

# REASONS AND THAT-CLAUSES

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## INTRODUCTION

- (1) I'm going to start by telling you about a debate over **the ontology of reasons**, and what **broader epistemic import** it threatens to have.
- (2) Then we'll look at some linguistic evidence that's commonly taken to support one of the prominent ontologies of reasons. If we trust the **orthodox relational semantics of attitude verbs**, that linguistic evidence looks pretty good.
- (3) But I'll argue that the orthodox semantics is ill-motivated and makes bad predictions. I'll motivate a different semantics; and start to sift through how good the linguistic evidence for that ontology of reasons then looks.

So most of this will be a talk about foundational issues in philosophy of language. But the stuff about the ontology of reasons isn't just *an excuse* to talk about that. It really is one of the problems that prompted me to think harder about these issues in the philosophy of language. Moreover, I think it's important to keep track of how basic theoretical issues in philosophy of language can impact seemingly very distant issues, in this case in mainstream epistemology.

## 1. THE ONTOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY OF REASONS

What are reasons? For example, if you're aware that there's beer in the fridge, and walk into the kitchen to get it, what is your reason for walking into the kitchen?

Are reasons *facts*? Is your reason *the fact* that there is beer in the fridge? If so, what kinds of facts are eligible to be reasons? Are there such things as merely possible facts? Can they be reasons (for actual subjects)? Are there such things as merely apparent facts? Can they be reasons?

Are reasons *attitudes*? Are your reasons for walking into the kitchen *your belief* that there's beer there and *your desire* for beer?

Are reasons *propositions*? Is your reason *that there is beer in the fridge*? If so, which propositions are eligible to be reasons? Only propositions that the subject believes (or desires)? Only propositions that are true? (On some views, true propositions are just the same as facts; on other views, not.)

Are reasons *considerations*, as Scanlon likes to say? What *are* considerations? Are they something other than we've already listed?

It's hard to know how we should go about choosing between these ontologies.

Will our choice of ontology have any upshot for epistemology or metaethics? Different theorists certainly *talk* differently about reasons. Naturally, Humeans tend to identify a subject's reasons with her beliefs and desires. They have an easy time accounting for talk like "I went to the kitchen because *I thought* there was beer in the

fridge.” They have to work harder to explain talk like this: “There are two good reasons for you to go to the kitchen: first, there’s beer in the fridge...”

For Davidson, it’s important that our reasons for doing something be among the causes of our doing it; so he will also tend to identify our reasons with our attitudes.

Some moral realists take the notion of an objective reason, out there in the world, as their basic notion. As they see it, *the fact* that your glass contains petrol is a reason for you not to drink, even if you think it contains gin.<sup>1</sup> (For some realists, it’d be a reason for you not to drink, even if you’re indifferent to your own welfare.) The realists have an easy time accounting for talk like “One reason for you not to drink that stuff is that it’s actually petrol.” They have to work harder to explain talk like “The reason I drank it was I thought it was gin.”

Here are two debates I’ve come across in epistemology that are sensitive to what we think about the ontology of reasons.

First, some epistemologists are impressed that much of our folk talk about reasons proceeds as though reasons were *external facts*. We’ll look at some of the linguistic evidence for this later. These ideas go back at least to Unger’s *Ignorance*, which argued on linguistic grounds that nothing can be a reason for a subject unless it’s *true*—and moreover, that nothing can be a reason *for which* a subject believes something unless the subject *knows* that it’s true. This prompted Unger to doubt whether we *do* believe anything for reasons. But in today’s more anti-skeptical and externalist-friendly environment, the idea that external facts are reasons for belief is starting to sound like a viable theoretical option. This idea has been defended by McDowell, Brewer, and Hyman<sup>2</sup>; Nico Silins defended it in his Oxford dissertation<sup>3</sup>; and I’m encountering it more and more in conversation.

Second, among moral theorists who do think of reasons as external facts, one commonly hears things like this: “The facts out in the world are *objective* reasons; but they can’t guide your behavior until you become *aware* of them. That state of awareness is (only) a subjective reason.” This invites the thought that nothing can *be* a reason unless it has that duality: unless there’s, on the one hand, some facts that provide objective support, and on the other hand, a mental attitude that represents or constitutes an awareness of those facts. Our epistemological situations *often* fit that model. But we shouldn’t uncritically assume that they *always* will. What is your reason for believing that you’re in pain? Some theorists will want to say it’s the pain itself, and that there needn’t be any further state that represents the pain. Similarly for your beliefs about what you believe: perhaps it’s your first-order beliefs *themselves* that give you reason to believe you have them, without there being any higher-order *awareness of* the first-order beliefs.

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<sup>1</sup> [Check] D. Parfit, “Normativity” in *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*; D. Parfit, “Reasons and motivation,” in *Arist Society Suppl* 71 (1997), 99-130; R. Shafer-Landau, *Moral Realism: a Defense*; J. Raz; J. Broome.

<sup>2</sup> [McDowell, Brewer citations]. J. Hyman, “How knowledge works,” *Phil Quarterly* (1999); see also *Mind* 2006.

<sup>3</sup> *Reasons and Armchair Knowledge*. Silins now has reservations about the view.

Maybe those views are wrong; but they sound like reasonable theoretical options.<sup>4</sup> If we think that reasons are mere facts, though, we may think that reasons always need to be mediated by states that represent them; and then those views may be ruled out of consideration.

One way for an epistemologist to respond to such debates is to just turn his back on the notion of a reason. Sociologists talk about guilt-cultures and shame-cultures. Guilt and shame are said to be different ways of structuring one's emotional and cognitive response to behavior society disapproves of. But what happens when guilt-cultures and shame-cultures start to mix? We end up encumbered with both structures. We may start to wonder how these structures correspond. Can we analyze guilt partly in terms of shame, or the reverse? Perhaps there's no neat analysis. Even if we discover exactly how guilt and shame map onto each other, the story might be so messy and idiosyncratic that it doesn't reveal much of theoretical use. The notions of guilt and shame might be too autonomous. An epistemologist might decide that the notions of reasons, justification, and knowledge are in the same boat. Maybe there will be no neat cross-analysis. Even if we discover exactly how they map onto each other, the story might be so messy and idiosyncratic that it doesn't reveal much of theoretical use. If that's our actual situation, then even if reasons do turn out to be external facts, or to require a fact/representation duality, that won't straightforwardly tell us much about other epistemological notions like justification.

I've got a great deal of sympathy for this view.

However, whether it's right or wrong, I think it's still an interesting question what the right ontology and epistemology of reasons is. Even if we think that, say, the notion of justification is the fundamental epistemic notion, still, we *do have* this notion of a reason, and it's plausibly of some philosophical interest to understand it better.

## 2. THE ALLEGED LINGUISTIC EVIDENCE

Consider the verb "believes." There are a variety of forms:

- (1a) John believed that P.
- (1b) John believed the proposition that P.
- (1c) John's belief that P was unreasonable / tentative / characteristic of him.
- (1d) John's belief was that P.
- (1e) ? John's belief was the proposition that P.

The term "reason" is somewhat funny. It patterns like the noun form "belief," but there's no corresponding verb form. We can *say* "John reasoned that P," but that means something different than we're after. We're after the notion of "reason" where John has a reason to do or think something, and that reason is, or is about, its being the case that P. There doesn't seem to be any analogue of "John's reason is that P" where "reason" is a verb. So forms (a) and (b) are missing for "reason." I wonder whether this is an accident of etymology, or whether there's some more interesting explanation of it.

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<sup>4</sup> I argue that they should be taken seriously in my "There is immediate justification."

I doubt that our sense of “reason” has any form like (c), either. We can say “the reason that P,” but that means something other than we’re concerned with. (It means something like “the explanation why P.”)

That leaves only forms (d) and (e). Compare:

(1d) John’s belief was that P.

(2d) John’s reason was that P.

On the orthodox relational semantics for “believes” and for that-clauses, (1d) would have the same logical form as:

(3d) John’s friend = Jack.

That is, (1d) would identify something which is John’s belief with what’s expressed by “that P.” Usually, this is thought to be a proposition. Treating (2d) on the same model, it would identify something which is John’s reason with the proposition expressed by “that P.” So this suggests that reasons are propositions.<sup>5</sup>

According to some theorists, though, that-clauses don’t always express propositions. Sometimes they express facts instead, where these are different than propositions (even true propositions). That suggestion comports well with our next piece of evidence.

Compare:

(1e) ? John’s belief was the proposition that P.

(2e) ?? John’s reason was the proposition that P.

(2e) sounds strange. I can make sense of it, but only with some effort. I have to understand “John’s reason” as being the object or source of his motivation. For example, Kristen’s reason for going to the kitchen might be *hunger*. If John stands to the proposition that P in the same relation that Kristen stands to hunger, then (2e) makes sense. But that would be a strange relation to stand in to the proposition that P. Somehow John would have to be motivated by a proposition. If, on the other hand, we have an ordinary sort of case, where John goes to the kitchen merely because he *believed* or *knew* the proposition P, then it sounds better to say that his reason was *the fact* that P, or *the prospect* of such-and-such happening, or something of that sort:

(2f) John’s reason was the fact that P.

On the orthodox relational semantics, (1e) would have a logical form like:

(3e) John’s friend = the child Jack.

That is, (1e) would identify something which is John’s belief with some proposition, specifically the proposition that P. Treating (2f) on the same model, it would identify something which is John’s reason with some fact, specifically the fact that P.

These reflections about (2d) and (2f) seem to provide linguistic evidence that reasons are propositions or facts, rather than attitudes. Non-philosophers may sometimes say things like:

(2g) John *went to the kitchen because* he believed there was beer in the fridge.

But I’ve never heard a non-philosopher say:

(2h) John’s reason for going to the kitchen was *his belief* that there was beer in the fridge.

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<sup>5</sup> [Check] See also J. Dancy, *Practical Reality* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), 131-4.

So it looks like the proposition and fact ontologies of reasons have an advantage over the attitude ontologies.

A central assumption in the argument we just considered is that the copulas in:

(1d) John's belief was that P.

and:

(2d) John's reason was that P.

are the "is" of identity.

My task in this paper is to persuade you that that's not so. Permit me a relation of "being-to-the-effect-that" which attitudes stand in to the contents that they have (and contents stand in to themselves). Thus, a belief will be-to-the-effect-that some proposition P (and the proposition P will be-to-the-effect-that itself). Roughly, my proposal will be that (1d) and (2d) have the semantic form of:

(4d) John's  $\chi$  is-to-the-effect-that proposition P.<sup>6</sup>

rather than that the form of (5d):

(5d) John's  $\chi$  = proposition or fact P.

If I'm right, then claims like (2d) *don't* after all provide any direct linguistic evidence for an ontology of reasons. (They *do* tell us that reasons have or are contents; but this was already agreed by the contending views.)

### 3. RELATIONALISM

Let's look more carefully at the orthodox relational semantics for verbs like "believes."

I want to separate out different theoretical commitments.

People who embrace this orthodox semantics—I'll call them **relationalists**—are operating with a certain **ontology of belief** and other attitudes. On that ontology, many of our attitudes have propositional contents, and having such an attitude will amount to standing in an interesting relation to that content. Nothing we go on to discuss will be meant to challenge this. Moreover, I think it's legitimate to talk about the "belief-relation," which we can understand to be the relation you stand in to a content when you have a belief *with* that content. Similarly, we can talk of the "desire-relation," the "wishing-relation," and so on.

What I will be questioning is how the relationalists think this belief-relation is related to the verb "believes." On their view, "believes" *expresses* that belief-relation. I'll understand that to mean that the belief-relation (or its intension) is the semantic value of "believes." (Weaker construals may be possible; I won't pursue them.) That is, the verb "believes" has as its semantic value a relation one of whose arguments is a proposition. (On some views, it's merely a 2-place relation between subjects and propositions. On other views, it's a 3-place relation between subjects, propositions, and ways of apprehending a proposition. That sort of debate won't concern us.)

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<sup>6</sup> This is rough; refinements will emerge. I *don't* want to deny that "that P" is a single syntactic constituent.

The relationalists have a correlative view about the semantic role of that-clauses. Their role is to semantically *provide* propositions to be the arguments of the belief-relation.

We can allow some latitude about how exactly they do that. Perhaps propositions are their *semantic values*, in the way that a Millian will say that the individual Jack is the semantic value of “Jack.” Or perhaps the relationship is less direct. Montagovian theorists say that the semantic value of “Jack” is not Jack himself, but rather the set of all predicate extensions that contain Jack. They can allow, though, that “Jack” still *refers to* Jack. Or consider attributive descriptions, like “Kristen’s son.” These don’t even refer to Jack, but on some views they still provide him to be an argument to the semantic values of the predicates they’re conjoined with. Some philosophers of language use “designate” as a fudge-term, to stand in for any of these ways of providing something as an argument. I’ll understand the relationalists to be saying that that-clauses at least “designate” propositions, in this loose sense. They function semantically in something like the way that singular terms and descriptions function.

One pretty straightforward construal of this is that that-clauses are of semantic type *e* or *(et)t*, and that they have the same semantic values as names or descriptions or quantifier phrases that designate the given proposition. So, for instance, the clause “that math reduces to logic” will have the same semantic value as some or all of the following:

- \* the name “logicism”
- \* the description-like phrase “the proposition that math reduces to logic”
- \* the quantifier phrase “some proposition that (uniquely) is-to-the-effect-that math reduces to logic”

So “believes” expresses a relation one of whose arguments is a proposition, and that-clauses designate propositions to be those arguments. The same goes for other attitude verbs that take that-clauses as complements.

So this claim:

- (1a) John believed that P.

works semantically in much the same way that:

- (3a) John befriended Jack / Kristen’s son.

does. This naturally invites us to interpret (1c) as working like (3c):

- (1c) John’s belief that P was so-and-so.

- (3c) John’s friend Jack was so-and-so.

and (1d) as working like (3d):

- (1d) John’s belief was that P.

- (3d) John’s friend = Jack.

just as we saw in the previous section.

But we need to proceed cautiously with relationalism. Its semantic commitments may not be as strong as I’ve claimed. It’ll help to have names for two broad classes of expressions. One class I’ll call **nominal** expressions. These include singular terms like “Jack”; plural and mass terms, like “John and my siblings,” “the jewelry Kristen bought,” and so on; and quantifier phrases like “two sailors,” “most of the water,” and so on. The class of **non-nominals** will include verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and many occurrences of general terms, like “cat” and “gold” in “is a cat,” “some cats,” “is gold” and “some gold.” It’s controversial which class that-clauses, infinitival and gerundival clauses, and

interrogative clauses belong to. For now, I'm understanding relationalism to say that that-clauses in fact function semantically like nominal expressions.

One might think that *has* to be right because that-clauses are “complements” to the verbs they modify, rather than “adjuncts.” Saying John believes *that P* isn't like saying he believes *firmly* or *in the kitchen* (those are examples of adjuncts). Instead, it tells *that which* John believes, in the way that saying he baked *a cake* (this is an example of a complement) tells *that which* he baked.

But we shouldn't be too hasty to assume that verbal complements are always nominal. Independently of any controversy about relationalism, a little reflection will persuade us that they aren't.

One class of potential counter-examples are infinitival and gerundive phrases:

- (6a) John stopped *climbing*.
- (6b) John started *to climb*.
- (6c) John is strong enough *to climb*.

and so on. But the proper analysis of these is disputed; on some views, they are clauses with unvoiced subjects, and differ from that-clauses only in the inflection of their verb. So they're not far enough away from the present controversy to give us any leverage.

Other candidates are:

- (7a) John felt/became *tired* [adjective].
- (7b) John called me *yellow* [adjective].
- (7c) I called him *a jerk* [general term].
- (7d) I hate *jerk*s [general term].
- (7e) We made him *angry* [adjective].
- (7f) I considered him *a jerk* [general term].
- (7g) I sought *a jerk* [general term], though none in particular.

The analysis of these examples is disputed. With intensional transitives like (7g), some theorists take the complement to have the semantic value of a predicate intension.<sup>7</sup> But many theorists take the complement instead to be a covert *clause*, or to have the semantic value of a *generalized quantifier intension*. (7e) and (7f) can also be argued to have complement *clauses*, with unvoiced subjects and verbs. (7d) can be argued to be of the form “[Generically x: x is a jerk] I hate x.” There “jerk” occupies an ordinary *predicative* role, rather than functioning as a complement of “hate.”

But (7a)–(7c) seem to be robust, not-that-disputed cases of complements that are neither nominal nor clausal.

Even more convincing examples are measure phrases, as in:

- (8) John weighs *100 pounds*.
- (9) John moved my piano *a half mile*.

When I say that John weighs 100 pounds, I'm not saying there's any thing or things such that he weighs *it*. Weighing 100 pounds (in the sense we're considering) is not like weighing an elephant. There are syntactic tests for the differences: for example, notice that this is good:

- (8a) Was an elephant weighed by him?

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<sup>7</sup> E. Zimmerman, “On the proper treatment of opacity in certain verbs,” *Natural Language Semantics* 1 (1993), 149-79.

whereas this is bad:

(8b) # Was 100 pounds weighed by him?

The only way to read (8b) is in an unintended sense, where John is measuring the weight itself, or measuring 100 pounds *of* something, like 100 pounds of sand. There's no reading of it where it's asking whether 100 pounds is John's weight.

There's good evidence, then, that verbs sometimes take complements that are, independently of our present dispute, recognizable as non-nominal. So we should be open to the possibility that that-clause complements are also non-nominal.

Some of you will be tempted at this point to say "What difference does it make whether that-clauses function more like names or more like adjectives? All the relationalist really needs to say is that the semantic function of that-clauses is to pick out propositions *somehow*. It can be negotiated whether they pick them out in the way names designate their referents, or in the way adjectives pick out the properties they express, or in some other way."

I don't know whether those who have embraced "the relational semantics" of attitude verbs *have* intended something as specific as I articulated earlier, or something as ecumenical as this, or something in between. I expect that many of them hadn't made a determinate choice.

In any event, I'm going to try to persuade you that the details of *how* that-clauses semantically function *shouldn't* be neglected. They may crucially affect some philosophical issues, such as our inquiry into whether linguistic evidence favors some ontologies of reasons over others. For this discussion, it will be useful to continue to use "relationalism" as a name for the more specific semantic proposal I articulated earlier.

#### 4. WHY THE DETAILS MATTER

Let's consider claims of the form:

(7b) John called me yellow.

What would be wrong with adopting a position analogous to relationalism about such examples? That is, what would be wrong with saying that the verb "calling" expresses a relation between a caller, a callee, and what the callee was called—as it may be, a property. The function of the predicative complement is to provide the what-called argument. The adjective "yellow" may not provide an argument *in the same way* that nominal terms like "yellowness" or "the property of being yellow" or "the color yellow" would, but the end result is the same. (7b) is true just in case John stands in the calling relation to me and the property those terms differently designate.

The problem with this is that John might *also* call me the property of being yellow. That is, he might express the view that I am identical to that property. Perhaps he suffers metaphysical delusions. Or perhaps he's directing a philosophy play and he was assigning me my role. Then it would true that:

(10) John called me yellow and the property of being yellow.

and what is now supposed to distinguish the relation John and I stand in to the property expressed by the first complement, and the relation we stand in to the property expressed by the second?

This problem is not specific to the verb "called." This sentence:

(11) The director made me yellow.  
is ambiguous in a similar way: did the director provoke me to cowardice? or assign me the role of yellow in the play? Consider also:

(12) The topic of our conversation became yellow.  
Is that to be read on a par with:

(12a) The topic of our conversation then panicked.  
Or on a par with:

(12b) The topic of our conversation then became economics.  
One might try to handle these variations by positing systematic ambiguities in verbs like “made” and “became.” But no such move helps with (10), where the verb only occurs once. Other things equal, we should prefer an analysis that can accommodate all of these examples.

A natural proposal is that the semantic values of the two complements in (10), and the semantic values of the complements in each of the disambiguations of (11) and (12), are different. Even if in *some* sense each of the complements in (10) is semantically related to the property of being yellow, the differences in *how* they’re related can be one that verbs are sensitive to.

If that’s right, then we shouldn’t just blithely talk about “relations to properties”—nor about “relations to propositions.” The way in which the property or proposition is provided as an argument may matter. (Consider “John feared both the very proposition of logicism, and that it was true.” How do we distinguish John’s two fearing-states?)

Consider some of the claims we cited earlier:

- (1a) John believed that P.
- (1b) John believed the proposition that P.

The complement in (1b) is a nominal. But suppose it’s right that “that P” in (1a) *doesn’t* function like a nominal. There may still then be a “believing relation”—the relation expressed by the verb in (1b)—and (1a) may truth-conditionally amount to the same thing as (1b). But the semantic form of (1a) would be different from that (1b). They might be related in the way that:

(13a) John and Kristen are married to each other.  
and:

(13b) John is a spouse of Kristen.  
are. These sentences are truth-conditionally equivalent; indeed they plausibly have one and the same *truth-maker*. But they don’t have the same semantic form.

If the that-clause isn’t functioning as a nominal in (1a), then it’d be natural to say it isn’t functioning as a nominal in either of:

- (1d) John’s belief was that P.
- (2d) John’s reason was that P.

It’s not clear whether the “is” of identity can have non-nominal relata. Rosefeldt points out:

(20) Aggressive is not the same as cocky.  
which may be an example. But presumably the relata of an “is” of identity always do need at least *to be of the same semantic type*. Since “John’s belief” and “John’s reason” clearly are nominals, if “that P” isn’t, we can conclude that the copulas in (1d) and (2d)

*aren't* the “is” of identity. In which case, (2d) wouldn't directly tell us anything about the ontology of reasons.

So to assess the evidential value of (2d), we need to investigate whether that-clauses really do semantically function like nominals.

## 5. ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST RELATIONALISM

It's not surprising that the relationalist semantics has become orthodoxy. There are many considerations that seem to support it.

One kind of argument comes from the fact that that-clauses sometimes seem to occupy the subject position in sentences, a position usually occupied by nominals:

(15a) That P was obvious.

(15b) That P was believed by me.

(15c) That P implies that Q.

The grammaticality of such sentences suggests that in these cases that-clauses are also functioning semantically like nominals.

Another kind of argument comes from propositional anaphora:

(16) John believed that P. Kristen believes *that* too.

“That” is usually understood to be a singular term, hence a nominal. Its antecedent here is the phrase “that P.” It looks like these expressions need to take the same semantic value, for the dialogue (16) to be true. It seems that the dialogue *could* be true. So it looks like “that P” is taking a nominal-type semantic value here, too.

The most common arguments for relationalism are a variety of inference-schemas that seem to be valid, and whose validity gets straightforwardly explained by the relationalist semantics. Consider:

(17a) John believed that P. So John believed something.

According to the relationalist, this is valid because it has the same semantic form as:

(18a) John befriended Jack. So John befriended someone.

Consider also:

(17b) John believed that P. Kristen believed that P. So there's something they both believed / they believed the same thing.

(18b) John befriended Jack. Kristen befriended Jack. So there's someone they both befriended / they befriended the same person.

(17c) John believed whatever/everything Kristen said. Kristen said that P. So John believed that P.

(18c) John befriended whoever Kristen kissed. Kristen kissed Jack. So John befriended Jack.

(17d) John believed Kristen's hypothesis. Kristen's hypothesis was that P. So John believed that P.

(18d) John befriended Kristen's son. Kristen's son is Jack. So John befriended Jack.

(17e) Kristen said something that John believes. All Kristen said was that P. So John believed that P.

(18e) Kristen drank something that John prepared. All Kristen drank was this cup of tea. So John prepared this cup of tea.

The close parallel between the (17) series and the (18) series of arguments suggests that their semantic forms, and hence the explanation of their validity, are the same. So this is yet more evidence that that-clauses function semantically in the same way that the nominals "Jack" and "this cup of tea" do.

It looks, then, like relationalism *is* pretty well-supported. So by extension, it looks like (2d) and (2f) are plausibly read as identities, and *do* give us evidence for taking reasons to be propositions or facts, rather than attitudes.

But are things ever that simple?

I won't speak to the argument that that-clauses sometimes seem to occupy subject positions. The data here is complicated and I don't have a settled view. (For example, why is "If that P was obvious..." unacceptable?)

But I will speak to the arguments from anaphora and validity. These are much less conclusive than they might seem. This is because there are reasons, independently of any controversy about relationalism, to believe that some quantifiers, and proforms "that," are non-nominal.

Consider:

(19) (a) I painted the wall *yellow* [adjective]. (b) Then she painted it *a different color*.

The antecedent of "a different color" is the adjective "yellow." It looks like "a different color" should be semantically functioning in (19b) the same way that "yellow" does in (19a), namely as an adjective.

Consider:

(20) He called me *yellow* [adjective]. He called you *yellow*. So he called us *the same thing*.

Here it looks like "the same thing" should also be functioning as an adjective. Consider also:

(21) John is *friendly* [adjective]. So is Kristen. So there is *something* John and Kristen both are: namely, friendly.

Here it looks like the semantic values that "something" is ranging over are adjective-like values, not nominal-like values. Also:

(22) Kristen *drank some tea* [verb phrase]. John did *everything* Kristen did. So John drank some tea too.

Here it looks like the semantic values that "everything" is ranging over are verb-like values, not nominal-like values. Finally, consider:

(23) Kristen is *everything* her mother wanted her to be: a nurse [general term], a good mother [general term], and honest [adjective].<sup>8</sup>

Here “everything” seems to be ranging *simultaneously* over general-term values and adjective values.

These examples attest that expressions like “something,” “everything,” “the same thing,” and the like can function as non-nominal quantifiers: quantifiers whose instances get the kinds of semantic values taken by verbs, adjectives, general terms, and so on, rather than the kinds of semantic values taken by nominals.<sup>9</sup> Similarly for the proform “that”; and for clauses like “whatever Kristen did.”

Rosefeldt argues that the validity phenomena cited in support of relationalism can equally well be accounted for on the assumption that that-clauses are *another* class of non-nominal expression, and that all the relevant quantifiers are non-nominal. In fact, this hypothesis seems to be *better* supported by the linguistic data. Why should:

(24a) John hopes that P. Kristen hopes that P. So there’s *something* they both hope / John hopes *something* that Kristen also hopes.

be OK, but:

(24b) John hopes that P. Kristen hopes that P. So # there’s *some proposition* they both hope / # John hopes *some proposition* that Kristen also hopes.

be bad? (You can’t hope a proposition. That’s not English.) Rosefeldt has an explanation: “some proposition” behaves in every respect like an ordinary nominal quantifier; but “something” can function as a non-nominal quantifier (as in (21), above). The relationalist has no explanation; on his account, “something” and “some proposition” should be functioning in just the same way.

Similarly, this is OK:

(25a) She realized that P. I already suspected that P. So she realized *something* that I already suspected.

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<sup>8</sup> [Original citation? I copied this sort of example from King fn. 27; he credits it to Graff and Stanley; it’s said to be much older.]

<sup>9</sup> Many theorists have argued that quantifiers like these can be non-nominal. See for example [check]: P. Geach, “On What There Is” *Arist Society Suppl* 25 (1951), 125-36; W. Sellars, “Grammar and existence. A Preface to ontology,” in *Science, Perception and Reality* (New York: Humanities Press, 1963); W. Sellars, *Naturalism and Ontology* (Reseda, Calif.: Ridgeview Publishing, 1979); A. Prior, *Objects of Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971); C.J.F. Williams, *What Is Existence?* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981); S. Yablo, “How in the world?” *Phil Topics* 24 (1996), 255-85; A. Rayo and S. Yablo, “Nominalism through de-nominalization,” *Nous* 35 (2001), 74-92; W. Künne, *Conceptions of Truth* (Oxford: OUP, 2003); and T. Rosefeldt, “‘That’-clauses and non-nominal quantification,” *Phil Studies* forthcoming.

F. Moltmann in “Propositional attitudes without propositions,” *Synthese* 135 (2003), 77-118; “Nominalizing Quantifiers,” *J Phil Logic* 32 (2003), 445-81; and “Nonreferential complements, nominalizations, and derived objects” *J Semantics* 21 (2004), 1-43 recognizes that these quantifiers are “special,” but she construes them as NPs ranging over a special kind of object, rather than as non-nominal quantifiers.

This is bad:

(25b) She realized that P. I already knew that P. So ? she realized *some fact / proposition* that I already suspected.

(Ordinarily, one doesn't suspect facts or propositions.) But on the relationalist story, "something" and "some fact" should be functioning in just the same way.

If relationalism is right, then that-clauses have the same semantic values as some canonically nominal expressions, like "the proposition that P." And indeed, for some verbs, "that P" and "the proposition that P" do seem to be interchangeable *salva veritate*:

(1a) John believed that P.

(1b) John believed the proposition that P.

So too with "denied," "doubted," "proved," "accepted," "asserted," "stated," and "assumed." But for many other verbs, substituting "the proposition that P" for "that P" changes the meaning. For some of these verbs, there are *other* nominal expressions, like "the fact that P" or "the prospect that P" that may be interchangeable *salva veritate* with "that P":

(26a) John recognized that P.

(26b) John recognized the fact that P.

So too with "knew," "remembered," "noticed," "regretted," and "forgot." And perhaps:

(27a) John feared that P.

(27b) John feared the prospect that P.

But it threatens compositionality if what semantic value a that-clause takes has to depend on what verb it is embedded under. (Moltmann makes this criticism.) Moreover, there are many verbs where *no* nominal expression seems to be substitutable *salva veritate* for "that P":

(28a) John saw that P.

(28b) John saw the proposition that P.

(28c) John saw the fact that P.

Neither (28b) nor (28c) nor anything else of that sort seems to mean the same as (28a). So too with "heard," "felt," "observed," "suspected," "expected," "demanded," "requested," "recommended," "desired," "promised you," "it helped," "preferred," and "mentioned."<sup>10</sup> For some verbs, it's not even *grammatical* to conjoin them with a nominal complement:

(29a) I hoped that P.

(29b) # I hoped the proposition that P.

So too with "agreed," "convinced you," "wished," "dreamt," "realized," "claimed," "complained," "remarked," "concluded," and perhaps "said," "meant," "guessed," and "thought."<sup>11</sup> Also expressions like "It was

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<sup>10</sup> King also mentions "imagined that P"—where that's understood to be conjecturing or speculatively believing that P; and "explained that P"—where that's understood to be offering P as part of an explanation (see his note 13). Consider also "understood that P"—where that's understood to be believing that P in a way that constitutes understanding.

<sup>11</sup> King (note 25) discusses: "What are the most common reptiles? Russell said snakes." That's grammatical, and so suggests that "said" and so on *can* accept nominal

funny/awful/true/possible/inevitable/lucky/unlikely that P”<sup>12</sup> and “I was glad/excited/annoyed that P”; and nominals like “the belief/hope/desire that P.”<sup>13</sup>

If the relational semantics were right, it’d be mysterious why nominal phrases like “the proposition that P” shouldn’t be exchangeable with “that P” in all these cases.

King replies to this argument as follows: (i) in cases of type (28), the relevant verbs are ambiguous or polysemous. Which meaning they take depends on the syntactic properties of their complement. King admits that this explanation would predict that “saw” always takes its seeing-an-object reading when conjoined with “something.” However, we can say “John saw something” to mean that there’s some P such that John saw that P. Since he doesn’t avail himself of non-nominal quantifiers, King has no account of why “saw” should sometimes take its seeing-an-object reading when conjoined with “something,” and other times take its seeing-that-so-and-so reading. He just cites “something” (and “everything” and “nothing”) as special exceptions to his account of which meaning these verbs will take.

(ii) King explains cases of type (29) as just being the effect of brute syntactic constraints on what kinds of complement the verb can take. This is unsatisfying in two ways. First, why should these verbs be unable to combine with ordinary nominals if—as the relationalist claims—they successfully combine with terms with *the same semantic values* in cases like (29a)? Second, if “that P” really does have a nominal-type semantic value in (29a), then why shouldn’t claims of the form:

(29c) # There’s some F such that I hoped it.

follow? Or at least be grammatical? Yet they don’t seem to be. (Rosefeldt presses this complaint.) King has no satisfying explanation of why not.

None of this is decisive. But I think it accumulates into *some* presumptive case against relationalism. It’s *some* evidence that the semantic function of that-clauses is importantly different from that of singular terms and other nominal expressions.<sup>14</sup>

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complements. But in fact the example is elliptical for “Russell said snakes *are the most common reptiles*.” The verb “said” *isn’t* there taking a nominal complement.

<sup>12</sup> Discuss why this is a basic form: evidence Gil cites that “that P” is not here extraposed. Also (15a)–(15c).

<sup>13</sup> The last two sorts of examples are discussed in [check] Fara, Delia Graff, “Comments on Marian David’s ‘Truth and Identity’” available online <<http://www.princeton.edu/~graff/papers/replytomarian.pdf>>; and Marc Moffett, “Are ‘that’-clauses really singular terms?” Presented at Eastern Division APA, Dec 2002.

<sup>14</sup> Other theorists who argue that that-clauses take different semantic values than names or expressions like “the proposition that P” include: A. Prior, *Objects of Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971); B. Rundle, *Grammar in Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979); K. Bach, “Do belief reports report beliefs” *PPQ* 79 (1997), 215-41; M. McKinsey, “The semantics of belief ascription,” *Nous* 33 (1999), 519-57; F. Recanati, *Oratio Oblique, Oratio Recta* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2000); and T. Rosefeldt, “‘That’-clauses and non-nominal quantification,” *Phil Studies* forthcoming. [?? F. Moltmann, “Propositional attitudes without propositions,” *Synthese* 135 (2003), 77-118]

## 6. WHERE WE STAND

The case we've marshaled against relationalism is admittedly inconclusive.

Moreover, rejecting relationalism only helps us to deny that the copula in:

(2d) John's reason was that P.

is the "is" of identity. It doesn't give us any reason for a parallel denial with:

(2f) John's reason was the fact that P.

Now, some theorists doubt whether *there is* any such thing as an "is" of identity. They'd say that in a sentence like:

(30a) Jack is John's friend.

"John's friend" is predicative, in exactly the same way that "friendly" is in

(30b) Jack is friendly.

In both cases the copula is merely joining the subject to a predicate.<sup>15</sup>

However, even if they're right, we still need to distinguish what's going on in cases like this:

(31a) Why do you love that old sweater? Because it's my favorite color.

and:

(31b) Why did you paint the kitchen blue? Blue is my favorite color.

Even if the copula turns out to be predicative in (31b) too, still we want to have *some* theoretical basis for counting (31b) as identifying the speaker's favorite color, and (31a) as merely attributing it. To help us keep track, I'll signal the difference like this:

(32a) This sweater [attributing] is my favorite color.

(32b) Blue [identifying] is my favorite color.

Perhaps the contrast isn't specifically tied to the copula "is." We can see it also here:

(33) John called me his favorite color.

This is ambiguous between an attributive and identifying readings of the complement. Did John attribute yellowness to me? Or did he mistake me for a color, or assign me the role of yellow in the philosophy play?

If the identifying kind of predication doesn't require a special "is" of identity, then we're in no position to be confident even about (2d). We no longer know enough to say whether it really follows from "that P" having a non-nominal semantic value that (2d) isn't identifying.

## 7. A NEW STRATEGY

So let's turn to a different line of argument, which tells in favor of neither (2d) nor (2f) being identifying.

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<sup>15</sup> see Delia, Partee?

Consider:

(34a) John's secret plan is to become famous.

How can this claim be identifying? There would have to be something which both is a secret plan, and so is secret, and is also identified with what's designated by "to become famous"—presumably, the proposition that John becomes famous, or perhaps the (possible) act of becoming famous. In other words, there would need to be something which is a (perhaps merely possible act of) becoming-famous, and which is also secret. But it's not *the proposition* or *the act* which (34a) says is secret. It's John's planning state.

Perhaps we should construe "John's secret plan" as "The x: John *secretly plans* x"? Two objections. First, descriptions don't ordinarily work that way. If I say "John's strong grip," I refer to something which is a grip, and which is strong (for a grip). I don't refer to something which is strongly gripped. So why should "John's secret plan" refer to something which is secretly planned. Second, consider:

(34b) John's secret plan, which was to become famous, gave him an ulcer.

Here it looks like "John's secret plan" *has to* refer to a planning state—because it was the planning state, not a proposition or merely possible act, that gave him an ulcer. But then we have to figure out how the planning state can satisfy "was to become famous." It seems unpromising to construe that predicate as an identifying one.

Consider next:

(35) John's desire VPs.

On the one hand, there's *what* John desires—some object or state of affairs. On the other hand, there's his *attitude*, the *state* or *event* of his desiring it. Some claims of the form "John's desire VPs" seem to be attributing properties to the state (e.g., "John's desire prompted him to so-and-so / was widely ridiculed"). Others seem to be attributing properties to what he desires ("John's desire eluded him / implied that Q").

One common treatment says that nominals like "John's desire" are ambiguous. In a claim like:

(36a) John's fear was Sue's desire.

—understood to be saying that there's something that John fears, but which Sue desired—"John's fear" refers to *what* John fears. In:

(36b) John's fear kept him awake at night.

on the other hand, "John's fear" refers to his attitude.

However, notice that this sounds OK:

(36c) John's fear, which as I said was that Russian oil production will fall, kept him awake at night.

Like (34b), above, this seems to be attributing a content-targeting predicate and a state-targeting predicate to a single subject. The ambiguity proposal doesn't help us here.

Here's an alternative explanation. Nominals like "John's fear" *always* refers to attitude states. Predicates like "was Sue's desire" and "was that Russian oil production will fall" include in their extension not just propositions, but also *states whose contents* are those propositions. That is, the extension of "was Sue's desire" will include not just the proposition that P, but also John's fear, too, if John's fear is that P.

But this account faces difficulties, too. Consider again:

(36a) John's fear was Sue's desire.

On the present account, John's fear-state automatically gets into the extension of "was Sue's desire," whenever they have the same content. But then how do we account for the *other* reading of this sentence, which says that Sue desires *that* John have fear? Intuitively, that *ought not* to follow just from John's fear having the same content as Sue's desire. Having a desire *that* John have fear and having a desire with the same content as John's fear ought to be independent (*even if* one's perfectly aware of what John fears). But since the present account will put John's fear-state into the extension of "was Sue's desire" whenever John's fear and Sue's desire have the same content, the two readings of (36a) can never diverge in truth-value.

I favor a third explanation. I agree with the previous account that, in these sorts of examples, nominals like "John's fear" univocally designate attitude states. So the content-targeting predicates aren't being applied to subjects that designate contents. Neither do the extensions of the content-targeting predicates expand to include both contents and states. Instead, the predicates get a different interpretation. In *some* cases, this may be because the expressions themselves have special readings. What *looks* like a content-targeting predicate may sometimes really be a predicate that targets *states with* a certain content. But I don't expect that strategy to work across the board. Rather, I think we should explore the possibility that there's a *special mode* of predication that targets a subject's content (or perhaps the content it's to-the-effect-that), rather than the subject itself.<sup>16</sup>

This would have precedents. The choice between distributive and collective predication can't be made in the noun phrase, but rather has to be made in the predicate, as examples like this attest:

(37) Tom, Dick, and Harry [each] lived alone, [collectively] met for drinks on Saturday nights, and [ambiguous] carried my piano a half mile.

But we don't want to postulate thousands of distributive/collective ambiguities in our verbal lexicon. Rather, it makes more sense to distinguish distributive and collective *modes* of predication. Similarly, I suggest, we should admit a distinct content-targeting *mode* of predication.

If we go that way, then (36c) should be understood as:

(38) John's fear, which as I said [content-targeting] was that Russian oil production will fall, [ordinary-targeting] kept him awake at night.

and (34b) should be understood as:

(39) John's secret plan, which [content-targeting] was to become famous, [ordinary-targeting] gave him an ulcer.

Since our inquiry into the exact semantic functioning of "that P" was inconclusive, we're not in a position to choose between different accounts of exactly how "was that P" is working here. But the accounts will agree that "John's fear" and "John's secret plan" designate John's *attitude states*, and that those *states* aren't being identified with anything designated by "that P."

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<sup>16</sup> Compare the notion of "descriptive predication" in [check] G. Bealer, "A solution to Frege's puzzle," *Phil Perspectives* 7 (1993), 17-60; and Marc Moffett, "Knowing facts and knowing propositions: a solution to the problem of doxastic shift," *Phil Studies* 115 (2003), 81-97.

We can see similar phenomena with attitude terms that take non-clausal complements. Google turns up: “Then she began to pray very specifically, saying ‘Lord I would really love to be able to combine my talent in PR and marketing with my passion, which is you.’ ” I don’t hear the subject as wanting to combine her talent with God. Rather, she wants to combine her talent with her standing passionate attitude. So “my passion” designates an attitude of hers, rather than an object of passion. Yet she goes on to say that her passion “is you,” that is, is God. Presumably she doesn’t identify God with any of her own attitudes. Hence, when she says that her passion “is you,” we have to understand that as content-specifying, rather than as identifying.

Returning now to our core examples, in:

(1d) John’s belief was that P.

we should also understand “John’s belief” to refer to John’s belief-state. Here, too, “was that P” can’t plausibly be identifying. John’s belief state is not identical to the content that P. Rather, “was that P” is content-describing or content-specifying. (1d) tells us what John’s belief is-to-the-effect-that. The predicate “was that P” is being *attributed to the state*, like “was unsuppressed” would be.<sup>17</sup> This contrasts to the way “is my favorite color” is used in:

(32b) Blue [identifying] is my favorite color.

If that is the right treatment for (1d), then presumably in:

(2d) John’s reason was that P.

“was that P” should also be understood as content-specifying, rather than identifying. (2d) only tells us what John’s reason was-to-the-effect-that. It doesn’t tell us what the reason is identical to. So it’s no direct evidence towards an ontology of reasons.

But what about:

(2f) John’s reason was the fact that P.

This *seems* to more strongly invite an identifying reading. And I have no decisive argument that it’s not identifying. However, there is some evidence suggesting that in this case, too, we should read the predicate as content-specifying, rather than as identifying.

Consider:

(50) What John already knew about my preparations, including the fact that I’d arranged an ambush at the pass, shocked me.

Here it’s not the propositions that are the contents of John’s knowledge that shocked me—after all, those propositions concern my own actions. Rather, it’s his knowledge state that I’m shocked by. So the “including...” clause needs to apply to John’s knowledge state, too. However, the “included” fact is part of *the content of* John’s knowledge, not part of his knowledge-*state*, itself. So we need to understand the predicate “including the fact that P” here as content-specifying, too, rather than as expressing a part/whole relation.

Now, this is all very speculative, but it seems reasonable that if the predicate in:

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<sup>17</sup> This is further evidence, though it does not require, that “that P” has a predicate-like, rather than a nominal-like, semantic value.

(51a) What John knew included the fact that P.  
is content-specifying, rather than part/whole, then the predicate in:

(51b) What John knew was the fact that P.  
should be content-specifying, too, rather than identifying. And that suggests that we  
should read the predicate in:

(2f) John's reason was the fact that P.  
as content-specifying, too.

As I said, this is very speculative. But I hope to at least made a case that it's  
unclear whether the linguistic evidence we've considered does much to directly support  
any particular ontology of reasons.