de re** beliefs about the plurality containing Peter
and Paul, since she does bear a relation of acquaintance
uniquely to it. I shall return to this point shortly.)

We may want to hold, contrary to the results given by
Lewis's view and (DR), that in this case Mary does believe
de re, of Peter, that he is a virtuoso, and that she does
believe **de re**, of Paul, that he is a virtuoso. After all,
she is willing to admit that anyone who can play a violin
piece like the piece to which she is listening must be a
virtuoso, and the piece to which she is listening is played
by Peter and Paul. I suggest that Mary does in fact have
these **de re** beliefs; although I do not have any arguments
that are likely to convince anyone who does not share this
intuition.

In making this claim about what Mary believes **de re**, I
do not intend to be making any analogous claims about other,
perhaps similar, cases, from which the present case may be

distinguished. Certain facts about this case, I think, warrant these **de re** attributions to Mary. First, Mary does stand in a suitable relation of acquaintance uniquely to (the plurality consisting of) Peter and Paul. Second, Mary stands in the above relation to Peter, and also to Paul; although she does not stand in it uniquely to either of them. Third, Mary self-ascribes the property of listening to music played by a virtuoso. Fourth, the property of being a virtuoso is a property that both Peter and Paul can have (unlike, say, the property of being the best violinist in the world), and Mary knows this. All of these points, I suggest, should make us think that Mary believes **de re** that Peter is a virtuoso, and that Paul is too.

We may contrast this case with another in which a subject has a plurally **de re** belief without having one of the corresponding individually **de re** beliefs. For example, suppose that from a distance I see a large gathering of a thousand or so people. I may come to believe **de re** of the crowd (of them) that each member is a person (that each one of them is a person). Would I thereby come to have a **de re** belief about a particular member of the crowd, say Mr. X, to the effect that he is a person? Surely not, the answer seems clearly to be, if I am in no way acquainted with Mr. X himself (uniquely or otherwise).

What are the differences between the case of the crowd and the case of Peter, Paul and Mary? There are at least

two that may be relevant to attributions of belief **de re**:

first, in the case of the crowd, I do not mistake the

plurality for a single **res** (a single person); whereas Mary

does make a mistake of this sort, since she takes herself to

be listening to a single violinist when in fact she is

listening to two of them. (This may be the reason, or part

of the reason, why there is no way that I could be said to

believe **de re** of Mr. X, say, that he is big, if I were to

believe **de re** of the crowd that it is big.) Second, in the

case of the crowd, I do not bear a relation of acquaintance

to every member of the group (e.g., I do not see Mr. X);

whereas Mary does bear such a relation to Peter, as well as

to Paul (although, as we have said, she bears it uniquely to

neither of them).[22]

   With these differences in mind, let us attempt to

distinguish various cases of plurally **de re** beliefs, and

also to determine, with respect to each sort of case,

whether or not an individually **de re** belief about one or

more members of the plurality is possible. All of the

relevant cases will have a subject who bears a relation of

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[22]I will want to say that, in the case of the crowd, I
do bear a relation of acquaintance uniquely **to the crowd**, so
that I can have **de re** beliefs about it; but this cannot mean
that I bear this relation to each one of its members and to
nobody else. So, I must say something like this: I can be
acquainted with them (with the plurality) in virtue of being
acquainted with some of them. For example, I might see the
ones who are closest to me. This is analogous to the fact
that a building can be on fire in virtue of, say, its second
story being on fire.

acquaintance uniquely to a plurality. These cases subdivide into those in which the subject stands in a relation of acquaintance to some of the members of the plurality, but not uniquely to any of them (like the case of Peter, Paul and Mary); and those in which there are no relations of acquaintance to the individual **res** (like the case of Mr. X and the crowd). Each of these further subdivides into cases where the subject wrongly thinks that he has acquaintance with an individual, rather than a plurality; and cases where the subject does not make such a mistake.

Let us first consider an example like that of Peter, Paul and Mary, but in which Mary does not wrongly take herself to be listening to a single musician. Suppose that Mary knows that she is listening to two violinists. Mary cannot single out either Peter or Paul: any acquaintance relation that Mary bears to Peter is such that she also bears it to Paul. Nevertheless Mary is acquainted with Peter, since she is listening to music being played by him. The same goes for Paul. In such a case, Mary might self-ascribe the property of listening to music being played by virtuosos. Clearly, then, she would believe **de re** of Peter and Paul (the plurality of them) that each of them is a virtuoso. I suggest that in this case, as before, Mary has the corresponding **de re** belief about Peter, and about Paul.

If Mary has a **de re** belief about Peter, how does she have it? It seems to me that four conditions are jointly

sufficient, viz., (1) she bears the 'listening to music being played by' relation uniquely to the plurality containing Peter and Paul; (2) she bears the same relation to Peter; (3) she self-ascribes the property of listening to music being played by a plurality such that each one of them is a virtuoso; and (4) the property of being a virtuoso does not imply the property of being a member of a plurality - i.e., it is not necessarily true that whatever is a virtuoso is a member of some plurality. I think that condition (4) is needed in order to handle the following sort of example: suppose that Mary knows that the violinists to whom she is listening are the Dynamic Duo. Then she might self-ascribe the property of listening to music being played by a plurality such that each one of them is a member of the Dynamic Duo. It seems to me that if this were the case, we should not say that Mary believes **de re** of Peter (or Paul) that he is a member of the Dynamic Duo.

   We may give a general principle connecting plurally **de re** beliefs with individually **de re** ones, with respect to the sort of case presently being considered. If a subject s is acquainted with a plurality X and does not mistake X for an individual, then s believes **de re**, of some x in X, that x has property F if and only if there is some relation of acquaintance R such that (i) s bears R uniquely to X, (ii) s bears R to x, (iii) s self-ascribes the property of bearing R uniquely to an X such that every x in X has F, and (iv) F

does not imply the property of being in (a member of, one of) a plurality. In the (admittedly uncommon) cases where such conditions hold, a subject's plurally **de re** belief that X is such that every x in X has F will yield an individually **de re** belief that x has F.

What about cases like the above, except for the fact that the subject wrongly thinks that he is acquainted with an individual rather than a plurality? Such cases are very similar to the one just discussed; but here there is always a chance that the subject will ascribe to the plurality a property that cannot be exemplified by more than one of its members:[23] for example, in the original case of Peter, Paul and Mary, Mary could have believed herself to be listening to the best violinist in the world. Unlike the property of being a virtuoso, that of being the best violinist in the world is one that cannot be exemplified at the same time by Peter and by Paul.

If Mary did in fact self-ascribe the property of listening to music being played by the best violinist in the world, it may be wrong to say that she believes **de re** that Peter is the best violinist in the world, and also that Paul is. This may be wrong because, if Mary were to learn that

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[23]Of course, there is also the chance that the subject will ascribe to the plurality a property that could not be exemplified at all by a plurality of things (e.g., the property of being a virtuoso?). I suggest that by itself this doesn't rule out the ascription of such properties to an individual **res** in cases such as the one in the text.

she had been listening to two musicians rather than just one, she would surely retract her belief that she was listening to the best one in the world.[24]

We could rule out such attributions that arise from mistaking a plurality for an individual by maintaining a principle similar to the one given for the previous sort of case. If a subject s, then, is acquainted with a plurality X and with the individuals therein, but wrongly thinks that he is acquainted with an individual and not a plurality, then s believes **de re**, of some x in X, that x has property F if and only if there is a relation of acquaintance R such that (i) s bears R uniquely to X, (ii) s bears R to x, (iii) s self-ascribes the property of bearing R uniquely to something that has F, and (iv) it is possible for every x in X, with whom s is acquainted, to have F (at the same time).

Since condition (iv) is necessary, this rules out the possibility that Mary, in the case being considered, has a **de re** belief about Peter to the effect that he is the best in the world, and also that she has the analogous **de re** belief about Paul. The principle does allow Mary to believe

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[24]Mary would, in this case, believe **de re**, of the plurality consisting of Peter and Paul, that it is the best violinist in the world. This may seem odd; but there are other cases in which a subject ascribes to an individual a property that the individual could not have: e.g., Smith might see Jones in the distance and think that what he sees is his goat, thereby coming to believe **de re** that Jones is a goat. And of course it is well known that a subject can ascribe to something (e.g., London) two properties that cannot jointly be exemplified.

de re that, say, Peter is a virtuoso. It also does not rule
out the possibility, for example, that in this case Mary
could believe **de re** that Peter is one of the best two
violinists in the world (and similarly for Paul). If Mary
had been listening to music being played simultaneously by
three violinists, however, the principle implies that she
could not have a **de re** belief about any one of them to the
effect that he is one of the best two violinists in the
world (since it is not possible for each of the three to be
one of the best two in the world). I hope that to the
extent that anyone has any clear intuitions about these
cases, the principle does not violate them.

What about the cases in which a subject is acquainted
with a plurality containing a certain individual, but not
with the individual itself? Given that some sort of
acquaintance is at least necessary for **de re** belief, we
should hold that in such cases a subject can have **de re**
beliefs about the plurality, but not about the individual.
Consider again the case in which I am looking at a crowd of
one thousand or so people. It is quite likely that I am
also looking at some of the individual people in the crowd
and hence that I am acquainted with them individually: for
example, I might notice Jones, who is wearing a bright red
hat. However, I will not be acquainted individually with
most of the people in the crowd. I will not see Mr. X
lurking around in the midst of a thousand people.

In this case, where of course I do not mistake the crowd of people for an individual person, I may have **de re** beliefs about the crowd (e.g., that it is big, unruly, or that everyone in it is a person), and about Jones (e.g., that she is a person, or is wearing a hat); but not about Mr. X. I cannot believe **de re**, for example, of Mr. X, that he is a person. Lewis's original account of **de re** belief, it seems to me, gives all of these results for the present case. The principles suggested to cover the previous two sorts of case may be used to supplement Lewis's account – or the revised account (DR) – to cover other similar cases;[25] but no independent issues arise for this sort of example.

The same goes for cases in which a subject bears no relations of acquaintance to (some of) the individuals in a plurality, and mistakenly takes himself to be acquainted with an individual **res** and not a plurality. One such case is that of a subject who sees a group of three goats, say, from a distance, and takes himself to be looking at a single goat (or a person; it doesn't make a difference). He might point and say 'that goat is coming toward me'. It seems to me that the subject might lack acquaintance with each of the

[25]For example, someone might be listening, at a certain time, to a recording of an orchestra playing a symphony. It could be the case that at that time the person is uniquely acquainted with a few different things (the orchestra, the lead violinist); is acquainted, but not uniquely, with a few different things (the violists, who are simultaneously playing the same notes and are all equidistant from the microphone); and is unacquainted with a few different things (the tympanist, e.g., who is not making a sound).

three goats, if for example his distance from them is such that he could not see an individual goat from so far away. In that case he would be acquainted with the plurality but not with any of the individuals in it. But even if this were impossible, the subject could lack acquaintance with one or more of the goats, e.g., if one were hidden behind another.

In this example, the subject may have **de re** beliefs about the plurality with which he is acquainted. He might believe (correctly) of it that it is moving toward him, and he might believe (wrongly) of it that it is a goat. As with the previous sort of case, here the subject cannot have any **de re** beliefs about the individual members of the plurality with which he is not acquainted. Again, the present case warrants no new **de re** attributions of belief that are not derivable from Lewis's original view or from (DR), and so raises no new problems for the attempt to give a general account of belief **de re**.

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