**De Se This and De Se That**

**Section 0: Introduction**

*De se attitudes* play a central role in traditional characterizations of propositional attitudes – attitudes such as belief and desire which agents take towards content.[[1]](#footnote-1) De se attitudes are often glossed as attitudes agents have about themselves when thinking about themselves in a first-person sort of way.[[2]](#footnote-2) They are thus understood in contrast to *de dicto attitudes*[[3]](#footnote-3) – roughly, attitudes agents have about states of affairs – and *de re attitudes*[[4]](#footnote-4) – roughly, attitudes agents have about objects.[[5]](#footnote-5) David Lewis famously claimed an adequate characterization of propositional attitudes required de se attitudes, since de re and de dicto attitudes would ultimately make false predictions concerning first-person attitudes, and many semanticists have since followed his lead.[[6]](#footnote-6) John Perry too forcefully argued the traditional, Frege-inspired, characterization of propositional attitudes could not accommodate first-person reports and attributions.[[7]](#footnote-7) Again, Perry’s observations were persuasive, and many interested in characterizing propositional attitudes attempted to remedy what was perceived as a lacuna in the tradition.[[8]](#footnote-8) It hardly needs to be said that a working assumption for many years has been that any adequate treatment of propositional attitudes must reckon with de se attitudes, and that this requires significant deviation from traditional semantic treatments.[[9]](#footnote-9) While few contemporary philosophers working in this area deny there is something special about first-person attitudes, recently some have questioned whether de se attitudes pose a *special* problem for traditional characterizations of propositional attitudes generally.[[10]](#footnote-10) A common complaint is that, despite the influence of popular motivations for thinking de se attitudes are special, such motivation falls short of establishing any such thing. At best, thought experiments involving messy shoppers, individuals lost in libraries, and gods atop mountains, show that opaque contexts – contexts in which substitution of co-referring terms fails, e.g. attitude contexts, quotation contexts, etc. – are problematic. De se attitudes, insofar as they pose a problem for traditional semantic accounts of propositional attitudes, seem simply a species of problems deriving from opaque contexts. If correct, this is a substantial conclusion, noting that some influential characterizations of attitudes, such as Lewis’s centered world account of propositional attitudes, are motivated at least in part to accommodate de se attitudes, a motivation it is often claimed traditional proposals cannot satisfy. But since traditional proposals do have potential solutions to problems arising from opaque contexts, if de se worries are ultimately a species of opaque worries, then it is plausible whatever solution traditional accounts offer for the latter will be applicable to the former. The upshot is that, say, Lewis’s centered worlds proposal loses some of its motivation, a notable cost in light of many others.[[11]](#footnote-11) Following Dilip Ninan, call objectors to the special status of de se attitudes *de se skeptics*. Call those advocating de se as a special, and especially motivating, sort of attitude, *de se exceptionalists*.

In what follows, we will examine a recent attempt by Ninan, a de se exceptionalist, to motivate de se attitudes as special. In **Section 1**, I briefly examine a paradigmatic scenario offered in favor of de se exceptionalism, Perry’s *Messy Shopper*, against the backdrop of a Frege-inspired traditional theory of propositions Perry targets with this case. Following recent criticism, I illustrate why Perry’s scenario does not, in fact, provide evidence for de se exceptionalism using what I call the Parallel Argument.[[12]](#footnote-12) In **Section 2**, I examine Ninan’s response[[13]](#footnote-13) on behalf of de se exceptionalism. Ninan claims a natural extension of the traditional theory of propositions involves explanations of motivation and action-guidance. Ninan argues the extended traditional theory of propositions is susceptible to a de se involving scenario concerning multiple individuals. Moreover, Ninan claims this scenario provides evidence for the specialness of de se attitudes, as the scenario is not susceptible to the Parallel Argument. Unfortunately, I go on to show, despite Ninan’s claims otherwise, his offered motivation for the specialness of de se attitudes *is* susceptible to the Parallel Argument, and obviously so. Having shown this, I conclude by examining what de se exceptionalists must provide to answer the skeptic’s challenge, noting it is a particularly high burden.

**Section 1: Elucidating the De Se**

In this section, I provide a neutral notion of “de se attitudes” over which skeptics and exceptionalists might dispute. I then examine Perry’s influential *Messy Shopper* case, and the traditional doctrine of propositions he targets with the scenario. While cases of this sort are often employed as motivating de se exceptionalism, I outline a response – the Parallel Argument – on behalf of the skeptic.

*Setting the Terms of the Dispute*

It is perhaps obvious that there is *something* distinctive about de se attitudes. More specifically, there is surely something distinctive about having a thought you might be disposed to express with the sentence “I am hungry” as opposed to having de re thoughts you might be disposed to express as “He is hungry” or de dicto thoughts such as “There is hunger.” Such observations may suggest de se skepticism *prima facie* conflicts with these no doubt common intuitions. But this is too quick. De se skeptics distinguish two theses concerning de se attitudes:

1. De se attitudes have distinctive features differentiating them from non-de se attitudes
2. De se attitudes raise a distinctive problem for theories of propositions attitudes[[14]](#footnote-14)

Skeptics remain agnostic over **(i)**, and so do not obviously conflict with intuitions elicited from the preceding data. It is **(ii)** that the skeptics dispute. More carefully, de se skeptics leave open whether de se attitudes play distinctive roles in motivation, or knowledge, but draw the line at whether de se attitudes generate distinctive problems for theories of propositional attitudes. Ultimately, the skeptic questions whether whatever distinctiveness de se attitudes are supposed to have raises special problems for theories of propositional attitudes.

Further clarification of the dispute between skeptics and exceptionalists is in order, given that characterizations of de se attitudes are commonly found within existing theories of propositional attitudes. But relying on theory-dependent characterizations of de se attitudes runs the risk of obscuring putative contributions made by de se attitudes. Problems may arise, for instance, in scenarios involving de se attitudes for a given theory, but this may have little to do with de se attitudes *per se*. We will attempt to avoid theory-dependent obscurity then by elucidating de se attitudes by example, supplemented by a defeasible heuristic for detection – “If an agent has a belief that he or she could express by uttering a sentence containing a first-person pronoun like “I”, “me”, or “my”, then that belief is probably a de se belief.”[[15]](#footnote-15) This characterization relies on natural language and dispositions, rather than any particular theory of propositional attitudes. Moreover, this characterization – since offering only a defeasible heuristic – provides flexibility in diagnosing whether de se attitude reports or attributions are accurate. Consequently, this characterization leaves open whether the target of our discussion is a non-empty, or empty, class.[[16]](#footnote-16)

We take the preceding to be a rough, but accurate enough, refinement of the dispute between exceptionalists and skeptics. The former claims de se attitudes, if there are such things, raise no special problems for existing accounts of propositional attitudes. The latter disagrees. Both camps accept, for our purposes, a neutral defeasible heuristic for identifying de se attitudes.

*The Doctrine of Propositions and its Discontents*

Commonsense intuitions that there is something distinctive about de se attitudes is not the only tool in the exceptionalist arsenal. A more forceful motivation may be found in Perry’s *Messy Shopper*:[[17]](#footnote-17)

**Messy Shopper:** An individual S notices a trail of milk on the floor in a shopping center. S says “Someone is making a mess.” S decides to find the messy shopper, and inform them they are making a mess. S follows the trail of milk in a circle then realizes S is making the mess. S then says “I’m making a mess,” and stops searching for the messy shopper.

Clearly, S learned new information between the first and second utterance; that much seems obvious. Perry’s target – what he calls the Doctrine of Propositions – however, seems unable to accommodate either the change in S’s information or behavior.[[18]](#footnote-18) The doctrine consists of the following theses:

1. A given attitude, such as belief or desire, is a two-place relation between an agent and content
2. The contents of attitudes are assigned so to avoid Frege Puzzles, e.g. if rational Lois had a belief she was disposed to express by uttering “Clark Kent is weak” while lacking a belief she was disposed to express by uttering “Superman is weak”, then Lois’s beliefs are assigned distinct contents
3. Contents of attitudes do not vary in truth-value across individuals or times

Given these commitments, observe during S’s first utterance, S is plausibly understood to stand in a binary relation to content which (we assume) reflects the putative content of the sentence “The messy shopper is making a mess.” Similarly, during the second utterance, S stands in a binary relation to content reflected by the sentence “I am making a mess.” Hence, **(1)** is applicable. To align with **(2)**, it seems we must assign distinct contents to S’s beliefs during the first and second utterances. That is, S’s belief during the first utterance must have content that is distinct from that of S’s belief during the second utterance. Hence, **(2)** is applicable. Finally, we assume here, as Perry did, that between utterances the content does not change in truth-value. Hence, **(3)** is applicable. Theses applied, the worry is patent. The traditional doctrine requires that S’s beliefs have distinct contents, yet it seems clear that the content of S’s first and second utterance is the same. More specifically, the content reflected in “The messy shopper is making a mess” and that reflected in “I am making a mess” is simply that *S* *is making a mess*. But according to the doctrine, this cannot be so. Hence, it seems the Doctrine of Propositions makes false predictions concerning plausible scenarios involving de se attitudes.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Does Perry’s case show there is something distinctive about de se attitudes such that they generate this puzzle? Along with scenarios offered by Lewis and others, a consensus formed among philosophers that the answer is “yes”. It is not hard to see why. The difference between what S believes during the first and second utterances plausibly involves a de se attitude. That is, S has a non-de se attitude during the first utterance, whereas during the second utterance S has a (relevant) de se attitude. This suggests not only a problem for the Doctrine of Propositions outlined earlier, but also suggests the problem has to do with de se attitudes.

*Parallel Argument*

But there are good reasons to remain skeptical scenarios such *Messy Shopper* show anything distinctive about de se attitudes.[[20]](#footnote-20) This point has been made forcefully by observing the following sorts of parallel cases:[[21]](#footnote-21)

**Messy Superman:** Lois Lane is pushing a cart down an aisle looking for Clark Kent to tell him that he was making a mess. Lois kept passing Superman, but was having trouble finding Clark. Finally, Lois realized Superman was Clark Kent.

Lois initially believed Clark Kent was making a mess, but did not then believe that Superman was making a mess. Later, Lois came to believe that Superman was making a mess. The change in Lois’s beliefs presumably led to a change in Lois’s behavior, namely, that she stopped looking for Clark. Now, note first that this scenario does appear to be a problem for the Doctrine of Propositions. Lois plausibly stands in binary belief relations to content(s) that do(es) not vary over time and context. Moreover, the content of Lois’s belief must be assigned so to avoid Frege Puzzles, so the content of Lois’s initial belief must be distinct from the content of her second. But it seems clear that what Lois has come to realize is that the respective contents of her initial and later beliefs are the same. Hence, the Doctrine of Propositions makes another false prediction concerning propositional attitudes. Granting this, note second that *Messy Superman* – unlike *Messy Shopper ­*– does *not* involve (relevant) de se attitudes. Moreover, the similarities between *Messy Shopper* and *Messy Superman* strongly suggest whatever trouble the latter raises for the Doctrine of Propositions is the culprit for the former as well. Indeed, it seems plausible problems associated with de se attitudes are a species of problems associated with opaque contexts generally, such as that exhibited in *Messy Superman*.

If the preceding observations are correct, then it seems whatever is distinctive about de se attitudes is insufficient to motivate significant adjustments – beyond whatever would be required to accommodate opaque contexts – to traditional theories of propositions. This is, in sum, the conclusion de se skeptics draw. Of course, finding one – albeit influential – case wanting does not undermine de se exceptionalism. Various scenarios have been offered by clever philosophers to motivate de se attitudes as requiring accommodation beyond the tradition. Rather than examine the many cases, I note that the *Messy Superman* variation of the *Messy Shopper* offered above is something of a recipe for undermining de se exceptionalism. Given a scenario which appears to motivate de se attitudes as posing a distinctive problem for a theory of propositional attitudes, skeptics may simply run the same scenario with a more general opaque context and note comparable problems arise. This strategy is adopted, it seems, successfully in Cappelen and Devers’s book length attack on exceptionalism. For perspicuity, the general argumentative strategy is, whenever presented with a scenario such as *Messy Shopper*, and an argument of the following sort:

1. Messy Shopper suggests there is a problem for the Doctrine of Propositions
2. The problem stems from de se attitudes
3. Hence, de se attitudes pose a special problem for the Doctrine of Propositions

The de se skeptic provides the following Parallel Argument:

1. Messy Shopper suggests there is a problem for the Doctrine of Propositions
2. The problem stems from opaque contexts
3. Hence, opaque contexts pose a special problem for the Doctrine of Propositions

Since it there are scenarios in which opaque contexts – absent de se attitudes - generate a problem for the Doctrine of Propositions, but whenever de se attitudes generate a problem so too would a simple transposition into an opaque context, the upshot of this response to the exceptionalist is that de se attitudes pose no special problem, and so do not deserve a special solution beyond whatever is needed to accommodate opaque contexts.

If the skeptic is correct, then theories of attitudes motivated by de se scenarios, such as centered world theories, are in fact unmotivated, at least as that motivation has been traditionally understood.[[22]](#footnote-22) This is a conclusion exceptionalists do not find palatable. We turn in the next section to a recent defense of de se exceptionalism offered by Ninan, who claims there are scenarios involving de se attitudes that are not susceptible to the Parallel Argument strategy invoked here.

**Section 2: De Se Attitudes Defended**

In this section, we examine Ninan’s defense of de se exceptionalism. Ninan targets a plausible extension of the Doctrine of Propositions – accommodating agreement and action explanation – he claims is susceptible to de se scenarios which are not themselves susceptible to the Parallel Argument strategy. If correct, Ninan’s results would suggest there is something distinctive about de se attitudes, insofar as they raise a problem for the expanded doctrine.

*Ninan on the Offensive: Expanding the Doctrine*

Ninan claims the Doctrine of Propositions introduced above is not entirely adequate. Plausibly, a theory of propositions should provide some explication of agreement between individuals, since one standard motivation for propositions as theoretical posits is that they are the items which individuals, say, believe in common when they agree. Lois and Jimmy Olson, if they each agree “The Daily Planet is in Metropolis”, presumably believe the same content, namely, that the Daily Planet is in Metropolis. To accommodate this, Ninan suggests adding the following to the Doctrine of Propositions:

1. Agreement is a binary relation between groups of individuals and a proposition, and group G stands in this relation to a proposition p iff all members of G believe p (similarly for agreement with respect to all members desiring p)

In addition, Ninan claims an adequate theory of propositions should provide a link between actions, beliefs, and desires agents have at some time, and what can be expected of other agents with comparable beliefs and desires. For example, if Lois is thirsty, believes there is bottled water in the refrigerator, and walks towards the kitchen in an effort to quench her thirst, if Jimmy is also thirsty and believes there is bottled water in the kitchen, it is reasonable to expect Jimmy to make his way to the kitchen as well. Of course, there are many reasons why Jimmy might not make his way to the kitchen. Still, it is reasonable that, *ceteris paribus*, a stroll to the kitchen is in Jimmy’s near future. To accommodate this desideratum, Ninan suggests adding the following to the Doctrine of Propositions:

1. If agent S performs action ϕ at time t1, and this is explained by S believing p1…pn at t1, and S desiring q1…qk at t1, and y believes p1…pn at t2 and y desires q1…qn at t2, then *ceteris paribus* y performs ϕ at t2

Putting this together, Ninan’s Expanded Doctrine of Propositions consists of theses **(1)**, **(2)**, and **(3)** from **Section 1**, combined with theses **(4)** and **(5)**.

Much like the traditional Doctrine of Propositions, the Expanded Doctrine of Propositions seems to run into trouble with de se attitudes. Ninan offers the following scenario to illustrate:[[23]](#footnote-23)

**Messy Picnic:** Lois and Jimmy are having a rather messy picnic in the woods near Metropolis when a bear, attracted by the mess, attacks Jimmy. Jimmy has mental states he may be disposed to express by uttering “If I curl up in a ball then I will not be mauled” and “I desire to not be mauled.” Lois also has mental states she might be disposed to express by uttering to Jimmy “If you curl up in a ball then you won’t be mauled” and “I desire that you not be mauled.” Jimmy curls up in a ball, and Lois runs to get help.

To see why this scenario is problematic for Ninan’s Expanded Doctrine of Propositions, note that while Jimmy’s beliefs and desires appear to explain his behavior, the proposition expressed in Jimmy’s context corresponding to the sentence “If I curl up in a ball, then I will not be mauled” is identical to the proposition in Lois’s context corresponding to the sentence “If you curl up in a ball then you will not be mauled.” Similarly, the proposition in Jimmy’s context corresponding to the sentence “I desire not to be mauled” is identical to the proposition in Lois’s context corresponding to the sentence “You will not be mauled.” But according to the Expanded Doctrine of Propositions, since Jimmy and Lois believe and desire alike, they will *ceteris paribus* behave alike. Yet, Jimmy curls into a ball while Lois goes to get help.[[24]](#footnote-24)

More generally, Ninan claims that if two agents agree on how the world is and how they want things to be **(4)**, they will have the same beliefs and desires. Moreover, if they have the same beliefs and desires, then they will behave similarly **(5)**. Scenarios like *Messy Picnic*, however, suggest these plausible extensions to the traditional Doctrine of Propositions lead to false predictions, since it is clearly not the case that agents sharing beliefs, desires, and content, even *ceteris paribus* behave similarly. In other words, the Expanded Doctrine of Propositions is susceptible to scenarios involving de se attitudes.

Of course, we have learned from the previous section that posing problematic scenarios involving de se attitudes alone is insufficient to undermine de se skepticism. For Ninan’s defense of de se exceptionalism to be successful, it must be shown that scenarios relevantly similar to *Messy Picnic* cannot be constructed by invoking the Parallel Argument strategy. Despite Ninan’s careful analysis of the dispute between de se skeptics and exceptionalists, and apparent sensitivity to the dialectic, it is perhaps odd then that he simply claims, when considering just this point, “it is not at all obvious how one might construct a non-indexical case that would pose a similar challenge” to the conjunction of **(4)** and **(5)**, and hence, to the Expanded Doctrine of Propositions.[[25]](#footnote-25) To be sure, if Ninan’s instinct is correct, then it seems de se exceptionalism is supported by scenarios like *Messy Picnic*, as they would suggest there is something distinctive about de se attitudes that requires revision to at least the Expanded Doctrine of Propositions. Unfortunately for the exceptionalist, however, vindication of their position has been greatly exaggerated. In the following section, I will provide - *pace* Ninan’s inability to imagine - an invocation of the Parallel Argument strategy applied to *Messy Picnic*.

**Section 3: De Se Attitudes Offended**

In our final section, we critically examine Ninan’s argument in defense of de se exceptionalism, providing a straightforward application of the Parallel Argument strategy to undermine his defense. If this application is correct, the de se exceptionalist seems back on the defensive against the persuasive attacks of the skeptic. These observations clarify just how much exceptionalists must show to undermine de se skeptics.[[26]](#footnote-26)

*Parallel Argument Revisited*

Applying the Parallel Argument to Ninan’s *Messy* Picnic case is nearly mechanical; we need only introduce actions into the content agents in the scenario believe and desire. More specifically, consider the following case:

**Messy Home:** While deciding whether to clean her home or go to the office, Lois has a belief the content of which she may be disposed to express with the sentence “If I go to the office then I’ll see Clark Kent.” Moreover, Lois has the desire to see Superman, which she may express with “I want to see Superman.” Now, Lois does not, with this belief and desire pair, go to the office. However, later, say after she has been to the store and realized Superman is Clark Kent, Lois utters “If I go to the office then I will see Superman” and “I want to see Superman.” Consequently, Lois goes to the office.

Observe, much like *Messy Picnic*, *Messy Home* generates a problem for the Expanded Doctrine of Propositions. While Lois is at home deciding whether to go to the office or clean, she has a belief-desire pair that, given **(4)** and **(5)**, does not predict she will go to the office. On the other hand, after Lois visits the store and realizes Clark Kent is Superman, she has a belief-desire pair *that has the same content* as the pair she had, respectively, earlier. If that is the case, then Lois’s later belief and desire should not provide any grounds for predicting she will go to the office. Yet, she does nonetheless. In other words, the Expanded Doctrine of Propositions makes false predictions concerning Lois’s behavior. Importantly, however, the problem raised by *Messy Home* does not obviously trade on (relevant) de se attitudes. The problem, it seems, stems from opaque contexts and Lois’s ignorance concerning the identity of Superman, at least at an earlier time.

*Objection and Reply*

We were sparse with the details here, but we have seen the Parallel Argument strategy before. The upshot of this case is the same as well. If the preceding application of this strategy is on target, then Ninan has *not* provided motivation for de se exceptionalism. Rather, he has merely provided, as he quips concerning better known scenarios he thinks are undermined by the Parallel Argument strategy, “more grist for the skeptic’s mill.”[[27]](#footnote-27) But perhaps this is too quick. Ninan claims if non-de se pairs of beliefs and desires have the same contents, then *ceteris paribus* they will cause the same behavior. For example, if Jimmy has a belief he might express with the sentence “Clark Kent is at the Daily Planet” then plausibly for Lois to have a belief with the same content, it must be such that Lois may be disposed to express this content with the same sentence type. If so, Ninan claims, then Lois and Jimmy *ceteris paribus* behave similarly. Transposing this to *Messy Office*, Ninan might respond that what Lois was disposed to utter in the first case by “If I go to the office then I’ll see Clark Kent” does not express the same content as that she was disposed to utter in the second with the sentence “If I go to the office then I’ll see Superman.” For if it did, then Lois would behave similarly in each case. Since she does not, then it does not.

One worry with this line of response is that it, if successful, it simply shows too much. More specifically, if Ninan’s response to *Messy Office* is correct, then it should be applicable to *Messy Picnic* also. Hence, the utterance “If I curl into a ball then I won’t be mauled by the bear” expressed in Jimmy’s context expresses a proposition different from what Lois’s utterance of “If you curl into a ball then you will not be mauled” expresses in her context. But then there is no obvious worry for the Expanded Doctrine of Propositions. Jimmy and Lois have different belief and desire content, and so there is no constraint that Lois’s behavior need parallel Jimmy’s. Similarly, in *Messy Office* Lois has different beliefs and desires between the first and second contexts, and so there is no constraint that her behavior in the second parallel her behavior in the first. We do not need to arbitrate whether this is a feasible characterization of attitude content. For our purposes it suffices to observe that such a move provides no support for the de se exceptionalist. *Messy Picnic* was supposed to generate a problem for the Expanded Doctrine of Propositions that illustrated why de se attitudes are special, and require special accommodations. But if the case does not even pose a problem, then *a fortiori* it does not pose a special problem.

Altogether, de se exceptionalism as defended by Ninan seems on the horns of a dilemma. The Expanded Doctrine of Propositions entails that for two agents to believe and desire the same content they might express by uttering the same respective sentences, they must behave similarly. If *Messy Picnic* is to be a problem case for the doctrine - putatively illustrating de se attitudes as the culprit – then Lois and Jimmy must believe and desire the same content in their respective contexts. Similarly, if *Messy Office* is to be a problem case for the doctrine, then Lois must believe and desire the same content prior to and after her visit to the grocery store where she learns Clark is Superman. But if this *is* a problem case for the doctrine, then since it is an instance of the Parallel Argument strategy, it seems Ninan’s *Messy Picnic* case shows nothing special about de se attitudes beyond that opaque contexts generate problems for theories of propositional attitudes generally. On the other hand, if *Messy Office* is *not* a problem for the doctrine, then it hard to see why *Messy Picnic* is supposed *to be* a problem for the doctrine. That is, claiming Lois believes and desires distinct content prior to and after her visit to the store seems, if provided as an explanation, just as applicable to Jimmy and Lois while Jimmy is being attacked by a bear. Ultimately, these cases seem to stand or fall together as putative problems to the Expanded Doctrine of Propositions. In either case, whether they both stand or both fall, it seems nothing distinctive has been shown concerning de se attitudes.

**Conclusion**

We have outlined a contemporary dispute between de se skeptics and de se exceptionalists, motivating the former skepticism, and warding it against a recent response. This is, of course, not to conclude that de se skepticism is correct. It is, however, to put the onus squarely on de se exceptionalists to provide reasons to think de se attitudes pose a distinctive problem for standard accounts of propositional attitudes. At present, these results suggest a third, safer but less interesting, alternative which we adopt here: *de se agnosticism*.

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1. I use “proposition” and “content” interchangeably. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For example, Lois Lane might believe that she has hair, or is a certain height, or works at the Daily Planet (Ninan, 2012; 2016), (Lewis, 1979; 1986). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For example, Lois might believe Metropolis is a dangerous city, or that some acidic compounds decompose steel, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For example, Lois may believe that Clark Kent is weak, and that Lex Luthor is evil. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Often other than themselves, but see (Ninan, 2012) who defends de se as a species of de re attitudes. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. (Lewis, 1979; 1986), (Cresswell & Stechow, 1982), (Ninan, 2012; 2016), among others. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. (Perry, 1979). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. (Castaneda, 1966; 1967; 1968) was also a notable influence on the rise of de se attitudes, as were many others. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See (Braun, 2015) for a list and discussion of various proposed answers to the problem of essential indexicals which often aligns with the problem of de se attitudes. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See (Cappelen & Devers, 2013), (Magidor, 2014) for recent critics. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See (Magidor, 2014), (Berto, 2014), (Ninan, 2012) for standard problems concerning centered worlds. See (Liao, 2012) and (Holton, 2015) for recent novel concerns. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Which I take as the central argument of (Cappelen & Devers, 2013) in their extended attack on de se exceptionalism. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. (Ninan, 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. (Magidor, 2014, pg. 1); (Ninan, 2016, pg. 2). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. And in this we follow (Ninan, 2016, pg. 5) closely. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. (Ninan, 2016, pg. 6, fn. 10) worries this characterization suggests de se attitudes makes them language-dependent, but suggests this characterization is compatible with various theories about what underlies justified attributions of these attitudes, e.g. de se attitudes being grounded in a certain functional role. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Though it is contentious whether Perry intended to defend de se exceptionalism, or rather, was noting de se attitude examples of opaqueness. See (Cappelen & Devers, 2013, pg. 34-35) for discussion. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. (Perry, 1979, pgs. 36-37). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. As we have neutrally characterized them. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Similar remarks apply to Lewis’s *Two Gods*, Carpintero’s *Lingens in the Library*, and a host of other scenarios. Even de se exceptionalists such as Ninan agree these cases do not show there is anything distinctive about de se attitudes, largely for the reasons outlined in this section. Worth noting is Lewis’s *Mad Heimson* case, which does seem to show there is something distinctive about de se attitudes in the relevant sense. However, this case rests on a view of narrow content which de se skeptics are likely to reject (Ninan, 2016, pgs. 13-15; Cappelen & Devers, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. See (Cappelen & Devers, 2013, pg. 33), (Magidor, 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Of course, there may be other reasons to continue using them. For example, centered world theories are influential among linguists. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. The structure of the scenario is from (Perry, 1977. pg. 22). I have made slight adjustments to the characters involved. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Moreover, both Jimmy and Lois stand in binary relations to respective contents **(1)** which do not vary in truth value across contexts **(2)**, which are assigned content so as to avoid Frege Puzzles **(3)**, and which they agree on **(4)**. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. (Ninan, 2015, pgs. 22-23). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. I note in passing Ninan’s characterization of agreement is borrowed from (Cappelen and Hawthorne, 2009, pg. 60), who distinguish two senses of “agree”, one state-like and the other interactive. Ninan claims the former for **(4)**, and so by agreement Ninan does not require individuals in a group interact or deliberate in any way. Rather, a group G consists of members that agree just in case all members believe the same thing(s). The strength of Ninan’s characterization is worth noting, as it is bi-conditional where Cappelen and Hawthorne only claim it a necessary condition on every individual in G believing p that G believes p. Though he accepts the sufficient condition, Ninan does not defend this. Moreover, this is the direction needed for his argument in the preceding section to work. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. (Ninan, 2016, pg. 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)