# Philosophical Papers

Volume I

## DAVID LEWIS

to make my point: other-ascriptions of properties are not further beliefs alongside the self-ascriptions, but rather are state of affairs that obtain partly in virtue of the subject's self-ascriptions and partly in virtue of facts not about his attitudes.

## XIV

Self-ascription of properties is ascription of properties to oneself under the relation of identity. Certainly identity is a relation of acquaintance par excellence. So belief *de se* falls under belief *de re*.

But there are other relations of acquaintance, besides identity, that a subject may bear to himself. So belief *de re* about oneself turns out to cover more than self-ascription of properties. To take an example due to David Kaplan,[18] watching is a relation of acquaintance. I watch myself in reflecting glass, unaware that I am watching myself. I ascribe to myself, under the description "the one I am watching," the property of wearing pants that are on fire. I therefore believe *de re* of the one I am watching—that is, myself—that his pants are on fire. But I do not self-ascribe the property of wearing pants that are on fire. Very soon I will, but not yet. So self-ascription isn't quite the same thing as ascription, *de re,* to onself.[19]

# *Postscripts to*

# "Attitudes *De Dicto* and *De Se*"

## A. *DE RE* AND *DE SE*

It should have been said more clearly: the analysis of belief *de re* that I propose in Section XIII is *not* a reduction of *de re* to *de dicto.* Rather, it is a reduction of *de re* generally to *de se.* We are normally left with an irreducibly *de se* belief in the analysans: the subject self-ascribes the property of bearing the relation Z uniquely to something which has property X. As it might be: I self-ascribe staring at something furry (and at nothing else); I am in fact staring only at Bruce, staring is a

suitable relation of acquaintance, and that is how I believe *de re* of Bruce that he is furry.

If I am right, there can be no reduction of *de re* to *de dicto*. For such a reduction would apply, *inter alia*, to the special case in which the subject ascribes a property to himself under the relation of identity—that is, to the special case of belief *de se*. But I have argued that *de se* is not in general reducible to *de dicto*.

Since belief *de se* is a special case of belief *de re*, a question arises.[1] I said that belief *de se* was (narrowly) psychological, whereas belief *de re* is only partly psychological: "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." Then is belief *de se* wholly psychological, or is it not?—It is. In this exceptional case, the nonpsychological part drops out. The nonpsychological part of *de re* belief generally is that the subject bears a suitable relation uniquely to the *res*. But when the *res* is himself and the relation is identity, this nonpsychological part reduces to the mere necessary truth that he is identical to himself and to nothing else.

## B. GRIEF FOR MODERATE MODAL REALISM?[2]

I suggested in Section X that the moderate modal realist has a problem about actuality. On his view, there is one of the abstract ersatz worlds, and one only, that is special because it is the one that represents the concrete world. This one, he says, is actualized. Now, consider W, another of the abstract ersatz worlds. It is not special, not the one that represents the concrete world, not actualized. But it could have been. Surely it is a contingent matter which of the ersatz worlds is actualized, and in particular it is possible that W be actualized. What is possible is what is true at some world. Which world?—Presumably W itself. So the moderate realist must be able to say: it is true at W that W is actualized, for at W, W is the ersatz world that alone represents the concrete world.

I asked: what does this mean? There is only one concrete world, according to the moderate realist. *Ex hypothesi,* W does not represent it. Then how can it be that, at W, W does represent it?

The problem is part of a more general one. What does it mean when we say that something that is not true *simpliciter* is nevertheless true at a world? For me, truth at a world is a simple matter. It is just truth, with world-dependent linguistic elements evaluated at the world in question. For instance—and this alone will take us a lot of the way—quantifiers must (usually) be restricted to inhabitants of the proper world.[3] Thus it is true at a certain world that some pigs fly iff some inhab-

---

[1] It was brought to my attention by Mark Johnston.

[2] In this postscript, I am much indebted to correspondence with John G. Bennett.

[3] See the translation scheme proposed in "Counterpart Theory and Quantified Modal Logic" (in this volume), in particular clauses T2g–T2h, page 31.

itants of that world are pigs that fly. It is not true *simpliciter* that some pigs fly, since no pigs that fly inhabit this world.

If that is what truth at a world means, I do not see how it can be true at one ersatz world and false at another that W represents the concrete world. It just does or it just doesn't. The concrete world is not part of any ersatz world. Still less are there supposed to be different concrete worlds to inhabit different ersatz worlds. That was my objection.

But, as should have been clear all along, the moderate modal realist cannot and does not think of truth at a world in the same way that I do. If he did, how could he even agree that it is true at a certain world that pigs fly? Pigs that fly are parts of some worlds, or so I think, but they are not parts of any ersatz worlds. (Maybe, representations of them are parts of some ersatz worlds.) So my objection should be in part withdrawn and in part generalized. I should ask: what does the moderate realist mean when he says that *anything* is true at an ersatz world?

That was not meant as an unanswerable question. There are many answers the moderate realist might offer. I think that all of them, except for some that don't even get the facts of modality right, succeed only by giving up on some of the analytic goals that modal realism was meant to serve. We are left with theories that may help to systematize our opinions about modality, counterfactuals, truth in a representation, . . . but that no longer offer instructive analyses.

It will suffice to consider one of all the answers that might be given: the modal answer. The moderate realist might say that it is true at ersatz world W that $\phi$ iff, necessarily, if W represented the concrete world, then it would be that $\phi$. (Despite the subjunctive verbs, this is to be taken simply as a strict implication—the necessitation of a truth-functional conditional.) Taking $\phi$ as "W represents the concrete world," this answer handles my original objection with the greatest of ease. But if it is given, then it becomes uninstructive to analyze necessity as truth at all (ersatz) worlds!

## C. *POSSIBILIA* POWER?

According to what I have said, our beliefs and desires consist in relations to properties. These properties are sets of possible individuals. In any realistic case, most of these *possibilia* are unactualized. But we act as we do because we believe and desire as we do. Then do our relations with unactualized *possibilia* enter into the causal histories of actual events? That would never do!

No; what's true is rather this. Certain of our states, presumably brain states, jointly cause our acts. Because of the ways they cause and get caused, we classify them as certain beliefs and desires. We classify beliefs and desires by associating them with "objects of attitudes"—namely, with sets consisting in part of unactualized individuals. They bear interpretations, according to such principles as are

discussed in "Radical Interpretation" (in this volume). But they stand in relations to unactualized *possibilia* because they bear interpretations, and they bear interpretations because of their causal powers—not vice versa.

You might as well worry that numbers have causal powers, since the water boils because it reaches the centigrade temperature of 100. The answer is the same. The state of the water is indexed by the number in virtue of its causal powers—not vice versa.