

'ABOUT BELIEF DE RE'

Arnold CUSMARIU

In a recent paper ⁽¹⁾ Mark Pastin presents an analysis of de re belief the following features: (a) The analysis «...does not require that a person be 'epistemically intimate' with an object in order to have a de re belief with respect to it.» (570). (b) It is restricted to de re beliefs of the form 'S believes the F to have G', i.e., beliefs tied to singular terms, as Pastin puts it. (574). (c) It is designed to «...undermine inconsistent skepticism about de re belief but not de dicto belief.» (570). Finally, (d) it is intended to cover 'fully' de re sentences, i.e., sentences which assert not only that a person believes with respect to a *thing* that it has a property, but also that he believes with respect to a *property* that it is had by a thing. (570).

I think Pastin need not shy away from epistemic analyses of de re belief. His own analysis, it seems to me, would be vastly improved if it was formulated along epistemic lines. I will show below how greater ontological simplicity and analytic breadth may be achieved through such a reformulation. But I think also that the structure of Pastin's analysis is sound, and that (c) and (d) are desirable features; so I shall incorporate both in the account I shall give.

(I)

Pastin says that his analysis will use the notion of de dicto belief and some notions about reference. (570). This is not entirely correct. Let me then begin by outlining what I take to be the full stock of concepts employed, including

⁽¹⁾ 'About De Re Belief', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, XXXIV (1974), 569-575. The numbers in parentheses refer to pages of Pastin's paper.

also Pastin's explanations of them, as well as other relevant comments of my own.

(1) A singular term *occurring* in a proposition. This seems to be an undefined concept. Pastin uses subscripts to mark such occurrence. 'Singular term_p' is to indicate that what is meant is a singular term of the sort which occurs in propositions, as opposed to a singular term of the sort which occurs in «...patently linguistic entities such as sentences or statements.» (570). The identity conditions of these singular terms_p are as follows:

Singular terms s^1 and s^2 are identical if and only if they are intersubstitutable in all propositions salve proposition identity. (570-71).

Pastin's propositions, incidentally, are abstract objects, and he follows Roderick Chisholm in giving their identity conditions via the propositional attitudes. That is, for Pastin the proposition that- p is the same as the proposition that- q just in case necessarily, p is true if and only if q is true, and, for any person S , S accepts, desires, hopes, etc., p , if and only if S accepts, desires, hopes, etc., q . Pastin is also committed to a Platonist view of properties, although most of the ontological weight of the analysis rests on the singular terms_p.

(2) A singular term with or without *descriptive content*. This seems also to be an undefined concept. Singular terms_p without descriptive content are also called 'purely nominative singular terms_p'. (571). Pastin, however, does make an attempt to explain what he means by a singular term_p of the purely nominative sort. He says that a singular term_p, n , is purely nominative, if and only if, it satisfies the following criterion:

Necessarily, for all persons S , if S believes x *exemplifies* P of x , where p is a singular term for a property, then S believes the proposition which results from substituting n for x in x *exemplifies* P . (571).

But then he withdraws this criterion, thus leaving intuitive, at least for present purposes, the concept of a singular term_p without descriptive content. It is quite possible, however, that Pastin's use of 'descriptive content' was inspired by David Kaplan's discussion of this concept in section IX of 'Quantifying In', and that the concept of a purely nominative singular term_p is to resemble Kaplan's standard names; but I believe it is fair to say that Kaplan's discussion of these concepts is also incomplete. ⁽²⁾

(3) A singular term_p being a *representation of* an individual for a person. This term, unfortunately, is also undefined; but here Pastin says explicitly that he is borrowing a concept from Kaplan. (571). But there are differences. First, Pastin allows that a singular term_p, a definite description_p, can be a representation of an individual for a person without being a correct description_p of that individual. Second, Pastin «... urge[s] liberality in matters of vividness». (571). Third, he uses the concept of a representation without any epistemic significance - - a departure from Kaplan's use which is not noted. ⁽³⁾

(4) A singular term_p being *directed upon* an individual for a person. This is the central concept of Pastin's analysis. It

⁽²⁾ David Kaplan: «Quantifying In», in D. Davidson and K.J.J. Hintikka, (eds.), *Words and Objections: Essays on the Work of W.V. Quine*, (Dordrecht, 1969), pp. 206-242. Descriptive content is discussed in Sec. IX of the paper, pp. 225-231, and standard names in Sec. VII, pp. 222-225. There is also a discussion of standard names in Kaplan's Ph. D. dissertation *Foundations of Intensional Logic*. (University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, 1964), pp. 55-57: although I have not found that discussion to shed new light on the topic. Kaplan himself admits at the end of 'Quantifying In' that there are «... obscurities in my formulation of the two central notions — that of a standard name and that of a name being of an object for a particular user.» *op. cit.*, p. 238.

⁽³⁾ Speaking of exportation, Kaplan says the following at the end of Sec. X of 'Quantifying In': «...I am less interested in a definitive analysis of that particular inference than I am in separating and elucidating certain notions which may be useful in epistemological discussion.» *op. cit.*, p. 232. This convinces me that the concept of a representation has epistemic properties for him.

is defined as follows: A singular term_p *d* is directed upon an individual *x* for a person *S*, if and only if, either (i) *d* is a purely nominative singular term_p for *x*, or (ii) *d* is a correct description_p of *x* and *d* is not a representation of any individual other than *x* for *S*, or (iii) *d* is a representation of *x* for *S*. (571).

The point of this (disjunctive) definition is to give a unified account of directedness upon contingent objects as well as abstract ones. It is in line with Pastin's intent to give a theory of 'fully' de re belief. As with all sufficiency definitions, the satisfaction of any of (i) - (iii) insures directedness upon, although only the disjunction of (i) - (iii) is necessary.

(5) A function being an *exemplification* function. This is not a referential concept. Pastin uses it to generate a special kind of proposition, one made up of singular terms_p. Suppose *d1* = *the F* and *d2* = *G*, i.e., suppose that *d1* is a singular term_p for an individual and *d2* is a singular term_p for a property; then, the exemplification function is one which allows us to form the proposition *the F exemplifies G*. (572). (Pastin had introduced earlier an italicizing convention to form names of propositions and of singular terms_p. I shall partly follow this convention later on.)

(6) A proposition being for a person *extensionally to the effect that* an individual has a property. This concept makes use of (1) - (5) in the following way: A proposition is for a person extensionally to the effect that an individual *x* has a property *F*, if and only if, the proposition is the output of the exemplification function taking as input singular terms_p *d1* and *d2* which are such that *d1* is directed upon the individual *x* for *S*, and *d2* is directed upon the property *F* for *S*. (572).

(7) A person *believing a proposition*. De dicto belief is used as an undefined concept.

Using (1) - (7) we obtain the following account of fully de re belief tied to singular terms: a person *S* believes a thing

x to have the property F , if and only if, S believes a proposition which is for him extensionally to the effect that x has the property F . (572).

This is Pastin's analysis.

(II)

(1) Pastin's theory of *de re* belief makes central use of singular terms of the sort which occur in propositions. But it is not made clear what such occurrence amounts to, nor is it clear what entity we are dealing with when we talk about singular terms which occur in propositions. Fortunately, we do not need them to give a theory of belief *de re*. So, I propose to begin by eliminating these singular terms^p, and make do with properties and propositions -- both of which Pastin already accepts. For starters, I shall introduce a kind of property which functions much like a singular term, but for which a clear sense of occurrence in a proposition can be provided.

- D1. F is an individual concept = df. F is a property which is such that (i) it is possible for something to have F , and, (ii) necessarily, for any time t , if there is something which has F at t , then nothing else has F at t . (⁴)

Roughly, an individual concept is a property expressed by an open sentence of the form ' x is the so-and-so', where it is also the case that there can be something which is the so-and-so. *Being the tallest spy* would be a good example. (Notice here the close similarity between D1 and Russell's handling of definite descriptions.)

(⁴) The term 'individual concept' is also used, in pretty much the same way, by Roderick Chisholm. Chisholm presents his own views on *de re* belief in *Person and Object: A Metaphysical Study*. The Carus Lectures, Appendix C (forthcoming from the Open Court Publishing Company, 1976), and in 'Knowledge and Belief: *De Dicto* and *De Re* (forthcoming in *Philosophical Studies*.)

Properties, I would say, play a role in the 'internal constitution' of propositions, which we could also put by saying that a proposition can be *about* a property. One way to define this kind of aboutness is the following:

- D2. p is a proposition which is about a property F =
df. Necessarily, if p is true, then there is something
which has the property F .

(2) A while back I conjectured that singular terms, without descriptive content may resemble Kaplan's standard names. Whether they do or not, I think it is fair to say that a fuller theory is needed before it is clear what contribution such singular terms, could make to an analysis of belief de re. Since I have already eliminated singular terms, with descriptive content in favor of individual concepts, we might as well go all the way and define a property to replace singular terms, without descriptive content. I hope it will be obvious here too that there are similarities in function between this kind of property and the concepts it is intended to replace.

- D3. F is an individual essence = df. (i) F is an individual concept, and (ii) F is an essential property. ⁽⁵⁾

Following Plantinga, we could say that an essential property is a property which is such that if it is had by a thing then it is had by that thing in every possible world in which the thing exists. ⁽⁶⁾

Essential properties, although unshedable, are shareable. Individual concepts, on the other hand, while shedable, are not shareable. And individual essence are neither shareable nor shedable. For example, anything whatever has the prop-

⁽⁵⁾ The term 'individual essence' is also used, in pretty much the same way, by Terence Parsons. See his 'Essentialism and Quantified Modal Logic'. *The Philosophical Review*, LXXVIII, (1969), pp. 35-52, esp. pp. 35-36.

⁽⁶⁾ Alvin Plantinga: *The Nature of Necessity*, (London, 1974), Ch. IV., Sec. 8.

erty *being self-identical*, in every possible world in which it exists. More interestingly, perhaps, any number has the property *being a number* essentially. But if Ralph happened to exemplify *being the tallest spy*, even if he would thereby have a preproperty which is and been individual concept, he would not be exemplifying an individual property, since he could have exemplified *being the tallest violinist* and be none the worse for it. On the other hand, the number 9 could not have failed to exemplify *being the sole integer between 8 and 10*, and since this property is one which nothing but the number 9 could have, it qualifies as individual essence.

(3) Pastin allows that a definite description_p may be incorrect without thereby failing to be a representation of an individual for a person. It seems to me that this is too liberal and that representations can do the job of directedness upon only if buttressed by some epistemic considerations. Let me give an example to bring this out. Suppose there are three men standing in the corner of the room at a party talking to each other and drinking brandy. Smith, let us say, is among the trio, but it would not be correct to refer to him as the man in the corner drinking brandy. But the definite description_p *the man in the corner drinking brandy* could, on Pastin's view, be a representation of Smith for the waiter trying to give everyone refills. And this description_p could then be directed upon Smith for the waiter. But how could this be? Imagine the waiter being instructed by the hostess to fill up Smith's glass and being told, upon inquiring *who* Smith was, that Smith is the man in the corner drinking brandy -- say the hostess is giving these instructions with her back turned to Smith. It may take a while before the waiter «has his candidate», and Smith his brandy, during which time the waiter would doubtless try to find out which of the three men standing in the corner is Smith. At one point, the hostess might turn around and, realizing her mistake, point out who Smith is -- he is the man in the middle, with the black tie and red beard. So, it seems to me that representability, as Pastin understands

it, is not sufficient for directedness upon and that it must be endowed with epistemic powers if we are to achieve directedness upon.

If we make properties the bearers of directedness upon, instead of singular terms_p, and use D1 and D3, we can define this concept as follows:

- D4. *F* is a property which is directed upon an individual *x* for a person *S* = df. (i) *F* is a conjunction of at least two properties each of which are individual concepts, and (ii) *S* knows that *X* has *F*. (7)

I think it is plausible to hold that as long as we restrict ourselves to contingently existing entities directedness upon can be achieved without requiring that the director be able to keep tabs on his candidate in all situations. I agree with Kaplan on this point: «...It is certainly too much to require that a *vived* name must provide Ralph with a means of recognizing its purported object in all circumstances, ...». (8) But, to insure a certain amount of exportability, it is a good idea to require him to have in his possession at least two sufficiently discriminating properties of the individual *x*. In this way we may also do justice to Kaplan's intuition that «... Ralph must have quite a solid conception of *x* before we can say that Ralph believes *x* to be a spy.» (9)

The strong requirement, though, does seem reasonable when it comes to properties or other abstracta, where it can be satisfied more easily. So, following the epistemic lead of D4, we can zero in on necessary existents this way:

(7) Both here and in the next definition I seem to countenance quantification accross an epistemic operator setting off an opaque clause. Such quantification, however, is not always impermissible (cf. J.K.K. Hintikka, *Knowledge and Belief*, — Ithaca, Cornell Univ. Press (1962), Ch. VI, Secs. 6.5 - 6.7). Nor is it always avoidable. I doubt that an epistemic reduction of belief *de re* to belief *de dicto* can be carried out without it.

(8) *op. cit.*, p. 230.

(9) *op. cit.*, p. 232.

- D5. F is a property which is directed upon a property G for a person $S = \text{df.}$ (i) F is an individual essence, and (ii) S knows that G has F .

(D5 can be easily extended to cover directedness upon other abstracta, such as numbers, sets, and even propositions.)

(4) Pastin writes

My main reason for rejecting epistemic intimacy analyses of de re belief is that they restrict the objects with respect to which a person may have a de re belief. (573).

adding

I see no reason for thinking that I may not have a de re belief with respect to the eraser on my desk, although it certainly does not play a major role in my inner story. (573).

This seems to be a criticism of Kaplan's requirement that a singular term can be a vivid name of an individual for a person only if that individual filled a major role in the person's inner story. ⁽¹⁰⁾ I think the criticism is correct and that an analysis of de re belief should not be so restrictive as to rule out de re beliefs about such ordinary things as the sole eraser on Pastin's desk. But, of course, it does not follow that all epistemic intimacy analyses must be restricted in this way just because Kaplan's (ostensibly) is. I suggest that Pastin can be allowed to have de re beliefs about the eraser on his desk, and more, as follows:

- D6. p is a proposition which is for a person S extensionally to the effect that an individual x has the property $F = \text{df.}$ There are properties G and H

⁽¹⁰⁾ Kaplan nowhere states exact conditions for vividness; although I think he would accept this as a necessary condition. See pp. 229-230 of 'Quantifying In'.

such that (i) G is directed upon x for S , (ii) H is directed upon F for S , (iii) p is about G , (iv) necessarily, if p is about G , then it is about H , and (v) p is necessarily such that it is true if and only if the thing that has G has F .

Finally,

- D7. S believes with respect to an individual x that it has the property $F =$ df. S believes a proposition which is for him extensionally to the effect that x has the property F .

D7 seems to me to capture the essence of belief de re and to have the desired degree of ontological simplicity and analytic generality, while being neither too restrictive nor too permissive. The reader may determine for himself that this is so. ⁽¹¹⁾

Brown University

Arnold Cusmariu

⁽¹¹⁾ I am indebted to Roderick M. Chisholm, Ernest Sosa and James Van Cleve for helpful comments.