USE OF THESES

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ARE PROPOSITION-ENTITIES THE OBJECTS
OF THE PROPOSITIONAL ATTITUDES?

by

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Statement of Contribution

All work in this thesis is to the best of my knowledge original, except where otherwise explicitly stated.

W. Broadbent.

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In this thesis I examine the proposal that proposition-entities are the objects of the propositional attitudes in the sense that they are what we believe, doubt, desire, etc. As a corollary of this, I also examine the proposal that proposition-entities are the objects of such acts of speech as asserting or stating in the sense that they are what we assert or state.

So as to present the best side of these proposals, which I do not view favourably, I attempt to give an account of, and draw together, what I believe are the main arguments and assumptions that are endemic to them.

But there are a number of theories that dispute the validity of holding that what we believe, doubt, desire, assert, state, etc., are proposition-entities. Might not one of these theories prove to be more viable? I attempt to answer this question, at least in part, by critically discussing what I take to be the major theories of this kind.

First up, some theories that substitute other types of entities for propositions are looked at. These include theories that appeal to facts (e.g., Broad, and to a lesser degree, Anderson), multiple objects (e.g., Russell, Wookley, and Geach), sentences (e.g., Carnapians), and inscriptions (e.g. Scheffler). A theory by A.R. White which partly retains and partly rejects proposition-entities is also considered. I then assess some major theories that deny that proposition-entities or entities of any other type are objects of the attitudes. These theories include the
'believes that' analysis (Prior and Quine), the paratactic analysis (Davidson), some forms of behaviourism (e.g., Russell, Braithwaite, and Aver), adverbial analysis (e.g., Aune, Ziff, and Sellars), and a theory by Searle which eschews proposition-entities as objects of the attitudes, but retains them in an innocuous sense. A more radical approach is to deny that there are such things as propositional attitudes. Stephen Stitch drifts towards this view, and I examine his position. Finally, I evaluate some recent arguments of Perry and Fodor that are of relevance. All these theories, with the exception of those of Perry and Fodor, contain serious, particular flaws which I try to draw out. In some cases an attempt is also made to ascertain whether there is an underlying problem with, for example, the type of analysis or paraphrase used. I also draw attention to some problems that any theory of the propositional attitudes would have to face, such as providing an analysis or treatment of 'Paul believes something that Elmer does not', and eventually make some suggestions of my own in this regard. In the final Chapter I attempt to show by appealing to certain paraphrases that neither proposition-entities nor entities of any other type are objects of the attitudes or speech acts. I defend the type of paraphrase used, and explain why it does not succumb to certain objections that were previously raised.
Philosophers speak of propositions for a multiplicity of reasons. It has been held that propositions are the meanings of sentences, the bearers of truth values, and are required for entailment relations. It has also been held that propositions are the objects of what Russell (1919, p.309; 1940, p.21) called the "propositional attitudes", i.e., beliefs, doubts, desires, hopes, fears, suppositions, expectations, and so on. Some philosophers have even claimed that the best case for speaking of propositions is furnished by arguments designed to show that propositions are the objects of the attitudes. Whether this claim is justified or not, such arguments certainly present a formidable case. Sometimes it is maintained that propositions are the objects of intentional states. But since it is also held that intentional states are beliefs, doubts, desires, etc., the claim that propositions are the objects of these states does not seem to be appreciably different to the claim that propositions are the objects of the attitudes.

However, the expression 'objects of the propositional attitudes' is imprecise. Objects of the propositional attitudes may be (1) what we believe, doubt, desire, etc., or (2) what our beliefs, doubts, desires, etc., are about. For example, following a suggestion of Prior's (1971, p.3), we may say that an object of the thought that grass is green is what is thought, namely, that grass is green, or what the thought is about, i.e., grass. I think we should add, though, that the thought is not simply about grass. It is also about the colour of grass and, more loosely, vegetation.
The word 'about' gives us a certain leeway here. Further, Gilbert Harman (1973, p. 93) has suggested that to treat beliefs, doubts, desires, etc., as propositional attitudes is not to suppose that what we believe, doubt, desire, etc., are propositions. Rather it is to suppose that believing, doubting, desiring, etc., may be analyzed as relations of believing-true, doubting-true, desiring-true, etc., to propositions. For instance, on this view, to fear that Nixon will retire is not to fear the proposition that Nixon will retire but to fear-true the proposition. Precisely how a relation such as fearing-true is itself to be analyzed, if it is to be analyzed at all, Harman does not say. All the same, we are given a third sense in which it can be said that propositions are the objects of the attitudes; they are objects of the attitudes in that they are what we believe-true, doubt-true, and so forth. (Harman, incidentally, does not adopt this proposal.) Nevertheless, in asserting that propositions are the objects of the propositional attitudes philosophers are usually proposing that what we believe, doubt, desire, hope, fear, suppose, expect, and so on are propositions. Harman's claim that philosophers have opted for holding that propositions are, for example, what we believe-true rather than what we believe is simply wrong. W.E. Johnson (1921, Part I, Chapter I), for instance, proposed that assertions, beliefs, disbeliefs, doubts, assumptions, suppositions, proposals, postulations, and presumptions are

1. But for a critical account of the notion of believing-true cf. Chapters III and IV.
"attitudes of thought" directed towards propositions.¹
This in itself is not clear. But Johnson mentions asserting, entertaining, and doubting a proposition as examples of what he has in mind. A.J. Ayer (1940, Chapter II, Section 10) once held that what we know, doubt, suppose, imagine, wonder and believe are propositions, although he did not think it was particularly informative to say this. G.E. Moore (1953, Chapter III) maintained that we apprehend, believe, disbelieve, understand, and entertain propositions. More recently, Bradley and Swartz (1979, Chapter 2) have claimed that what is believed, stated, asserted, remarked, hypothesized and denied is a proposition. In fact, the thesis that what we say, believe is a proposition is a traditional one, but the notion of believing-true has only been promulgated since the Second World War, particularly under the auspices of Scheffler and Quine. In any case, it is more usual for philosophers to hold that what we believe-true are sentences or inscriptions rather than propositions (See Chapters III and IV).

Some philosophers have also maintained that propositions are the objects of speech acts, such as acts of asserting or stating. It is perhaps less common for philosophers to speak of propositions as the objects of speech acts than as the objects of the attitudes. Even so, there are certainly those, for example, Robert Stalnaker (1976, p.80), who are happy to support both conceptions. The claim

¹. It is interesting to note that Johnson explicitly states that assertion is an attitude. I find this difficult to accept. Asserting does not seem to be an attitude at all, though it may be said to involve one.
that propositions are the objects of acts of asserting or stating normally amounts to the thesis that what we assert or state are propositions. More usually, it is simply said that what we assert or state are propositions.

I have no objection to those who wish to say that propositions are the objects of the propositional attitudes or speech acts where this just means that we believe, doubt, desire, assert, state, etc., propositions. I do not inveigh against all talk in which the word 'proposition' appears. Such locutions as 'Stacy believes a proposition', 'Stacy asserts a proposition', 'Stacy believes the proposition that p', and 'Stacy asserts the proposition that p' are quite alright provided they can be paraphrased (which I believe they can) in a manner that does not commit us to the postulation of propositions as entities. Of course, there are other locutions that will need to be handled. Some philosophers would perhaps hold that (i) 'There is a proposition that Stacy believes' and (ii) 'p is a proposition that Stacy believes' have a greater claim to making reference to a proposition than 'Stacy believes a proposition' or 'Stacy believes the proposition that p', and thus will be more difficult to paraphrase. However, in Chapter VI I argue that a sentence of the form 'There is (are) a p' is not ontologically committed to P. Thus there would seem to be no reason to suppose that (i) is ontologically committed to some proposition believed by Stacy. Also, it might well be argued that (iii) 'Stacy believes some proposition' and (iv) 'Stacy believes the proposition that p' serve
respectively any useful purpose served by (i) and (ii). Consequently, the difficulty in eliminating purported reference to a proposition in (i) and (ii) by means of a suitable paraphrase is no more difficult in principle than eliminating such a purported reference in (iii) and (iv), however difficult that might be. In any case, in this thesis I argue that it is a mistake to hold that what we believe are proposition-entities. If (i) and (ii) really do affirm that Stacy believes a proposition-entity of some type then both sentences are simply false. On the other hand, if they both affirm that Stacy believes a proposition, but do not affirm that he believes a proposition-entity, then they must in principle be capable of being paraphrased in a manner that eliminates any seeming reference to a proposition.

Certainly there are a number of philosophers who maintain that what we believe or assert are propositions whilst denying that propositions are entities. D.M. Armstrong, for instance, takes this view in Belief, Truth and Knowledge (1973) and Universals and Scientific Realism (1978). I have no quarrel with someone like Armstrong. But I am opposed to the thesis that what we believe, doubt, desire, etc., are proposition-entities. In this sense I am opposed to the claim that proposition-entities are the objects of the propositional attitudes. As a corollary of this, I also reject the view that what we assert or state are proposition-entities.

We should rule out an objection that might be raised at this point. Many philosophers seem to treat 'object' and 'entity' as synonymous terms. So might it not be argued that a part of what 'propositions are the objects of the attitudes' means is that propositions are entities?
However, this is rather difficult to accept. If someone were to tell us that the object of his desire is happiness, it would seem a bit perverse to insist he had committed himself to the claim that happiness is an entity; he may simply mean that he desires happiness. Similarly, if someone affirms, for example, that propositions are the objects of belief, it may be that he simply means we believe propositions. But, as we have already seen, this need not be taken as an affirmation that propositions have entity status. I hold, then, that the thesis that propositions are the objects of the attitudes is distinct from the thesis that what we believe, doubt, desire, etc., are proposition-entities. The latter entails the former (on its usual construal) but the former does not entail the latter.

Still, might it not be held that to deny that what we believe, doubt, desire, assert, etc., are proposition-entities is not in itself entirely unambiguous? For instance might not what is believed be construed as either the content of a belief or what is believed of a subject? The content of Stacy's belief that the Queen of England is married is that the Queen of England is married whereas what he believes of the Queen of England is that she is married. But we cannot ascertain the content of a person's belief merely from the fact that he believes such-and-such of a subject. Suppose, for instance, that Stacy believes that the woman wearing the diamond tiara is married. If that woman and the Queen are one and the same, then there is a sense in which we may say that Stacy believes of the Queen that she is married. But we cannot ascertain from this the content of Stacy's belief. We cannot infer, for example, that he believes
that the Queen is married, since Stacy might not believe that
the woman wearing the diamond tiara is the Queen. He might
be of the opinion that she is, say, Phyllis Diller.

However, I do not think that this shows that the
expression 'what is believed' is ambiguous. After all, the
very fact that we can speak of a distinction between what is
believed and what is believed of a subject demonstrates
that 'what is believed' does not mean 'what is believed of
a subject'. All the same, in denying that what we believe
are proposition-entities, I certainly wish to also disclaim
any suggestion that what we believe of a subject is a
proposition-entity.

To be clear, to deny that what we believe, doubt,
desire, assert, etc., are proposition-entities is to deny
that we believe, doubt, desire, assert, etc., propositions
on any construal of propositions as entities. Certainly
various sorts of entities have been postulated by philosophers.
Perhaps the least controversial of these are physical entities,
i.e., things that exist in space and time, such as trees,
houses, and people. The treatment of propositions as physical
entities is often manifested in the claim that propositions
are literally to be found in the brain. More usually, I
believe, it is held that propositions are abstract entities -
things that do not exist in space and time. An example of an
abstract entity would be the Universal of Beauty. Those who
take this view of propositions frequently hold that,
although propositions do not exist in space and time, they
exist in some more rarefied form, or perhaps subsist. It
is interesting to note, though, that those who postulate
propositions as abstract entities need not hold that proposi-
ions either exist or subsist. Meinong took the view that some entities neither exist nor subsist, but lie 'outside of being'. Propositions can also be conceived as abstract entities along these lines. Some philosophers are reluctant to invoke abstract entities because such entities do not stand up to empirical or scientific verification. A third view treats propositions as mental entities. Irreducible mental entities exist in time but not space. However, some philosophers, particularly in North America and Australia, maintain that mental entities 'reduce' to physical entities. On this view, propositions construed as mental entities are contingently identical to propositions construed as physical entities. Those who support the thesis that propositions are entities hold that propositions are either physical, abstract or mental entities.

I shall now give a résumé of some of the major arguments in favour of the claim that what we believe, doubt, desire, etc., are proposition-entities. In the process, an attempt will also be made to show that philosophers who endorse this claim tend to share some of the basic assumptions of those who argue simply that what we believe, doubt, desire, etc., are propositions.

(a) According to a number of philosophers, mental phenomena such as love, hate, belief, doubt, etc., may be characterized in the following way. To love is to love someone or something, to hate is to hate someone or something, to believe is to believe something, to doubt is to doubt something, and so on. Now philosophers have not been inclined to argue that we love or hate propositions. However, in

the case of the propositional attitudes, it has frequently
been held that the something believed, doubted, desired, etc.,
is a proposition. C.D. Broad cites a proposal of this type
in *An Examination of McTaggart's Philosophy* (1933):

> We cannot believe or disbelieve without believing or disbelieving something, any
> more than we can have a sensation without sensing something. And in the case of
> judgement, the something in question is a proposition. (p.59)

Some philosophers prefer to say that the something
in question is a 'thought' or 'judgement'. But the express
disadvantage of this is that the terms 'thought' and
'judgement' are equivocal: they can stand for either an
act of thought (or judgement) or what is thought (or judged).

This does not show that propositions must be
treated as entities. But some philosophers have attempted
to bolster their position by arguing that it is not possible
to analyze sentences such as 'Stacy believes something'
in a manner that does not presuppose that there is some
entity Stacy believes. On this view, the believed entity
is referred to by the word 'something'. There are, I
think, a number of considerations that have induced many
philosophers to take this stand.

(i) Some philosophers still cling to what Strawson
(1950, p.191) has described as the ancient, but no longer
respectable, error of supposing that, whenever we use a
singular substantive, we are, or ought to be, using it to
refer to something. Persuaded by the fact that standard
grammar tells us that 'something' is a singular substantive,
they have inferred that the term must at least refer to
something in 'Stacy believes something'.

(ii) In the *Timaeus* (189) Plato attributes to
Socrates an argument in favour of the view that whenever we think something we must think something which is:

Soc. And does not he who thinks think some one thing? Theaet. Certainly.
Soc. And does not he who thinks some one thing, think something which is? Theaet. I agree.
Soc. Then he who thinks of that which is not thinks of nothing? Theaet. Clearly.
Soc. And he who thinks of nothing does not think at all? Theaet. Obviously.

This is quite similar to an argument cited by Russell in 'Meinong's Theory of Complexes and Assumptions' (1904):

If I believe that A is the father of B, I believe something: the subsistence of the something, if not directly obvious, seems to follow from the fact that, if it did not subsist, I should be believing nothing, and therefore not believing. (p.61)

More recently, Zeno Vendler (1974) has argued:

...if we say that George believes something (e.g. that Josef is dead), we can always add that Jim believes it too. Consequently, with believing...there must exist something for the person to believe. (p.406)

Vendler's argument has not been as influential as those mentioned by Russell and Plato, but all three arguments, though they would not be said to stem from the same school, reflect a certain tendency of thought that has appealed to many philosophers. And it is surely to be admitted that if it is the case that whenever we believe something we believe something which is, subsists, or exists, and the something in question may be said to be a proposition, then it becomes rather difficult to deny that believed propositions are entities. The same line of argument would seem to equally apply to doubts, desires, etc.

(iii) A number of philosophers, for example,
Quine (1953), argue that to assert 'There is an x' is to count x among one's ontology. Equally, on this view, to assert 'There is something that Stacy believes' is to count among one's ontology something that is believed by Stacy. That is, it is to assert that some entity is believed by Stacy. Now, it is not infrequently thought that we can infer that if someone believes, doubts, or desires something, then there is something that he believes, doubts, or desires. If this is correct then, unless Quine's criterion of ontological commitment is defective, it does seem to follow that whenever Stacy believes something, there is some entity that he believes. Quine can make as much out of such kindred locutions as 'Stacy doubts something' and 'Stacy desires something'.

(b) We frequently speak of the same person as believing the same thing at different times. For instance, if Stacy believes on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday that the Queen is married, then we may say that he believes the same thing at different times. In such a case, it is held, there is a distinction between Stacy's believing that the Queen is married - what Stacy does at different times - and the thing he believes which is the same on each occasion. Some philosophers describe this type of case by saying that the thing believed on each occasion is a proposition.

We often speak of different people as believing the same thing. For instance, if several people all believe that the Queen is married, we may say that they all believe the same thing. In such a case, it is said, there is a distinction

1. For some sceptical thoughts on this plus mention of an alternative account cf. Chapter VI. My treatment of such sentences is given in Chapter XIII.
between the various believings—each person's act or state of belief—and the thing they all believe. Some philosophers describe this type of occurrence by saying that the same proposition is believed by several people.

Sometimes we also speak of some people as believing and others as disbelieving some one thing. (It seems that there could be no real conflict of opinion unless this description were correct.) For example, if Stacy believes and Susan disbelieves that the Queen is married, we may say that Stacy believes and Susan disbelieves some one thing. Here, it is held, there is a distinction between Stacy's believing and Susan's disbelieving that the Queen is married and the thing which is believed and disbelieved. Certain philosophers describe this type of case by saying that one person believes and the other disbelieves the one proposition.

Some attempts have been made to go beyond this by arguing that we cannot give an account of any of these cases which does not presuppose that the subject(s) are related by a relation of believing (or disbelieving) to a numerically identical object. For instance, it is sometimes maintained that if two people believe the same thing then the proposition they both believe cannot be in the mind of either. It is then assumed that both individuals must be related by a relation of believing to a numerically identical object outside their minds.

(c) It is often pointed out that it is natural to draw a distinction between what is believed and the belief-state. Sometimes the distinction is referred to as being between what is believed and the act of belief, or what is believed and the believing of it. The same kind of dichotomy
applies in the case of the other propositional attitudes. For example, a distinction may be drawn between what is doubted and the state of doubt, what is desired and the state of desire, and so on. In the opinion of some philosophers, we may say that what is believed, doubted, desired, etc., is, in each case, a proposition.

A parallel distinction is sometimes drawn between what is asserted or stated and the act of asserting or stating, or what is asserted or stated and the asserting or stating of it. In the view of some philosophers, we may also say that what is asserted or stated is a proposition.

There are philosophers who prefer to hold that what is stated is a statement. But it has been objected by David Armstrong in *Belief, Truth and Knowledge* (1973, Pp 39-40) that the term 'proposition' seems better suited, since it brings out clearly that what is stated can be exactly the same as what is believed or entertained but never expressed verbally.

Some philosophers have gone beyond this to treat such expressions as 'What Stacy believes', 'What Stacy doubts', and 'What Stacy asserts' as definite descriptions on a par with 'The first man to climb Mt. Everest' and 'The tallest man in the world', and thereby, in their view, referring to entities. I think that some philosophers have felt that this claim gains a degree of support from the fact that 'what' functions as a pronoun in such expressions as 'What Stacy believes'. On the other side of things, it should be noted that, whether 'What Stacy believes' is a definite description or not, not all philosophers agree that definite descriptions must be referential.
(d) It is often held that what is true or false is true or false whether or not anyone believes or asserts anything. If it is true, for example, that Jansoon discovered Australia then it is true whether anyone believes or asserts it is not. And if it is false that Jansoon discovered Australia then it is false whether anyone believes or asserts it or not. Consequently, some philosophers contend, what is true or false are not acts of belief or assertion but propositions. It is then added that since what we believe or assert is either true or false, what we believe or assert is a proposition.

Sometimes it is also argued that what is true or false is eternally (or timelessly) true or false. So that if it is true that Jansoon discovered Australia then it eternally true; and if it is false that Jansoon discovered Australia then it is eternally false. However, it is held, acts of belief or assertion only have a temporal existence whereas the existence of propositions may be construed as eternal. It is then added that since what we believe or assert is eternally true or false, what we believe or assert is best viewed as being a proposition. This alleged eternal (or timeless) nature of propositions has led some philosophers to conclude that propositions must be abstract entities of some sort.

(e) It is often pointed out that many of our

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1. It should be noted that not all philosophers accept that what we believe or assert is always either true or false. For example, if what I believe is that the king of France is bald then, although what I believe is not true, it is philosophically controversial as to whether it is false.
beliefs seem to involve logical incompatibilities. For example, there is a logical incompatibility apparent when Stacy believes that the Queen is married and Susan believes that the Queen is not married. But, according to a number of philosophers, mental acts or states cannot be incompatible with one another. An argument of this type is mentioned by Ryle in his well known article, 'Are There Propositions?' (1930):

Nor can A and B [where A and B are incompatible] denote states of mind such as opining or surmising. For, though A is incompatible with B, there is no incompatibility in my opining A and my surmising B, or even between my believing A and my believing B. In other words, states of mind may very well co-exist though the things thought cannot both be true. (p.103)

Following this line of argument, some philosophers (though not Ryle) have held that logical incompatibilities are not between acts or states of belief but propositions. If this view is correct, it certainly follows that, since the logical incompatibilities involved between certain of our beliefs are between the things we believe, the things we believe are propositions. Thus, on this thesis, the logical incompatibility involved when Stacy believes that the Queen is married and Susan believes that the Queen is not married is between the proposition believed by Stacy, namely, the proposition that the Queen is married, and the proposition believed by Susan, namely, the proposition that the Queen is not married.

However, it is sometimes argued that logical incompatibilities hold whether we believe anything or not. On this supposition, the proposition that the Queen is married is incompatible with the proposition that the Queen is not
married independently of the existence of our beliefs. Yet if logical incompatibilities between propositions are independent of the existence of our beliefs then so are propositions. This consideration has led some philosophers to conclude that propositions must be entities.

It would appear that the same account can be given of the other propositional attitudes, since they may also involve logical incompatibilities. For example, when Stacy desires that the Queen be married and Susan desires that the Queen be not married there seems to be an incompatibility between the things desired.

(f) One thing we require is an analysis of oratio obliqua sentences, i.e., sentences of indirect discourse, such as 'Stacy asserted that the Queen is married'. This is equally true of the attributions of attitude, for example, 'Stacy believes that the Queen is married' and 'Stacy doubts that the Queen is married', which are not sentences of indirect discourse since they do not report discourse at all.

Frege went at least a part of the way towards advancing an analysis when he proposed that the that-clause in such sentences refers to a proposition. That Frege held this view is, I believe, generally accepted. Certainly it is the interpretation espoused by such people as Susan Haack in Philosophy of Logics (1978, p.125), and Donald Davidson and Gilbert Harman in The Logic of Grammar (1975, p.9).

But John Perry (1977) suggests an alternative reading. Says Perry:

Consider a report of a belief: "Copernicus believed that the planetary orbits are circles". On Frege's analysis, this is relational. "Believed that" stands for a relation, which is asserted
However, it is difficult to see how this interpretation could be correct. Frege's own words in 'On Sense and Reference' (1892) seem to rule it out:

The case of an abstract noun clause, introduced by 'that', includes the case of indirect quotation, in which we have seen the words to have their indirect reference coinciding with what is customarily their sense. In this case, then, the subordinate clause has for its reference a thought... This happens after 'say', 'hear', 'be of the opinion', 'be convinced', 'conclude' and similar words. (p.66)

It seems clear that Frege is saying here that the subordinate clause (the that-clause) refers to a thought. In fact, Frege (p.68) even goes on to propose that the subordinate clause may be regarded as a proper name of a thought in sentences of the kind in question.1

To be sure, the word translators use to translate Gedanke (Frege's word for what the that-clause refers to) is 'thought' rather than 'proposition'.2 But the niceties of translation aside, the term 'thought' is not a happy one. A thought may be either an act (or state) of thought or what one thinks, whereas Frege's (1977, p.30) thoughts are not created by the thinker and can be true without being grasped by anyone. Given that Frege (Ibid, p.27) also holds that thoughts are timeless, eternal and unvarying, the claim that thoughts are nothing more nor less than propositions looks

1. Frege allows, though, that sometimes the subordinate clause names a command or request.
2. See, for example, Frege (1918), P. Geach and M. Black (1970), and Frege (1977).
extremely plausible. In fact, philosophers have generally
taken Frege's thoughts to be identical to propositions. I
think it must be admitted that if they are not identical
then they certainly seem to be close relatives.

At any rate, Frege's proposal that the that-clause
is a naming or denoting expression in sentences such as
'Stacy believes that the Queen is married' has been highly
influential. A large number of philosophers, particularly
in the first half of this century, have adopted the proposal,
and usually in conjunction with the claim that the thing
named or denoted is a proposition. On the analysis proposed
by these philosophers, the word 'believes' in 'Stacy believes
that the Queen is married' is a two-place predicate which
expresses a relation of believing between Stacy and the
proposition named or denoted by 'that the Queen is married'.

For those who argue that what we believe, doubt,
desire, etc. are proposition-entities, this analysis is not
an option but a necessity. If we ask 'What does Stacy believe?',
we can always answer the question with a sentence of the form
'Stacy believes that the Queen is married'. This is because
'Stacy believes that the Queen is married' specifies what
Stacy purportedly believes. But if what Stacy believes is
a proposition-entity then 'Stacy believes that the Queen
is married' specifies what Stacy believes only if some part
of the sentence refers to a proposition. However, if some part
of 'Stacy believes that the Queen is married' names or
denotes a proposition believed by Stacy then we should be
able to substitute the coreferring expression 'the proposition
that the Queen is married' for that part of the sentence
to get a meaningful result. But it is only if the
naming or denoting expression is 'that the Queen is married'
that the substitution yields a meaningful sentence: 'Stacy
believes the proposition that the Queen is married'.
The only other expression which could plausibly be construed
as naming or denoting a proposition is 'the Queen is married'.
But if in 'Stacy believes that the Queen is married' we
substitute 'the proposition that the Queen is married' for
'the Queen is married' the resultant sentence 'Stacy believes
that the proposition that the Queen is married', is clearly
nonsensical. Moreover if the that-clause names or denotes a
proposition in 'Stacy believes that the Queen is married'
then 'believes' is a two-place predicate expressing a relation
between Stacy and the proposition named or denoted. The
relation expressed is one of believing. An analogy with
this is provided by the analysis of 'A loves B' whereby 'A'
and 'B' are names or denoting terms and 'loves' is a two-place
predicate which expresses a relation of loving between A and B.

This does not imply that every philosopher who
holds that 'that p' names or denotes a proposition in
sentences of the form 'A believes that p', 'A doubts that p',
'A desires that p', etc., does so on the basis that what we
believe, doubt, desire, etc., are proposition-entities.
Rather, a number of philosophers hold that what we believe,
doubt, desire, etc., are proposition-entities on the basis
that we cannot give a credible analysis of such sentences
as 'A believes that p', 'A doubts that p', 'A desires that p',
etc., unless we take 'that p' to be a name or denoting
expression of some object. This distinction is, I believe, an
important one and I shall refer to it again in this thesis.
The arguments listed above are only some of those
used by philosophers to support the thesis that what we believe, doubt, desire, etc., are proposition-entities. I think, though, that they are fairly central ones.

There is, however, an important distinction to be drawn when speaking of entities. We may differentiate between physical entities (which exist in space and time), such as tables, chairs, lakes, and pieces of chalk, and abstract entities (which do not exist in space and time), such as Platonic Forms. On a radical nominalist view, sentences are simply certain marks on paper, on blackboards, etc., certain patterns of sound, and the like. As such, sentences are construed as physical entities. Now a good number of philosophers, though perhaps not so many these days, have held that propositions are simply declarative (or indicative) sentences. Hence, could it not be argued that, although we believe proposition-entities, what we believe are not abstract entities but physical ones in the form of declarative sentences?

But there are some arguments against this. One argument of a not unfamiliar sort may be put as follows. If an Englishman and a Frenchman both believe that the Queen is married then we may say that they believe the same thing. But what sentence do they both believe? We cannot presume it is the English sentence 'The Queen is married, since the

1. Against this, it is sometimes argued that although sentence tokens exist in this form, sentence types are abstract entities. The treatment of sentence types has been a traditional difficulty for radical nominalism.

2. A.N. Prior, in The Doctrine of Propositions and Terms (1976, Chapter 1), lists a number of philosophers who identify propositions with declarative sentences.
Frenchman may not understand it; nor can we presume that it is the French sentence 'La Reine est mariée', since the Englishman may not understand it. Therefore, the argument goes, what they both believe is not a declarative sentence.

An argument of a similar sort but regarding assertion is as follows. Suppose an Englishman and a Frenchman both assert that the Queen is married. The Englishman utters 'The Queen is married' and the Frenchman utters 'La Reine est mariée'. Although they both assert the same thing, what they utter is different. Therefore, what they assert cannot be identical to either of the sentences they utter. But, then, what declarative sentence can we say they have both asserted?

Argument (d) may also be interpreted as an argument against the view that what we believe, doubt, desire, etc., are physical entities in the form of declarative sentences.

I certainly agree that we do not believe, doubt, desire, etc., declarative sentences, whether we call declarative sentences 'propositions' or not. A case to this effect is presented in Chapter III. However, an attempt will also be made to argue against the thesis that what we believe, doubt, desire, etc., are proposition-entities, no matter how proposition-entities are to be construed. In fact, the position is somewhat stronger than that for it is also denied that entities, whether in the form of propositions, mental images, possibilia, possible worlds, classes of possible worlds, states of affairs, or any other kind of exotica, are what we believe, doubt, desire, etc. at all.

There are various theories that disclaim the thesis that what we believe, doubt, desire, and so on,
are proposition-entities. So if opposition to proposition-entities is warranted, why not simply accept one of these theories? In this work I examine some of these theories - what I take to be the major ones - and in the process an attempt is made to demonstrate their unacceptability. A critical examination of these theories is important if we are to ever have an adequate theory of mind. An adequate theory of the mind will include an account of the will, emotion, inference, perception, bodily sensations, as well as the propositional attitudes. But any account of the propositional attitudes that invokes proposition-entities as what we believe, doubt, desire, and so on, is, I argue, bound to be unsatisfactory.