CONCLUSION

It is now time to conclude the whole work. We have seen that different theories regarding the nature of belief are presented in chapter 1, but none of them gives the full picture. Arguments have been given and it seems better to agree with Ginsberg when he interprets belief to be a theoretical construct. So it is the ascriptive account of belief-sentences that gets more importance than the descriptive one.

The merit of this account lies also in the fact that it gives a very prudent answer to the question: What is the basis of belief-ascription? In the Introduction, it is said that belief guides our actions. Arguments are available in favour of the view that language is the primary and dependable expression of belief, but it remains a fact that non-linguistic behaviour may replace linguistic expression. In fact, there
may be psychological reasons behind the idea that linguistic capacity is needed for having belief, but there is no logical link, and non-verbal behaviour seems to be the better evidence both for human beliefs and animal beliefs.¹

Now, there may not be only one action as the evidence of a particular belief. A particular belief may lead to actions of different types. For example, believing that a particular cup of tea is poisonous immediately results in the refusal of drinking it, but this negative attitude is not itself an action. This belief may lead the person to make a dog drinking it, or throw the cup away, etc. In another example, the host of a party who believes that there are more women than men, will arrange more chairs in the space allotted for women (if he makes different sitting arrangement for men and women), he will put more glasses for soft drinks than for strong ones (if soft-drinks are supplied to women) and so on and so forth. All these actions are expressions of his belief that women will outnumber men in the party. This view is very much a plausible one, and when there is a conflict between avowal and behaviour of a man, the latter gets a superiority over the former.

Thus far the ascriptive account is right. But this view, interesting and plausible though, cannot be accepted wholly.

¹ "...we constantly attribute beliefs to beings such as animals and very small children who lack any capacity to speak." D.M. Armstrong, Belief, Truth and Knowledge, p. 25.
Even if actions are treated as 'only' evidences for ascription of beliefs, there is still, a vagueness, where doubt arises whether A believes that p or not-p. There is hesitation and it is difficult to ascribe one belief (viz. p) rather than another (viz. ~p) to a man. According to some thinkers, this problem of recognition of a belief to be simpler than the problem of an analysis of believing. But still it is more reasonable to comment that, be it either avowal or behaviour of any sort, it is better to tackle this problem of evidence of belief by means of inductive generalisation and thereby make a provisional estimate which is liable to further correction.

Beside this point, it can be shown that the descriptive analysis of belief-sentence cannot be so easily eclipsed by the ascriptive analysis. The cases of self-contradictory beliefs are important factors in this context. It is the choice between the acceptance or rejection of the possibility of self-contradictory beliefs that will throw some light on the issue. We have seen that descriptive account accepts the possibility of self-contradictory beliefs because of the reason mentioned in the Introduction, but it is very hard to accommodate such beliefs in ascriptive analysis. The requirement of a theory is logical consistency. There cannot be any self-contradictory sentence within a well-built logical theory. Arthur Pap also rejects the possibility of explicit self-contradiction, though he discusses the point in connection with a common view that propositions are expressions of sentences.
Proposition is sometimes non-semantically defined as the object of propositional attitude. In this sense, a proposition is what is believed, disbelieved, doubted. On this analysis, Pap shows, some declarative sentences express no propositions at all. For this Pap accepts two premises:

1. It is logically impossible to believe 'explicit' self-contradiction.
2. Significant belief-sentences always express contingent propositions and that when a sentence expresses a proposition, only then the corresponding belief-sentence 'X believes that p' expresses a proposition.

Regarding the first premise, Pap says that this impossibility is not just psychological, it is logical too. A self-contradiction may be a belief-sentence also. There is a distinction between implicit and explicit self-contradiction. The implicit self-contradiction is that from which an explicit self-contradiction is deducible. For example, the sentence "a believes at t that p and not-p" is self-contradictory, though the self-contradictoriness is not explicitly stated. Taking Bap as "a believes at t that p", we can show the explicit self-contradictoriness of the sentence in the following way:

1. Ba (p and not-p) ⊃ (Bap and Ba~p) assump.
2. Ba~p ⊃ ~Bap assump.
3. Ba(p and not-p) assump.
4. Bap and Ba~p 1,3, M.P.
5. Ba~p and Bap 4, Com.
8. ~Bap 2,6, M.P.
9. Bap and ~Bap 7,8, Conj.

The first assumption is the expression of a trivial entailment relation. The second assumption need not be supported by a psychological justification. According to Pap, the consequent is the partial meaning of the antecedent. So the consequent is 'analytically deduced' from the antecedent. Thus the third assumption Ba(p and not-p) can be shown to be an explicit self-contradiction.

The second premise says that if a sentence 'p' expresses a proposition, so also the corresponding belief-sentence 'X believes that p'. If 'p' stands for 'p and not-p', then the belief-sentence is self-contradictory, it does not express a contingent proposition and so 'p' is devoid of propositional significance. Now a well-known principle is that when 'p' expresses no proposition, so also its negation 'not-p'. It implies that the explicit tautology 'if p, then p' cannot represent a propositional form.
Pap refers to one complicated formula in propositional variable, viz., \( (F) \left[ p \supset (\neg q \supset -p) \supset (\neg q \supset r) \right] \). The difficulty is that, though this formula is logically equivalent to the explicit tautology, 'if \( p \) then \( p' \), still, unlike that tautology, it expresses a proposition. Pap however considers this difficulty to be spurious one, because it arises only in the context of semantic meaning of 'proposition'. But on non-semantic definition, there are logically equivalent propositions which are at the same time distinct from each other. Here the difficulty disappears.

Another difficulty is anticipated. The formula \( F \) is logically equivalent to a tautology, so its denial entails a contradiction. Now, it means that it is possible to believe the formula but not its denial, since it is logically impossible to believe a contradiction (a contradiction is entailed by the denial of the formula). Pap says that in a situation where \( p \) entails \( q \), it is not necessary that if \( X \) believes \( p \), then \( X \) believes \( q \). The required assumption is that the entailment-relation itself must be believed by \( X \). The point is that \( X \) may believe \( p \) without knowing all that \( p \) entails, and this happens in the case of the denial of the formula. One can believe the said denial without knowing that a contradiction is entailed by that denial. The consequence is that "it is possible to believe propositions which, upon analysis, turn out to entail contradiction."³

³ Pap, op. cit., p. 176.
We may return to our discussion with the comment that Pap rejects the possibility of belief in explicit self-contradiction. But is this rejection tenable on empirical ground? The answer perhaps cannot be sought in the positive way. We can at most say that when we believe both $p$ and $\neg p$, one of the beliefs must be in the unconscious level of mind due to forgetfulness.

It is better to pose the problem in two specific questions:

1. What is the evidence of self-contradictory belief?
2. Is there any unconscious belief?

According to ascriptive analysis, the answer to the first question is negative. The argument is this: if there were really such a belief, viz., the belief that $p$ and $\neg p$, then both $p$ and $\neg p$ must influence the action of the believer. As they lead to opposite actions, there would be total postponement of any action altogether. As belief is studied as a way of explaining a man's behaviour, so in the absence of any behaviour no belief can be ascribed to that man in this context.

Counter-example to this analysis can be well found when belief that $p$ and belief that $\neg p$ influence the actions of a person on different occasions. There may be a case of a lady. When she is in the kitchen, she prepares some food in anticipation that some guests will come in the afternoon, and when she is in the drawing-room, she makes a programme with her friend over telephone to go to outdoor shopping on that very afternoon. Thus empirical observations show that
possibility of self-contradictory belief is evident both in verbal and non-verbal behaviour of a man.

A compromise between the empirical observation and the requirement of ascriptive analysis is found in the writing of Prof. Hintikka. He does not deny the possibility of self-contradictory beliefs. But with the help of the rule A - PXX together with certain consistency rules, he shows that belief in self-contradiction is indefensible. His argument has been elaborated in chapter 1 of this work.

According to Hintikka, an indefensible sentence is never a product of a conscious mind. It is due to failure of the person making or believing the sentence and this failure is caused by his ignorance of the far-reaching consequences of what he knows. There are however some disadvantages of this theory.

First of all, this theory is very restricted in nature. When he says that indefensibility of a sentence is not due to the conscious or active mind, he never allows unconscious level of mind to explain the said indefensibility. So this theory does not cover the cases of self-contradictory belief which are due to forgetfulness. Hintikka replaces forgetfulness by failure to maintain rationality.

Secondly, Hintikka points out that belief in self-contradictory propositions disappears when the person is made aware of the consequences of what he knows either by others
or by himself. But the real picture is otherwise. Even after such awareness or correction, belief may not be erased from the mind if there is strong emotional involvement. It re-appears when we are careless. So the problem of self-contradictory belief cannot be so easily solved.

In the third place, Hintikka explains indefensibility as lack of rationality. But if this criterion is applied uniformly to all persons irrespective of their different brain-capacities and different mental attitudes, then this concept of rationality demands a restricted omniscience which is surely a high demand.

The upshot of this discussion is that Hintikka's treatment of self-contradictory beliefs cannot be 'totally' accepted. The case of forgetfulness which is ignored in Hintikka's philosophy gets considerable attention in Freudian analysis. It is however difficult to agree with Freud when he says that forgetfulness is always deliberate. It is really doubtful whether belief in self-contradiction is always deliberate.

We have so far got a positive answer to the question whether we have self-contradictory beliefs. One thing is clear from Hintikka's analysis that the problem of self-contradictory beliefs is very closely connected with that of rationality of belief. It is better to accept Hintikka's treatment of self-contradictory belief without accepting his view of rationality of belief. I prefer Stuart Hampshire's
reflection on this issue. He says that human beings possess various beliefs which are apparently self-contradictory. So there is no question of irrational belief and there should be no rigid criterion of rationality. The reason is, a man may have a change of opinion that may influence and alter any of his prior beliefs. But it is also true at the same time that the requirement of rationality is universal. A compromise can be made by saying that we can provide particular reason for a particular belief. But there cannot be reason for belief in general, because all of us entertain a system of interdependent beliefs and it is difficult to remember the whole system at a time. So the degree of rationality of belief is different in different individual's practical thinking.

The credit of Hintikka's theory is that it introduces the concept of model set and model system in explaining the belief-situation. Actually the question is not that of having a particular belief. The fact is, we do not have a single belief, we have a mass of beliefs, some are rational, some are articulated, some other are amorphous (not clearly formulated). All these beliefs do not even form a system. But even though every individual has a mass of beliefs, his beliefs do not cover everything in the Universe. 4 So it is possible to

4. In the Introduction of this paper, I have made a similar comment in the context of comparing beliefs with maps. The said comparison has a short-fall, i.e., there are gaps in our belief-system. The reason is, a man does not believe something about everything.
retain belief-sentences entertained by a man and at the same time to change other sentences. Thus another possible world can be conceived that consists of states-of-affairs that make a person's belief-sentences true, but make other sentences false which are true in the former world. To put the whole thing technically, we have to take recourse to Hintikka's rule (A.PKK). This has been elaborated in Chapter 6. He introduces the notion of model sets and model system which will not be repeated here. The upshot of the elaboration is that there are different model sets that constitute a model system. That system retains some states-of-affairs unchanged by virtue of which belief-sentences of a man are retained, while other states-of-affairs undergo changes.

I conclude my discussion by saying that it is the ascriptive account that seems to explain belief in a better way than the descriptive one. But it has been shown that not all the details of ascriptive account can be accepted. The possibility of belief in self-contradiction should be accepted along with the ascriptive account. In this respect, Prof. Ginsberg's theory seems to be philosophically better than Prof. Hintikka's theory of belief. It is only then that a better analysis of belief can be sought.