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## DE RE BELIEF IN ACTION

Lynne Rudder Baker

**B**eliefs and other attitudes play a prominent role in the explanation of action. It has thus seemed plausible, even obvious, that actions directed upon concrete objects are explainable in part by attitudes directed upon those objects. My aim is to expose vexing difficulties in the received views that attempt such explanation, to show that the received views cannot simply be patched up to avoid the difficulties, and to suggest a somewhat different approach to the explanation of action in terms of the agent's attitudes.

Belief intuitively seems to come in two varieties: belief about an object or person and belief that something is the case. *Belief about* is belief regarding an object or *res* and is called *de re* belief; *belief that* is belief in a (nonsingular) proposition or *dictum* and is called *de dicto* belief. For example, the police, suspecting arson, may believe (*de dicto*) that someone set the fire without believing (*de re*) of any particular person that he is the culprit. Or again: there is a *prima facie* distinction between a *de re* belief regarding Sims, the most junior member of the faculty, that she is underpaid, and a *de dicto* belief that the most junior member of the faculty, whoever she may be, is underpaid.

A *de dicto* belief may be thought of as a dyadic relation between a believer and a proposition. A *de re* belief may be thought of as a triadic relation among a believer, an object (or nonnull sequence of objects), and a property that the believer attributes to the object(s).<sup>1</sup> Since the *res* itself is one

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<sup>1</sup>Alternatively, *de re* belief may be taken as a dyadic relation between a believer and a singular proposition containing objects as constituents, and *de dicto* belief as a dyadic relation between a believer and a general proposition. This kind of singular proposition is discussed by David Kaplan in "How to Russell a Frege-Church," *Journal of Philosophy*, 72 (1975), 716-29. The latitudinarian, whose views will be examined, denies that there are such singular propositions, and thus denies that there are *de re* beliefs in the sense of this alternative formulation. The formulation of the *de re/de dicto* distinction in the text is intended to be neutral enough to allow initial

of the *relata* of the belief, singular terms specifying the object(s) in ascriptions of *de re* belief are in referential position and are thus subject to substitutivity of identity. So, in the canonical ascription of *de re* belief, 'S believes of *a* that it is *F*,'<sup>2</sup> where '*a*' is a singular term, '*a*' may be replaced by any coreferring term *salva veritate*.

There is a substantial literature concerning how the two apparent varieties, *de dicto* and *de re*, are related.<sup>3</sup> The leading conceptions are the view that *de re* belief does not really constitute a distinct category, but is trivially reducible to *de dicto* belief (hereafter the *latitudinarian* view),<sup>4</sup> and the view that *de re* belief is either independent of *de dicto* belief or at least not trivially reducible to *de dicto* belief (hereafter the *classical* view).<sup>5</sup> The issue is joined over whether ascriptions

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assent by the latitudinarian, who may hold that the believer's use of any singular term denoting an object suffices for the "relation" between the believer and the object.

<sup>2</sup>'S believes, concerning *a*, that it is *F*' and '*a* is believed by *S* to be *F*' are alternative formulations.

<sup>3</sup>Recent work in this area was touched off by W. V. O. Quine's "Quantifiers and Propositional Attitudes," *Journal of Philosophy*, 53 (1956), 177-87. Important contributions to the debate include David Kaplan's "Quantifying In," in *Words and Objections*, ed. Donald Davidson and Jaakko Hintikka (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1969), 206-42, and Tyler Burge's "Belief *De Re*," *Journal of Philosophy*, 74 (1977), 338-62. Of related interest is Burge's "Demonstrative Constructions, Reference and Truth," *Journal of Philosophy*, 71 (1974), 205-23.

<sup>4</sup>Roderick Chisholm coined the term "latitudinarian" to apply to conceptions of *de re* belief. He has discussed latitudinarian views in *Person and Object* (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1976); "Knowledge and Belief: '*De Dicto*' and '*De Re*,'" *Philosophical Studies*, 29 (1976), 1-20; "Thought and its Reference," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 14 (1977), 167-72. See also Ernest Sosa, "Propositional Attitudes *De Dicto* and *De Re*," *Journal of Philosophy*, 67 (1970), 883-96, and "Rejoinder to Hintikka," *Journal of Philosophy*, 68 (1971), 498-501; Mark Pastin, "About *De Re* Belief," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 34 (1974), 569-75; Roderick Chisholm, *The First Person* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1981), 113. In the latter, Chisholm also gives a second interpretation of *de re* belief which is akin to the classical conception.

<sup>5</sup>A sampling of accounts of what I am calling the "classical" view of *de re* belief may be found among the following: Herbert Heidelberger, "Beliefs and Propositions," *Studies in Epistemology*, Vol. V of Midwest Studies in Philosophy, ed. Peter French et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1980), 525-32; David Kaplan, "Quantifying In," *op. cit.*; David Kaplan, "Dthat," *Contemporary Perspectives in the Philosophy of Language*, Vol. II of

of *de dicto* belief (such as 'S believes that the *F* is the *G*') supplemented only by standard notions like denotation entail ascriptions of *de re* belief (such as 'S believes of the *F* that it is the *G*'). The latitudinarian says yes; the classicist says no.

Although latitudinarian theories have been developed in a number of ways, they all have in common some principle such as this:

- (L) *S* believes of *x* that it has property *F* if and only if there is a singular term  $\alpha$ , a predicate  $\psi$ , and a context *C*, such that (i)  $\alpha$  denotes *x* in *C*; (ii)  $\psi$  expresses *F* in *C*; and (iii) *S* believes what would be expressed by ' $\alpha$  is  $\psi$ ' in *C*.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, on any latitudinarian view that subscribes to (L), an ascription of *de re* belief of *x* is warranted whenever a believer has a *de dicto* belief in whose expression he would use a singular term denoting *x*. So latitudinarians are committed to the inference from 'Ralph believes that the shortest spy is a spy' to 'Ralph believes of the shortest spy that he is a spy'.

The contrasting view of *de re* attitudes, the classical view, is also represented by a number of theories, united for our purposes by the fact that each takes *de re* belief to be a genuine relation between a believer and the object(s) of belief. Although there are various suggestions as to whether the relation is causal, perceptual, or something else, what these views have in common is that none of them allows a person to have a *de re* belief of, say, the shortest spy merely because he believes the tautology 'The shortest spy is a spy' or the *dictum*

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Midwest Studies in Philosophy, ed. Peter French et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1977), 383–401; David Kaplan, *Demonstratives* (unpublished manuscript, UCLA, 1977); Steven E. Böer and William G. Lycan, "Knowing Who," *Philosophical Studies*, 28 (1975), 299–344; Jaakko Hintikka, *Knowledge and Belief: An Introduction to the Logic of Two Notions* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1962).

<sup>6</sup>This is a rough-and-ready formulation found in Richard Feldman's "Actions and *De Re* Beliefs," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 8 (1978), 579. For some latitudinarian views, it would not hold precisely. E.g., in *Person and Object*, Chisholm deals with concepts rather than expressions, and he requires that the believer know that there is one thing that the concept applies to. (L) is easily adjusted to accommodate the variations in the latitudinarian views.

'The shortest spy is a midget'. There must be some genuine relation between the believer, say, Ralph, and the shortest spy for the belief to be *de re*: for example, the shortest spy may be a neighbor with whom Ralph is well acquainted and whose behavior has begun to raise suspicions. However the relation between the believer and the object of belief is construed, the relevant determinate feature of the classical views is that they all affirm *de re* belief as something more than a trivial consequence of *de dicto* belief whose expression contains a singular term denoting an object.

For purposes here, exponents of classical views include those who propose a nontrivial reduction of *de re* to *de dicto* belief as well as those who reject reducibility, trivial or not, of *de re* belief altogether. For example, according to Kaplan's view in "Quantifying In," Ralph has a *de re* belief only if he believes a *dictum* whose subject term is a "vivid name" representing the object of belief. Such a view still counts as classical since "exportation" of singular terms to referential position and existential generalization are restricted to cases in which the believer is related to the object of belief via a distinguished term. What sets the classical accounts apart from the latitudinarian accounts, broadly, is that they bar wholesale exportation.

In Section I, I show that on both the latitudinarian and the classical views, ascription of *de re* beliefs leads to incoherence in the explanation of action. The diagnosis of the difficulty in Section II reveals that its source is surprisingly deep; indeed, it is so fundamental that ascriptions of *de re* attitudes regarding concrete objects threaten the coherence of any explanation containing them. Finally, I outline an alternative to *de re* belief regarding objects which avoids these problems. If the proposed alternative cannot be rendered satisfactory, then it seems that there is little hope for a deductive explanatory schema of action in terms of the agent's attitudes.

## I

Proponents of the classical view, supposing that what is needed to explain action directed upon concrete objects are ascriptions of *de re* attitudes directed upon those objects,

have recently deployed a forceful argument against the latitudinarians.<sup>7</sup> The classicists' argument purports to show that on a latitudinarian conception, belief is deprived of its role in certain kinds of explanation of action. The implication is that latitudinarianism permits ascription of *de re* belief too freely, and that the more robust classical conception of *de re* attitudes is needed to accommodate the explanatory function of belief. I shall reconstruct the argument from the explanation of action as used against the latitudinarian account and show that a parallel argument can be constructed against the classical view. Thus, if the antilatitudinarian argument succeeds—and I think that it does—then the classical view of *de re* belief falls prey to the same line of reasoning.

The argument to show that latitudinarianism deprives belief of its central role in the explanation of action may be displayed by an example:<sup>8</sup> suppose that Smith is asked to remove the more valuable of two objects on a table in front of him. On the table are a carved jade dish and a painted porcelain basket, which Smith believes are of unequal value. Smith removes the basket, explaining, "I believe that this [demonstrating the basket], but not this [demonstrating the dish], is the more valuable." On the basis of Smith's statement, we may ascribe to him the following *de re* beliefs:

- (1) Smith believes of the basket that it is the more valuable.
- (2) Smith believes of the dish that it is not the more valuable.

Now suppose that, in fact, the dish is the more valuable. Smith surely believes that the more valuable is the more valuable. Then by (L), Smith believes *de re* of the more valuable that it is the more valuable. But the more valuable is actually the dish. So, on a latitudinarian view, we may ascribe to Smith a further *de re* belief:

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<sup>7</sup>See "Actions and *De Re* Beliefs," pp. 577-82, and Herbert Heidelberger, "The Self-Presenting," *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, 7 (1979), 59-76.

<sup>8</sup>What follows is a reconstruction of the example given by Heidelberger, "The Self-Presenting," p. 76.

(3) Smith believes of the dish that it is the more valuable.

But given that Smith has the belief ascribed to him in (3), neither (1) nor a combination of (1) and (2) can help to explain Smith's removing the basket. The difficulty with latitudinarianism is illustrated by this: since Smith has the same belief of the dish, his belief of the basket that it is the more valuable cannot explain his removing the basket rather than the dish.

Surprisingly, the same incoherence in the explanation of action is produced on the classical view, without the aid of a principle such as (L) to license questionable inferences. To see this, let us continue the tale of the dish and the basket. Say that it is now Jones's turn to be asked to remove the more valuable of the two objects. After inspecting the dish and the basket, Jones says, as Smith had before him, "I believe that this [demonstrating the basket], but not this [demonstrating the dish] is the more valuable." On the basis of Jones's statement, we may ascribe to him the following *de re* beliefs:

(4) Jones believes of the basket that it is the more valuable.

(5) Jones believes of the dish that it is not the more valuable.

Jones then says that he would feel more confident of his judgment if he were allowed to pick up the objects and handle them. To oblige Jones without giving him too great an advantage over Smith, he is allowed to handle the objects, but only on the condition that he be blindfolded. Now the two objects are quite similar in shape; and although they differ in texture, the way that they differ in texture is not obvious to the eye. (The painting on the porcelain basket is quite skillful.) Jones, however, sure of his ability to distinguish the dish from the basket by touch alone, consents to the blindfold and gives each object a thorough tactual examination, which, he thinks, confirms his earlier judgment based on the visual examination. So believing that he is holding the basket, Jones says confidently, "I believe that this [demonstrating the object he is holding] is the more valu-

able." It turns out, of course, that it is the dish that Jones is holding. Thus, on the classical view, we may ascribe to Jones the following *de re* belief:

(6) Jones believes of the dish that it is the more valuable.

So without changing his mind, Jones comes to believe of the two objects that each is the more valuable. The dish replaced, the blindfold discarded, Jones is now asked to remove the more valuable of the two objects on the table in front of him. Like Smith before him, Jones (predictably) removes the basket.

On every classical account of *de re* belief I know of, (4)–(6) are justifiable ascriptions of *de re* belief. If any one of them were an incorrect ascription, then all of them would be. For except for the temporal priority of the acquisition of the beliefs ascribed in (4) and (5), Jones is in the same position vis-à-vis each of the beliefs ascribed to him. And the temporal priority is irrelevant here: the point would be unaffected if Jones had come to accept the belief ascribed to him in (6) first. In any case, the beliefs may be acquired simultaneously. Jones may be looking at the basket at the same time that he is touching the dish; but because, say, he is reaching under a screen placed between the objects and him, he may not realize that the object he is looking at is distinct from the object he is touching, and in this way, at exactly the same moment, he may acquire the belief of each that it is the more valuable.<sup>9</sup>

Now given that Jones has the belief ascribed to him in (6), neither (4) nor a combination of (4) and (5) can help to explain Jones's removing the basket. The difficulty with the classical view is illustrated by this: since Jones has the same belief of the dish, his belief of the basket that it is the more

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<sup>9</sup>I owe this style of example to David Austin. In conversation, Austin has pointed out that incompatible beliefs may be acquired at one time via a single sensory modality: Suppose that Jones looks through lenses that are rigged in such a way that one object is seen by the left eye and a second object is seen by the right eye; if the visual fields are qualitatively similar, a person may believe that she is seeing one object when in fact she is seeing two. She may then believe of each object that it is the only *F*.

valuable cannot explain his removing the basket rather than the dish.

The symmetry between the two cases of Smith and Jones is obvious. (4)–(6) ascribe to Jones exactly the same *de re* beliefs that (1)–(3) ascribe to Smith. So if, as opponents of latitudinarian views argue, (1)–(3) can have no role in explaining Smith's removing the basket, then (4)–(6) can have no role in explaining Jones's removing the basket. And since the classical picture suffices to generate (4)–(6), the classical accounts give rise to the same kind of explanatory incoherence as latitudinarianism.

But is the charge of incoherence warranted in either case? Yes: neither the latitudinarian nor the classical account provides a nonarbitrary way of paring down the incoherent sets of ascriptions—(1)–(3) or (4)–(6)—so that we would be justified in explaining Smith's or Jones's removing the basket on the basis of his belief of it that it was the more valuable. The incoherence lies deep within the nature of *de re* belief, and it ultimately indicts one plausible, and often implicitly accepted, model of explanation, and with it, perhaps all ascription of *de re* belief.

## II

We do not have to go far to find the reason that the classical picture of *de re* attitudes succumbs to the same objection as the latitudinarian view given by (L). The difficulty with both views is that an agent may unwittingly believe of each of two objects that it is uniquely *F* (as in (1) and (3) or in (4) and (6)), and an agent may unwittingly believe of a single object that it is *F* and also believe of it at the same time that it is not *F* (as in (2) and (3) or in (5) and (6)). Now this is just a variant of the problem, discussed by Quine long ago, as the price of accepting the classical view of *de re* belief.<sup>10</sup> Consider the familiar pair:

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<sup>10</sup>"Quantifiers and Propositional Attitudes," 177–87.

- (7) Ralph believes of the man in the brown hat that he is a spy;
- (8) Ralph believes of the man seen at the beach that he is not a spy,

where the man in the brown hat and the man seen at the beach are, unbeknownst to Ralph, the same person—Bernard J. Ortcutt. If (7) and (8) are true, then Ralph accepts “near-contraries:” Ralph believes of Ortcutt that he is a spy and believes of Ortcutt that he is not a spy. Since he has both beliefs, his alerting the authorities when he sees Ortcutt in suspicious circumstances wearing the brown hat, but not when he sees Ortcutt lying placidly on the beach, cannot be explained by citing either (7) or (8): and this is so no matter whether (7) and (8) are *sui generis*, as on the classical view, or are arrived at by latitudinarian inference.

The problems raised by these examples are completely general. It is not just that we have failed to ascribe the right *de re* belief regarding the object acted upon; for the problems stem from the possibility of near-contraries, which haunts *all de re* beliefs regarding objects.<sup>11</sup> In what follows, I use ‘near-contraries’ to apply not only to the pairs discussed by Quine (as in (5) and (6)), but also to what might be thought of as the “converse” pairs (as in (4) and (6)).

To see the depth of the difficulty posed by near-contraries, consider the following explanatory schema *ES* for a deductive explanation in terms of *de re* beliefs:<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>I am omitting from consideration here an extension of Tyler Burge’s (nonstandard, but attractive) view that ascriptions of *de re* belief may employ quasi-indicators, ‘he\*’ and ‘then\*’, in predicative position. (See Lynne Rudder Baker and Jan David Wald, “Indexical Reference and *De Re* Belief,” *Philosophical Studies*, 36 (1979), 317–327.) Although such a view may avoid near-contraries for reasons developed in III, I now suspect that this move makes reference to the object otiose.

<sup>12</sup>The ‘etc.’ in (A) stands in place of clauses in the tradition of *ceteris paribus*—e.g., ‘... & At *t*, *S* has no overriding intentions & At *t*, *S* does not fall into reverie ...’ Note that my argument makes no use of the oft-heard charge that *ceteris paribus* clauses trivialize general explanatory principles such as (A).

ES

- (A)  $(x)[(At\ t, S\ believes\ of\ x\ that\ it\ is\ the\ F\ \&\ At\ t, S\ intends\ to\ \phi\ the\ F\ \&\ At\ t, S\ is\ able\ to\ \phi\ the\ F, etc.) \rightarrow S\ \phi s\ x\ at\ t.]$
- (B)  $(Ex)(At\ t, S\ believes\ of\ x\ that\ it\ is\ the\ F.)$
- (C)  $At\ t, S\ intends\ to\ \phi\ the\ F.$
- (D)  $At\ t, S\ is\ able\ to\ \phi\ the\ F, etc.$
- (E)  $\therefore S\ \phi s\ x\ at\ t.$

It turns out that the possibility of near-contraries casts doubt on the claim of any schema of the form *ES* to be explanatory. To see this, return to the case of Jones's removing the basket. We may allow Jones's attitudes to be as fine-grained as we wish. For example, if we ascribe to Jones the belief of the basket that it is the basket, we may tell the story so that it is equally warranted to ascribe to him the belief of the dish that it is the basket. The point will still be made as long as his beliefs are *de re* and thus subject to being parts of near-contraries. For ease of exposition, however, I shall continue to attribute to Jones the kinds of attitudes ascribed in (4)–(6). Now to attempt to explain Jones's removing the basket, *ES* may be instantiated as follows:

*ES*<sub>1</sub>

- (9)  $(At\ t, Jones\ believes\ of\ the\ basket\ that\ it\ is\ the\ more\ valuable\ \&\ At\ t, Jones\ intends\ to\ remove\ the\ more\ valuable\ \&\ At\ t, Jones\ is\ able\ to\ remove\ the\ more\ valuable, etc.) \rightarrow Jones\ removes\ the\ basket\ at\ t.$
- (10)  $At\ t, Jones\ believes\ of\ the\ basket\ that\ it\ is\ the\ more\ valuable.$
- (11)  $At\ t, Jones\ intends\ to\ remove\ the\ more\ valuable.$
- (12)  $At\ t, Jones\ is\ able\ to\ remove\ the\ more\ valuable, etc.$
- (13)  $\therefore Jones\ removes\ the\ basket\ at\ t.$

Since Jones also believed of the dish that it was the more valuable, we have a second instantiation of *ES*:

*ES*<sub>2</sub>

- (9') (At *t*, Jones believes of the dish that it is the more valuable & At *t*, Jones intends to remove the more valuable & At *t*, Jones is able to remove the more valuable, etc.) → Jones removes the dish at *t*.
- (10') At *t*, Jones believes of the dish that it is the more valuable.
- (11) At *t*, Jones intends to remove the more valuable.
- (12) At *t*, Jones is able to remove the more valuable, etc.
- (13') ∴ Jones removes the dish at *t*.

The problem is now partly apparent. The second instantiation, *ES*<sub>2</sub>, is on the same logical footing as *ES*<sub>1</sub>. Yet it "explains" an action that did not occur. If *ES* were a correct pattern of explanation, then it would follow that Jones removed the dish. But he did not. So *ES* is not a correct pattern of explanation.

Putting the matter in terms of what Jones actually believed and actually did, however, does not do justice to the difficulties. For the problems with *ES* have their source in the logic of deductive explanation, not in the facts of any particular case. To bring these out, consider another schema that has exactly the same plausibility as *ES*:

*ES'*

- (A') (x)[(At *t*, *S* believes of *x* that it is not the *F* & At *t*, *S* intends to  $\phi$  the *F*, At *t*, *S* is able to  $\phi$  the *F*, etc.) → *S* does not  $\phi$  *x* at *t*.]
- (B') (Ex)(At *t*, *S* believes of *x* that it is not the *F*.)
- (C) At *t*, *S* intends to  $\phi$  the *F*.
- (D) At *t*, *S* is able to  $\phi$  the *F*, etc.
- (E') ∴ *S* does not  $\phi$  *x* at *t*.

*ES'* has as an instantiation:

*ES*<sub>3</sub>

- (9'') (At *t*, Jones believes of the basket that it is not the more valuable & At *t*, Jones intends to remove the more valuable & At *t*, Jones is able to remove the more valuable, etc.) → Jones does not remove the basket at *t*.
- (10'') At *t*, Jones believes of the basket that it is not the more valuable.
- (11) At *t*, Jones intends to remove the more valuable.
- (12) At *t*, Jones is able to remove the more valuable, etc.
- (13'') ∴ Jones does not remove the basket at *t*.

Now the actions described in (13) and (13'') are such that an agent performs one if and only if he does not perform the other; so there is no possible world in which both (13) and (13'') are true. (Invocation here and following of possible worlds is purely heuristic.) If there are valid deductions with incompatible conclusions, as *ES*<sub>1</sub> and *ES*<sub>3</sub>, then the two conjunctions of the premises are logically incompatible. So there is no possible world in which the conjunctions—(9)&(10)&(11)&(12) on the one hand and (9'')&(10'')&(11)&(12) on the other—are both true. But what combination of the premises is contradictory? It is clear that the source of trouble rests with (9), (10), (9''), and (10''). Confining attention to the interesting cases, then, the condition imposed on the premises of *ES*<sub>1</sub> and *ES*<sub>3</sub> by virtue of the fact that they have incompatible conclusions may be simplified: there is no possible world in which (9), (10), (9''), and (10'') are all true.

There are several ways—each casting doubt on *de re* belief as explanatory—in which this condition may be satisfied. Disregarding what seem to be extraneous possibilities,<sup>13</sup> there

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<sup>13</sup>There is no reason to hold that (9)&(10'') (or (9'')&(10)) are contradictory. And (9)&(10) (and by parity of reasoning (9'')&(10'')) would be contradictory if and only if in each possible world either (9) or (10), but not both, were false. This is so since (9) is a conjunct of the antecedent of (10).

are three options that yield the required contradiction among the premises of  $ES_1$  and  $ES_3$ :

- (i) There is no possible world in which (9) and (9'') are both true.
- (ii) There is no possible world in which (10) and (10'') are both true.
- (iii) There is no possible world in which (9), (9''), (10), and (10'') are all true, but there are no pairwise contradictions.

*Option (i):* It is easy to see that on option (i), (9) and (9'') cannot be interpreted as material conditionals. On option (i), there is no possible world in which (9) and (9'') are both true; but as material conditionals, both would be (vacuously) true in any world in which, for example, Jones is unable to remove the more valuable. Since (9) and (9'') are instantiations of the general principles (A) and (A'), it thus seems that option (i) requires that (A) and (A') not be taken as truth-functional. Then it is up to proponents of *de re* belief to try to specify intensional senses for (A) and (A'). But that alone would not be enough to make option (i) palatable. If (A) and (A') were taken nonextensionally so that there were some conceptual link between antecedent and consequent, then there would be no reasonable grounds for rejecting either (9) or (9'') without also rejecting the other. Since on option (i) there is no possible world in which both (9) and (9'') are true, both (taken intensionally) are false in every possible world. But then it seems that by parity of reasoning, we should have to say that *every* instance of (A) and (A') is false in every possible world, in which case neither (A) nor (A') has a role in explaining action.

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Thus, (9)&(10) would be contradictory just in case any world in which Jones removes the basket at *t* is a world in which it is *not* the case that at *t* Jones believes of the basket that it is the more valuable. So, if (9)&(10) were contradictory, then a *de re* belief regarding an object would be logically incompatible with acting on that object. I shall not consider further this possibility, nor the possibility that the conjunction of (9)&(10) with (9'')&(10'') is noncontradictory until conjoined with (11)&(12).

*Option (ii)*: On option (ii), there is no possible world in which the ascriptions of near-contraries such as (10) and (10'') are both true. In Jones's case, as told above, there is no ground for rejecting one and not the other, so on option (ii) we should take neither (10) nor (10'') to be true. Then we may not use either of these *de re* beliefs to explain Jones's removing the basket at *t*. Moreover, if there is no possible world in which a pair of such paradigmatic ascriptions as (10) and (10'') are true, then there seem to be no near-contrary beliefs. But if there are no near-contrary beliefs, then there are no *de re* beliefs, as understood heretofore.

It seems open to the classicist (although not to the latitudinarian who accepts (L)) to try to develop a plausible account that allows for *de re* beliefs directed upon concrete objects without the possibility of near-contraries. That such an account will not be forthcoming, however, is suggested by the fact that option (ii) undermines the intuitive basis of *de re* belief in demonstrative reference. At the very least, an exponent of the classical view who repudiates near-contraries by adopting option (ii) would have to eschew the natural and plausible rule:

- (R) If Jones sincerely and competently says, "That's *F*," and thereby successfully demonstrates *x* while directly perceiving *x*, then Jones believes of *x* that it is *F*.

But without some rule such as (R), we are left completely in the dark about the conditions under which one has a *de re* belief that is immune to near-contraries.<sup>14</sup> Since we have no idea of how there can be *de re* beliefs directed upon concrete objects that are logically immune to near-contraries, option (ii) forces abandonment of *de re* beliefs directed upon con-

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<sup>14</sup>Herbert Heidelberger and David Austin suggested various formulations of (R) as untenable. Kaplan's example of the switch of the pictures of Carnap and Agnew could be modified in such a way that it becomes another counterexample to (R). Kaplan's example, in which the speaker fails to express an antecedent belief that he intended to express, differs in important ways from Jones's case. See "Dthat," p. 396. Moreover, Kaplan's own views of *de re* attitudes do not avoid ascriptions of near-contraries.

crete objects altogether, not just in the context of explaining action.<sup>15</sup>

*Option (iii):* On option (iii), there is no single pair of the four premises (9),(9''),(10),(10'') that accounts for the contradiction among the four premises; rather, in different possible worlds, different conjunctions of two or three of the four premises are true. There are ten sets of possible worlds in which various combinations of two or three of the four premises are true, and in all but two of these it is obvious that  $ES_1$  and  $ES_3$  are not explanatory. In six of the ten sets of possible worlds, (9) and (9'') differ in truth value; for reasons cited under option (i), since (9) and (9'') are instantiations of explanatory schemata with exactly the same plausibility, no world in which one is true and the other false is a world in which  $ES_1$  or  $ES_3$  is explanatory. Consider next the possible worlds in which (9) and (9'') are true and (10) and (10'') are false; in these worlds the *de re* beliefs are obviously not explanatory since their ascriptions are false. Now consider the possible worlds in which (10) and (10'') are true and (9) and (9'') are false; since a deductive explanation of the sort under consideration requires a conditional in the explanans, it is obvious that the *de re* beliefs are not explanatory in these worlds either.

There remain two sets of possible worlds in which to consider whether or not on option (iii)  $ES_1$  or  $ES_3$  is explanatory: the possible worlds in which (9), (9''), and (10) are true but (10'') is false, and the possible worlds in which (9), (9''), and (10'') are true but (10) is false. These are just the worlds without the (relevant) near-contraries. So on option (iii)  $ES_1$

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<sup>15</sup>The position offered in III may be understood as tantamount to holding that one may have (irreducible) *de re* beliefs about oneself and the present moment, but about nothing else, and that such *de re* beliefs are immune to near-contraries. (Stephen Schiffer takes such a view in "The Basis of Reference," *Erkenntnis*, 13 (1978), 171-206.) In that case, it may seem plausible to take option (ii) and conclude that the position offered in III is compatible with the classical view. Alternatively, if it is held that neither oneself nor the present moment is a concrete object, then the position in III may be construed in a way contrary to the spirit of classical views, according to which *de re* attitudes typically concern concrete objects.

and  $ES_3$  are not explanatory in any world in which the agent happens to believe the (relevant) near-contraries. Are they explanatory at all? At this point of the discussion, to claim that the  $ES$  schemata are explanatory when the agent happens not to believe near-contraries seems to be seriously *ad hoc*; it seems to offer simple withdrawal (with no replacement) of explanation whenever near-contraries turn up.

To illustrate the worry here, assume for the moment that  $ES_1$  is explanatory in worlds in which (9), (9''), and (10) are true but (10'') is false, and that  $ES_3$  is explanatory in worlds in which (9), (9''), and (10'') are true but (10) is false. Does Jones inhabit one of these worlds? Suppose that he does. Then Jones does not actually have the near-contrary beliefs that he seems to have; in that case, the proponent of option (iii) must show a *principled* way both to hold that Jones fails to have one of the beliefs that contribute to the near-contraries and to hold that *de re* beliefs that happen not to contribute to near-contraries may be explanatory. Since the story of Jones generates paradigm cases of *de re* belief, it would take a deep and convincing philosophical argument to save this position from being *ad hoc*.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, suppose that Jones does not inhabit one of the worlds under consideration and that he does happen to believe the near-contraries. Then on option (iii) we are left not only with a mystery of how to explain Jones's (intuitively unpuzzling) action, but also with the general question: if Jones's *de re* beliefs do not explain his removing the basket, what reason is there to think that any *de re* beliefs ever explain actions? Again the *ad hoc* threatens.

Moreover, on option (iii) similar cases are not treated similarly. Compare the actions of Smith and Jones. Take a classi-

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<sup>16</sup>One principled approach, which is an alternative to the traditional views under attack here, is Robert Stalnaker's. See, for example, his "Assertion," in *Syntax and Semantics*, 9 (*Pragmatics*) ed. Peter Cole (New York: Academic Press, 1978), pp. 315-32. Although it offers deep philosophical motivation for not attributing near-contraries, Stalnaker's view has the consequence that logically equivalent propositions are identical—a consequence that seems to trivialize mathematics. If this consequence can be dealt with satisfactorily, perhaps Stalnaker's view can be developed in a way useful to proponents of option (iii). This observation is due to David Austin.

cal *de re* view of Smith's removing the basket, so that (3) is false and (1) is true and attributes to Smith a belief that helps explain his action. Suppose again that Jones believes near-contraries; say, that (4) and (6) are true. As the story was told, intuitively, the beliefs that explain Smith's removing the basket have the same general character as the beliefs that explain Jones's removing the basket. But on option (iii), the same *kind* of belief (viz., *de re* belief) does not enter into the explanation of both actions; for on option (iii),  $ES_1$  is not explanatory when the agent has (relevant) near-contrary beliefs. So on option (iii), Smith's removing the basket may be explained by his *de re* belief, but Jones's removing the basket may not. Some powerful theoretical justification would be required to treat such intuitively similar actions as not conforming to the same kind of explanatory schema.

These various shortcomings strongly suggest that, without a good deal of tricky development along lines that depart significantly from traditional views, option (iii) does not offer a satisfactory way to take *de re* belief as explanatory. (It is worth noting here that the alternative to the *ES* schemata offered in III has none of the difficulties that beset option (iii).)

The argument of this section has been somewhat complex. In order to account for the fact that the two valid arguments,  $ES_1$  and  $ES_3$ , have incompatible conclusions, we are led to options (i)–(iii). The choices at this point are among the following: In the absence of plausible versions of (A) and (A'), accept (i) and deny to *de re* belief its expected role in deductive explanation. Or in the absence of specification of conditions under which one has *de re* beliefs that are logically immune to near-contraries, accept (ii) and deny that *any* ascription of *de re* belief is true. Or in the absence of a principled and otherwise adequate position that excludes putative *de re* beliefs that happen to contribute to near-contraries, accept (iii) and acknowledge the *ad hoc* character of explanation by *de re* belief and look elsewhere for explanations of actions like Jones's removing the basket. All the options have the same immediate outcome: *de re* beliefs concerning objects

are deprived of the explanatory role they were assumed to have. And this outcome is independent of whether *de re* attitudes are construed according to latitudinarian or classical conceptions. It seems, then, that the initially plausible *ES* schemata are no patterns of explanation.

It may be, of course, that there is no valid deductive pattern of explanation of action in terms of the agent's attitudes. If there is one, it would seem to be fairly removed (unlike *ES*) from the commonplace explanations that figure in our ordinary life. It is to this possibility that we now turn.

### III

It remains to show how Jones's removing the basket can be explained without recourse to *de re* belief of it, and thus to point the way toward an explanatory schema more adequate than *ES*. It is clear that *de dicto* belief, as traditionally conceived as belief in timeless propositions, cannot explain Jones's removing the basket. For example, Jones may believe *de dicto* that the basket is the more valuable, and he may intend to remove the more valuable, and he may be able to, and so on, and still he may remove the dish instead, mistakenly believing that he is removing the basket.<sup>17</sup>

Intuitively, ascription of belief in near-contraries can be avoided by ascribing beliefs by means of sentences that the agent would recognize as expressing his or her attitudes. For example, Smith and Jones would readily assent to "The object I pointed to first is the more valuable," but they would not also assent to "The object I pointed to second is the more valuable," on pain of irrationality. Of course, Smith would assent to "The more valuable is the more valuable," which, given a plausible disquotation principle and (L), yielded the troublesome (3), and Jones would assent to "The object I held first is the more valuable," which, given disquotation and classical *de re* belief, yielded the troublesome (6); but

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<sup>17</sup>This kind of case tells against a number of proposed schemata. See, for example, Georg Henrik von Wright, *Explanation and Understanding* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1971), pp. 96 ff., and Bruce Aune, *Reason and Action* (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1977), pp. 76-77.

Smith and Jones could not recognize (3) and (6), respectively, as correct ascriptions of their beliefs.

These considerations suggest that explanation of intentional action requires ascriptions of attitudes that appropriately capture the agent's point of view.<sup>18</sup> In the kinds of cases we are considering, in which there is no self-deception, intentional action is tied to the agent's attitudes as he would reason from them, and this fact casts doubt on the explanatory value of *de re* attitudes. For example, taking Oedipus' intention to marry Jocasta to be *de re*, we have 'Oedipus intended to marry his mother'. But this ascription cannot capture Oedipus' reasoning that led to his marrying Jocasta, at least as Sophocles tells the story. Thus, it is not the *de re* intention that should be ascribed to explain Oedipus' action. Of course, Oedipus intended to marry Jocasta, and Jocasta was his mother. But this indicates that the attitudinal part of the explanation, in which the appropriate ascriptions retain descriptive or indexical elements that the agent could use to express his attitudes, should be separated from the "factual" component of the explanation, which states the circumstances in which the agent acts.<sup>19</sup>

Now consider Jones's beliefs as he would reason from them. Instead of (4)-(6), we ascribe to Jones the non-*de-re*

(4') Jones believes that the object he\* pointed to first is the more valuable.

(5') Jones believes that the object he\* pointed to second is not the more valuable.

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<sup>18</sup>John Perry, in "The Problem of the Essential Indexical" (*Nous*, 13 (1979), 3-21), gives further arguments for taking into account the agent's point of view. He argues that the classical accounts of *de re* and *de dicto* belief both seem to preclude certain natural explanations of action. The example he uses to show this involves the special case of self-belief. Although vivid, this example has two drawbacks: (i) it wrongly suggests that the difficulty is limited to "self-locating" beliefs and thus obscures the generality of the problem; and (ii) there are competing views of self-belief, according to which Perry's example may be explained without denying that ordinary *de re* beliefs explain behavior.

<sup>19</sup>The first part of the explanation to be developed is congenial to J. A. Fodor's position in "Methodological Solipsism Considered as a Research Strategy in Cognitive Psychology," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 2 (1980).

- (6') Jones believes that the object he\* held first when blindfolded is the more valuable.

The '\*' is Castañeda's symbol for attributing indexical reference. The force of the occurrences of 'he\*' in (4')–(6') is to guarantee that Jones would express his belief in the first person if he expressed it at all. Similarly, 'then\*' attributes a present-time indexical reference. Suppose that Sims, the most junior member of the faculty, sincerely asserts, "I am now underpaid." Using Castañeda's convention, we would attribute to her the belief so expressed by 'Sims believed that she\* was then\* underpaid'. The attribution would be false if Sims, mistakenly believing Adams to be the most junior member of the faculty, asserted, "The most junior member of the faculty, and that person only, is underpaid." (4')–(6') assure that the beliefs attributed to Jones are genuine self-beliefs, that is, that Jones would recognize, in the first person, that it is himself whom the beliefs concern.<sup>20</sup>

Since Jones is rational, we also have

- (14) Jones believes that the object he\* held first when blindfolded is the object he\* pointed to first.

After the blindfold is removed, assume that Jones comes to believe, correctly or incorrectly, what the following attributes to him:

- (15) Jones believes that the object he\* pointed to first is the object directly in front of him\*.

Given his ultimate intention to remove the more valuable, Jones may reason either from the belief ascribed to him in (4') or from the belief ascribed to him in (6'). If he reasons

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<sup>20</sup>See Hector-Neri Castañeda, "Indicators and Quasi-Indicators," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 4 (1967), 85–100; "He': A Study in the Logic of Self-Consciousness," *Ratio*, 8 (1966), 130–57; "On the Phenomeno-Logic of the I," *Proceedings of the XIVth International Congress of Philosophy* (1968), pp. 260–66; "On the Logic of Attributions of Self-Knowledge to Others," *Journal of Philosophy*, 65 (1968), pp. 439–56. There is a good deal of controversy surrounding the conclusions Castañeda draws from the data he presents. For a defense, see Lynne Rudder Baker, "On Making and Attributing Demonstrative Reference," *Synthese*, 49 (1981), 245–273; for an attack, see Steven E. Böer and William G. Lycan, "Who, Me?" *Philosophical Review*, 89 (1980), 427–66.

from the belief ascribed in (4'), he immediately comes to intend to remove the object directly in front of him\*. If he reasons from the belief ascribed in (6'), he will use the beliefs ascribed in (14) and (15) to arrive at the same intention.

One promising strategy to explain Jones's removing the basket without recourse to *de re* attitudes concerning the basket is to turn to basic actions. Common to views of basic action is the idea that a basic action is one that an agent may perform at will. If *B* is a basic action, there is no other action *A* such that an agent performs *B* by intentionally performing *A*.<sup>21</sup> If we take reaching-and-grasping to be a basic action, we have the beginning of an explanation of Jones's removing the basket:

(16) [At *t*, Jones believes that (he\* reaches-and-grasps then\*  $\leftrightarrow$  he\* removes the object directly in front of him\* then\*) & At *t*, Jones intends to remove the object directly in front of him\* then\*]  $\rightarrow$  At *t*, Jones intends to reach-and-grasp then\*.

(17) At *t*, Jones believes that (he\* reaches-and-grasps then\*  $\leftrightarrow$  he\* removes the object directly in front of him\* then\*).

(18) At *t*, Jones intends to remove the object directly in front of him\* then\*.

(19)  $\therefore$  At *t*, Jones intends to reach-and-grasp then\*.

Since reaching-and-grasping is a basic action,

(20) (At *t*, Jones intends to reach-and-grasp then\* & At *t*, Jones is able to reach-and-grasp)  $\rightarrow$  At *t*, Jones reaches-and-grasps.

(21) At *t*, Jones is able to reach-and-grasp.

(22)  $\therefore$  At *t*, Jones reaches-and-grasps.

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<sup>21</sup>See, for example, Arthur C. Danto, "Action, Knowledge and Representation," in *Action Theory*, ed. Myles Brand and Douglas Walton (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1976), pp. 11-26; Alvin I. Goldman, *A Theory of Human Action* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1970), Ch. 3; von Wright, *Explanation and Understanding*, Ch. 3.

This completes the intentional part of the explanation of Jones's removing the basket. To explain what actually happened—that the basket was removed—we need no further ascriptions of attitudes, but statements of fact:

- (23) Jones's belief ascribed in (17) is true: At  $t$ , if Jones reaches-and-grasps, then he removes the object directly in front of him at  $t$ .
- (24) Jones's belief ascribed in (15) is true: The object directly in front of him is the basket.
- (25)  $\therefore$  Jones removes the basket at  $t$ .

The first part of the explanation consists entirely of ascriptions of non-*de-re* attitudes; the second part consists entirely of statements of fact that are independent of the agent's attitudes. If Jones's belief ascribed in (15) had been false and the object directly in front of him had been the dish, then Jones would have removed the dish, even though he had the very same beliefs and intentions: the difference between the two cases would lie solely in the nonattitudinal facts. (And if there had actually been a dagger in front of Macbeth, then Macbeth, having exactly the same attitudes and making exactly the same movement, would have seized it. The difference between Shakespeare's Macbeth and our hypothetical Macbeth is not a matter of Macbeth's attitudes, *de re* or not.)

We may be sure that the explanation employs no covert ascriptions of *de re* attitudes regarding the basket by stating the general principles of which (16) and (20) are instances.

- (G1) [[At  $t$ ,  $S$  believes that (he\* reaches-and-grasps then\*  $\leftrightarrow$  ( $x$ )( $x$  is directly in front of him\* then\*  $\rightarrow$  he\* removes  $x$  then\*))] & [At  $t$ ,  $S$  intends that ( $x$ )( $x$  is directly in front of him\* then\*  $\rightarrow$  he\* removes  $x$  then\*)]]  $\rightarrow$  At  $t$ ,  $S$  intends that he\* reach-and-grasp then\*.
- (G2) (At  $t$ ,  $S$  intends that he\* reach-and-grasp then\* & At  $t$ ,  $S$  is able to reach-and-grasp)  $\rightarrow$   $S$  reaches-and-grasps at  $t$ .

(G2) just follows from the definition of basic actions, but (G1) raises several controversial issues and demands fuller discussion.

In (G1), the first conjunct of the antecedent may be read as ‘At *t*, *S* believes that: he\* reaches-and-grasps then\* if and only if he\* removes whatever is in front of him\* then\*’. It is clear that (G1) does not tacitly rely on *de re* beliefs concerning the basket; the quantification over objects all occurs within the scope of the attitudinal verbs. The universal generalization of (G1) does, however, rely on “quantifying in” over agents and times. So it must be shown that instantiations of the antecedent of (G1) are immune to near-contraries.

As noted earlier, the use of Castañeda’s ‘\*’ guarantees that the belief attributed is one that the believer would express indexically, in English by means of ‘I’ and ‘now’. So Jones should recognize the belief ascribed to him in (16) as one that he could express, stiltedly, by ‘I reach-and-grasp now if and only if I now remove whatever is in front of me now.’ If Jones would not assent to the indexical sentence, but would assent to, say, “Jones reaches-and-grasps at *t* if and only if at *t* he removes whatever is in front of him at *t*,” then (16) would be false. Thus, the instantiations of (G1) will all attribute a particular kind of indexical reference to the agent. It is this attribution of indexical reference that allows escape from ascription of near-contraries.

Near-contraries are pairs of inconsistent beliefs (that is, there is no possible world in which both members of the pair are true) that a logically and linguistically competent person may accept. Indexical beliefs expressed by typical uses of ‘I’ and ‘now’, such as ‘I am now sitting’, have a special feature that prevents them from yielding near-contraries. No rational speaker of English would believe at one time what she would express by ‘I am now sitting’ and ‘It is not the case that I am now sitting’. Let us take Castañeda’s ‘\*’ to attribute such uses, so that ‘At noon, *S* believes that she\* was then\* sitting’ and ‘At noon, *S* believes that it is not the case that she\* was then\* sitting’ cannot both be true. Crudely put, a rational and competent speaker of English knows what the referents of her uses of ‘I’ and ‘now’ are, and thus in making first-

person and present-time indexical reference, she is not likely to make the kind of mistake that generates near-contraries.<sup>22</sup>

There may be a temptation to retort: such features are hardly peculiar to 'I' and 'now'. One's knowledge of English alone prevents her from believing what is expressed by 'This is *F*' and by 'This is not *F*', demonstrating a single object at (nearly) the same time. But this retort will not do. A rational and linguistically competent person, such as Jones, may be unaware that he is demonstrating a single object twice. By contrast, it would be ludicrous to suppose that a rational speaker of English were unaware that his several uses of 'now' referred to different times, or to be unaware that his several uses of 'I' referred to the same person. For this reason, beliefs typically expressed in English by 'I am now *F*' are not likely to generate near-contraries, and this fact distinguishes the indicators 'I' and 'now' from the other demonstratives, as well as from descriptions and names. Therefore, since all the instantiated antecedents of (G1) attribute indexical reference by first-person and present-time indicators, there is no threat from near-contraries.

Although (G1) and hence the proposed explanation of Jones's removing the basket seem safe from ascriptions of near-contraries, it is a further question, which cannot be addressed here, whether the alternative survives challenges from other quarters. For instance, is it plausible to ascribe the "low-level" beliefs associated with basic actions, which the agent may be unaware of having?<sup>23</sup> Can an adequate semantics of sentences containing 'he\*' be developed?<sup>24</sup> Is it plausible that ordinary intentional explanation rests on such abstruse principles, which seem to presuppose sophisticated conceptual apparatus on the part of the agent? How are intentional actions of beings with more limited conceptual

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<sup>22</sup>Stephen Schiffer exploits this fact in "The Basis of Reference," *op. cit.*

<sup>23</sup>I have qualms about ascribing beliefs to a person who sincerely and competently denies having them. See "Underprivileged Access," *Nous*, May, 1982.

<sup>24</sup>In "Who, Me?" for instance, Boer and Lycan see Castañeda's irreducible 'he\*' as "a surd in semantics."

resources—for example, members of other species or human infants—to be explained?<sup>25</sup>

Formulation of a deductive schema for intentional explanation is an elusive goal. Many have held that the psychological generalizations required are truistic or vague.<sup>26</sup> It seems that the problem is deeper, however. Neither *de re* nor *de dicto* generalizations provide the basis for deductive explanation of action directed upon objects, and the alternative suggested in III has yet to be vindicated. So formulation of a deductive schema for intentional explanation may turn out to be an illusive goal as well.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Gareth B. Matthews advances reasons to endorse a Principle of Psychological Continuity, which seems to be violated by explanations depending on (G1), in "Animals and the Unity of Psychology," *Philosophy*, 53 (1978), 437-54.

<sup>26</sup>See Donald Davidson, "Psychology as Philosophy," in *The Philosophy of Mind*, ed. Jonathan Glover (Oxford: Oxford University, 1976), pp. 101-10; and Alvin I. Goldman, *A Theory of Human Action*, pp. 74 and 114.

<sup>27</sup>For numerous discussions and hard criticism, I am deeply indebted to Herbert Heidelberger and to members of his Task Force on Propositional Attitudes—David Austin, William G. Lycan, Murray Kiteley, Melinda Roberts; also helpful were the comments of Gareth B. Matthews, Stanley Bates, Michele LaRusch, and William Rued. Thanks are due to Middlebury College, for providing a sabbatical leave, and to the Philosophy Department at the University of Massachusetts/Amherst, for providing congenial surroundings in which to work. A short version of this paper was read at the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association, December, 1980; I wish to thank my commentator, Mark Pastin. Finally, I am grateful to an anonymous referee for *The Philosophical Review* for incisive comments, and especially for pointing out the need to discuss option (iii).