

not to dogs. I think this is on the right track, or almost on the right track, and with help and inspiration from Baier, I will try to locate and travel down the *better* track.

Ronald de Sousa, in a fascinating paper, "How to give a piece of your mind: or, the logic of belief and assent", argues that we should distinguish sharply between what he calls *belief* and *assent*.^{*} Belief, on his view, is a sort of lower, less intellectual phenomenon; it forms the dispositional foundation for the fancier phenomenon, assent, which is restricted to human beings. I think he is closer to the truth than Malcolm. Putting de Sousa's ideas together with Baier's seems to me to produce one of those mutual illuminations that gives off more than twice the light of the parts taken separately.

First we must recognize, as Baier says, that not every alteration in "cognitive state" is a change of mind. You were not born knowing that turtles can't fly, it almost certainly never *occurred* to you before this moment, but it is hardly news to you. You already knew it, but were not born knowing it, so there was some cognitive change in you in the interim; it was not a case of changing your mind, that's for sure. Many other cognitive alterations are harder to distinguish from our targets, changes of mind, but Baier suggests that it will help if we look at the clearest cases: where one changes one's mind or makes up one's mind about *what to do*—the practical cases. I think she is right to point to these cases, for more reasons than she gives. I want to get at this rather indirectly by looking at a different distinction between types of cognitive transition. Consider for a moment the transition between what tradition would call *de dicto* or *notional* desire and *de re* or *relational* desire. As Quine memorably puts it, when one *wants a sloop* in the former, notional sense, one's desire does not link one to any particular boat; what one wants is mere *relief from slooplessness*. This is to be contrasted with wanting *de re that sloop, Courageous*, the sloop tied up at the slip.

Now suppose I am in the former state, as in fact I often have been. Suppose I am *in the market* for a sloop. Now let us see what happens if I pass from that state into the presumed state of desire *de re*. I start out wanting something much more specific than mere relief from slooplessness, of course. I want relief from 32-to-36-foot-wooden-

^{*}Review of *Metaphysics*, XXV (1971): 52-79. There is a terminological problem in de Sousa's paper that I am going to pretend is not there. To evade exegetical problems I will claim that de Sousa says things he doesn't quite say—but might agree with. Forwarned that my account of his paper is distorted, everyone should read it and see for themselves. Everyone should read it anyway, since it is an important paper, containing many more insights than I discuss here.

How to Change Your Mind

Annette Baier claims* that we can discover something important about the mind, something overlooked or denied in recent accounts, by examining a particular sort of episode in the natural history of minds, the sort of episode ordinarily called a *change of mind*. We can, she says, see more clearly what does and does not count as a *mind* by seeing what does and does not count as a change of mind. We can understand thought by understanding second thoughts. I propose to extend her analysis of change of mind, to do some very impressionistic theory sketching and speculating, and in the process try to provide at least a partial explanation for some of her observations about the nature of change of mind.

Baier's contention is that there is an important distinction to be drawn between those of us who can change our minds and other intelligent creatures. The conviction that *some* such distinction is to be made is shared by several philosophers whose claims have long tempted me, without converting me until now. Norman Malcolm, in his APA Presidential Address of 1972, "Thoughtless Brutes", claimed that there was an oft-neglected distinction between *thinking that p* and *having the thought that p*; a dog may think a squirrel is up the tree, Malcolm allows, and this may explain its barking where it does, but it would be wrong, Malcolm thinks, to suppose the dog has the thought that the squirrel is up the tree. Thoughts *occur* to people, but

*This chapter was prepared as a reply to an early draft of Annette Baier's "Change of Mind", delivered at the Chapel Hill Colloquium, October 16, 1977. The references in it to Baier's essay do not prevent it from being understood by itself, or better yet it can be read as an introduction to Baier's subsequent version of "Change of Mind" (forthcoming).

diesel-auxilliary-spinnaker-rigged-slooplessness. And this is what I tell the boat broker. I give him a list of requirements. I want a sloop that is *F, G, H, I, J*, etc. My list is finite, but if I am wise I don't declare it to be unrevisably complete when I give it to him. For suppose he then says: "I know just the boat *you want*; you want the *Molly B*, here." The *Molly B* is a sloop that is *F, G, H, I, J*, etc. Of course the salesman is pushing when he says this. He must mean I *will* want the *Molly B* when I see it. Certainly it doesn't follow from the fit between my requirement and the boat that I am already in a state of relational desire for it. I may have neglected to mention or even reflect upon the color of the boat I want, and if the *Molly B* is painted purple, this may suffice to keep me out of the *de re* state. On seeing the purple *Molly B*, I add, like Tigger: "Well, *not being purple* was really one of my tacit requirements." The boat broker sets out again with a clearer sense of what I desire *de dicto*. But even if the yacht he then presents me with is exactly what I had in mind, even if when I examine it I can find no disqualifying features, there is still a motion of the mind that must happen, and this is just what the broker tries so resourcefully to evoke in me. He's got to get me to plump for it, to declare my love, to sign on the line. What he wants to stimulate in me though is not correctly viewed, I submit, as a change of desire or wanting. What he wants to stimulate in me is a *choosing*, a decision to opt for something. Once I have opted, in fact, I may get cold feet about the whole deal. Desire may drain out of me. Having made up my mind, not to desire the boat but to *buy* it, I may begin having second thoughts. But having second thoughts in this sense is not changing my mind. That happens only if I back out of the deal and renege on a contract. Now several features of this special case seem to me to bear importantly on the general issue of change of mind.

First, in such a case my decision to buy the boat or not is not logically tied to the grounds on which it is made in the way that, arguably, other cognitive states and events can be logically tied. That is, there may be a rule requiring me to attribute to you a disbelief that *not-p*, if I attribute to you a belief that *p*. But there is nothing incoherent or logically odd about the description of me as desiring *de dicto* a sloop that is *F, G, H, I, J*, and not desiring *de re*, the *Molly B*, which I even *believe* to be *F, G, H, I, J*. Moreover it is least not obvious that in such a state I always warrant criticism. It is not obvious that I am clearly irrational. My bullheadedness or caution may in fact be a highly useful and adaptive feature of my cognitive make-up. More important to our concerns, I think, is the fact that although opting for the boat or not is *my* decision, it is something *I do*, I don't know

in the end why I do it, what causes me to do it. I am not in a privileged position to tell someone else *exactly* what prevented me from opting if I refrain or what tipped the balance if I buy. In this matter, my decision is the occasion of the discovery I make about myself. It is in this domain that E. M. Forster's marvelous remark draws our attention to a truth. He once asked: "How can I tell what I think until I see what I say?"

The distinction between *de re* and *de dicto* propositional attitudes is a vexed one. I am in fact quite inclined to believe that nothing real or worth talking about deserves to be called either a *de re* belief or a *de re* desire. But that is a topic for another time. What interests me here is just that the case I've described of moving from *de dicto* desire to an opting, a choice, has certain features in common with other non-conative cases of making up one's mind. This decision is first of all an act, an exemplary case of doing something that has consequences for which one may be held responsible. Moreover, it bears the marks of freedom, such as they are. (I discuss these in Chapters 5 and 15.) Here, what is important is just that it is a choice point that terminates a process of deliberation or consideration that is not apparently algorithmic, but rather at best heuristic. At some point, we just stop deliberating. We take one last look at the pros and cons, and leap. As Baier says, the changes of belief that are cut and dried, the mere corrections having no taint of uncertainty, are not changes of mind.

Another important feature to note in our boat-buying example is that the result or product of this episode of choice is not the same sort of thing as the "raw material". Although my opting arises from and is ultimately explained by my desires, it is not a desire, but a choice, and the state it initiates is not a state of desire, but of *commitment to acquire* or something like that. This point sets the stage for de Sousa's claims, for the parallel remark to make regarding all cases of making up or changing one's mind is that changes of mind are a species of judgment, and while such judgments arise from beliefs and are ultimately to be explained by one's beliefs, such judgments themselves are *not* beliefs—when such judgments are called occurrent or episodic beliefs, this is a serious misnomer—but *acts*, and these acts initiate states that are also not states of belief, but of something rather like commitment, rather like ownership. I trust it sounds at least faintly paradoxical to claim that when I change my mind or make up my mind, the result is not a new belief at all, but this is just what I want to maintain, and so does de Sousa. He calls such judgments "assenting", but is then left with no good term for the products of assent, the states one enters into as a result of such judging. I suggest that we

would do quite well by ordinary usage if we called these states *opinions*, and hence sharply distinguished opinions from beliefs. Then we can immediately extend Malcolm's train of thought in this way: animals may have *beliefs* about this and that, but they don't have *opinions*. They don't have opinions because they don't *assent*. Making up your mind is coming to have an opinion, I am proposing, and changing one's mind is changing one's opinion. Here is what de Sousa says (roughly) about the relationship between belief and assent (or now: opinion). On some theories of belief, he notes, the belief that p is considered to admit of degree. One believes .9 that p and so believes .1 that *not-p*. Bayesian accounts have this feature, for instance. Other accounts of belief—he calls them classical accounts—treat belief as all or nothing. One believes flat out that p and hence disbelieves flat out that *not-p*. Now de Sousa's interesting suggestion is that there ought to be no quarrel to adjudicate here, that the intuitions that support the latter variety of theory are not to be dismissed or overridden by intuitions that support the former. We should simply view the latter intuitions as about a different category of mental state, the state of assent, i.e., opinion, not belief. So de Sousa proposes a two-level theory for human beings (and other persons if such there be). We human beings are believers, as are the beasts. But moreover (and here he is echoing Hume, as we learn from Baier) we harbor epistemic desires. We are collectors, he says, of true sentences. We have a hunger for such items, which we add to our collections by what he calls "*a bet on truth alone*, solely determined by epistemic desirabilities". He is careful to say that there is an analogy only, but a strong one, between betting and assenting. Now when a gambler bets, his wagers, if he is rational, are a function of the subjective probability of the outcome for him and the desirability of the payoff, or at least that's the Bayesian line. This Bayesian line is applied or exploited by de Sousa to explain (or at least predict statistically) the acts of assent we will make given our animal-level beliefs and desires. We are equipped first with animal-type belief and desire, which behave in Bayesian fashion, and which explain our proclivity to make these leaps of assent, to act, to bet on the truth of various sentences.

Now of course subjective probabilities and degrees of desirability are not in any sense introspectable features of our beliefs or desires. That's why we can't calculate, on the basis of introspected data, a Bayesian prediction about *what we will decide*. We must wait and see what we decide. Some observant Bayesian psychologist might attribute weighted beliefs and desires to us, and on this basis predict our decisions; we might endorse those predictions, but not from any

privileged position. (By the way, it seems to me that this fact about non-introspectable subjective probabilities has an important and damaging implication for epistemological doctrines that pretend to enunciate principles about *what one ought to believe* when one believes such and such with subjective probability k , as if they were giving us rules for the regulation of the understanding that we could actually attempt to follow.)

What is the role of language in the difference between belief and opinion? I'll suggest a few sketchy points. Belief, the lower brutish state, is best considered divorced from language. Robert Stalnaker suggests in "Propositions"¹ that for the purposes of cognitive psychology, the task of which is to explain the behavior of both beast and man in terms of beliefs and desires, the objects of belief should be viewed as propositions, because the identity of propositions can be fixed, not by their being tied closely or even indirectly to sentences of a particular language, but by reference to the selective function of the state of belief in determining behavior. We want a way of speaking of this selective function that abstracts from particular languages. Fortunately, a manner of speaking is available: we say that a particular belief is a function taking possible worlds into truth values.

First, the functional account, as a theory of rational action, already contains implicitly an intuitive notion of alternative possible courses of events. The picture of a rational agent deliberating is a picture of a man who considers various alternative possible futures, knowing that the one to become actual depends in part on his choice of action. The function of desire is simply to divide these alternative courses of events into the ones to be sought and the ones to be avoided, or in more sophisticated versions of the theory, to provide an ordering or measure of the alternative possibilities with respect to their desirability. The function of belief is simply to determine which are the relevant alternative possible situations, or in more sophisticated versions of the theory, to rank them with respect to their probability under various conditions of becoming actual.

If this is right, then the identity conditions for the objects for desire and belief are correctly determined by the possible-world account of propositions. That is, two sentences P and Q express the same proposition from the point of view of the possible-world theory if and only if a belief or desire that P necessarily functions exactly like a belief or desire that Q in the determination of any rational action. (p. 81).

Propositions thus viewed, Stalnaker observes, have no syntax, or structure, and this fits our intuitions about *belief* so long as we keep belief firmly distinguished from opinion. Philosophers are forever taking as examples of belief such things as:

Tom believes that Don Larson pitched the only perfect game in World Series history

an example par excellence of a *sentence collected as true* by Tom, not a belief in the basic sense at all.

Now why do we have opinions at all? And why do we have them while animals don't? Because we have language. I think the way to look at it is this: once you have a language, there are all these sentences lying around, and you have to do something with them. You have to put them in boxes labeled "True" and "False" for one thing. In Chapter 3 (p. 47) I discuss an example from Chekhov's *Three Sisters*. Tchebutykin is reading a newspaper and he mutters (*a propos* of nothing, apparently), "Balzac was married in Berditchev," and repeats it, saying he must make a note of it. Irina repeats it. Now did Tchebutykin believe it? Did Irina? One thing I know is that I have never forgotten the sentence. Without much conviction, I'd bet on its truth if the stakes were right, if I were on a quiz show for instance. Now my state with regard to this sentence is radically unlike my current state of perceptual belief, a state utterly unformulated into sentences or sentence-like things so far as common sense or introspection or casual analysis can tell. (That is, what the ultimate cognitive psychology might discover about the machinery of my information processing system is only very indirectly tied to this.)

Now then, what are the problems with the view that I have been sketching here, in my headlong rush to theory? Well, one might claim that de Sousa and I have got the whole matter completely backwards. I agree with de Sousa that the realm of opinion is where the classical, all-or-nothing notion of belief really belongs, but isn't it in fact our "intellectual" *opinions* that are *most* amenable to treatment in terms of degrees of confidence? I think this objection springs from an illusion. Remember my opting for the *Molly B*. My desire for this craft may subsequently wane following my decision to buy it. Similarly, my happiness with my own opinions may increase and diminish, but they are nevertheless the opinions I am *committed* to unless I change my mind. I may express or exhibit less confidence in them, while not relinquishing them. Most importantly, I may fail to act on them as I would were my conviction unflagging. It is my beliefs and desires that predict my behavior *directly*. My opinions can be relied on to predict

my behavior only to the degree, normally large, that my opinions and beliefs are in rational correspondence, i.e., roughly as Bayes would have them. It is just this feature of the distinction between opinion and belief that gives us, I think, the first steps of an acceptable account of those twin puzzles, self-deception and *akrasia* or weakness of will. Animals, I submit, whatever their cognitive and conative frailties, are immune to both self-deception and *akrasia*. Why? Because they have only beliefs, not opinions, and *part* of what is true when one exhibits either of these normal pathologies, self-deception or weakness of will (I think they may be just one affliction in the end), is that one *behaves* one way while *judging* another. One's behavior is consonant with one's beliefs "automatically", for that is how in the end we individuate beliefs and actions. It is only because we have among our acts *acts of deeming true*, *acts of assent*, that these afflictions have a domain in which to operate.

There seems to be another problem with this account. I believe that Don Larson pitched the only perfect game in World Series history. My account would require that since this is one of those sentences latched onto and deemed true, it should count as an *opinion*, and not a belief, yet it doesn't ring in the ear as ordinary usage to say that it is one of my opinions. It is not something, as Baier would point out, that I've *made up my mind about*. I think that's right. It isn't something I've made up my mind about. I think the way to handle such cases is dictated by considerations raised by de Sousa and also by Baier. Many sentences that are candidates for acquisition into my collection of truths are not at all dubious under the circumstances in which they first occur as candidates. This sentence about Don Larsen is surely one of them. No heuristic, informal deliberation or consideration or tea-leaf gazing is required as a prelude to their acceptance. But that is just to say that there are *sure bets*. The outcome is so expectable and the stakes are so favorable, that they hardly count as bets at all. Recall the professional card player who says: "Oh I bet, but I never gamble."

There are in any case many ways of adding to one's collection of opinions, just as there are many ways of acquiring paintings or overcoats.* One can inherit them, fall into possession of them without noticing, fail to discard them after deciding to discard them, take them on temporary loan and forget that this is what one has done. For instance, one's verbal indoctrination as a child—as an adult too—certainly has among its effects the inculcation of many ill-considered *dicta* one will be willing to parade as true though one has never exam-

*Amelie Rorty provided many of the ideas in this paragraph.

ined them. Habits of thought tied to well-turned phrases may persist long after one has denied the relevant assertions. One may suspend disbelief in a few enabling assumptions "for the sake of argument", and become so engrossed in the argument that one forgets one has done this. Years later one may still be suspending disbelief in those assumptions—for no reason at all, save reasons that have lapsed in the interim. Losing is not discarding, and forgetting is not changing one's mind, but it is a way of divesting oneself of an opinion. Why is Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus not a change of mind? Ordinary language gives us a hint. His mind changes all right, but *he* doesn't change it; it is changed for him. It is not an act of his.

Baier points to the role of *other critics* in changing one's mind, and claims it is important to recognize this role. Why are critics important? Because one changes one's own mind the way one changes somebody else's: by an actual colloquy or soliloquy of persuasion (see Chapter 14). Note that in such an enterprise there can be success, or failure, or an intermediate result between success and failure. Understanding these intermediate results is important to understanding self-deception and *akrasia*. Surely the following has happened to you—it has happened to me many times: somebody corners me and proceeds to present me with an argument of great persuasiveness, of *irresistible* logic, step by step by step. I can think of nothing to say against any of the steps. I get to the conclusion and can think of *no reasons* to deny the conclusion, *but I don't believe it!* This can be a social problem. It is worse than unsatisfying to say: "Sorry, I don't believe it, but I can't tell you why. I don't know." You might, depending on the circumstances, lie a little bit, nod and assent publicly while keeping your private disbelief to yourself, and it might not always be a craven or vicious thing to do. But I suggest that there is another thing that could happen. Genuine (de Sousaian) assent, *inner* assent if you like, can be wrung from you by such an argument so that the conclusion does become one of your *opinions—but you don't believe it*. This is what happens, I think, when you follow an argument whose conclusion is that all things considered cigarette smoking is harmful, acquiesce in the conclusion ("Yes indeed, that conclusion falls in the set of true sentences."), and then light up another cigarette. The *gap* that must be located one place or another is any account of weakness of will in between what one has been provoked or goaded or enticed into *judging* (quite sincerely) by such an act of persuasion (which might be self-persuasion), and one's deeper behavior-disposing states—one's beliefs. As many accounts would have it, weakness of will is exhibited when one acts intentionally against one's better *judgment*, a claim

that can be saved from incoherence if we distinguish sharply between such judgment and belief.

To return to an issue raised at the outset, is the ordinary distinction between changes of mind and other cognitive shifts an important distinction? Yes. It is very important, for only a theory of mind that makes change of mind and the resulting opinions a salient category can begin to account for self-deception and *akrasia*, two phenomena that are not just cognitive pathologies, but moral pathologies as well. If we are to explain how a person can be a moral agent, we must first grant that it is of the essence of personhood that a person can change his mind.