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Non-Propositional Attitudes Supervene on Disjunctive Propositional Attitude Complexes
by
Steven Guillemette
Under the Direction of Daniel Weiskopf, Ph.D.
A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts
in the College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University

ABSTRACT

Propositionalism is the widely held view that intentional attitudes are fundamentally and predicatively propositional. In contrast, objectualism is the view that a particular class of intentional attitudes—for example, love, fear, like, and hate—bears no relation to a proposition or state of affairs nor does their content make reference to objects by predicating something of them. This paper challenges the objectualist view. While I do not deny that non-propositional attitudes are real mental states, I do deny that they are metaphysically independent from propositional ones. To that end, I proffer an account whereby non-propositional attitudes supervene on possible disjunctive complexes of propositional attitudes, and I defend its merits over objectualism. I argue that my propositional account provides an intuitive framework to index polysemous attitudes and explain a variety of intentional behaviors whereas objectualism does not.

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December 2021			

DEDICATION

For Marie and Scott.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Intentionality refers to the power of particular mental states to have contents—that is, to represent or be about certain objects. Generally, philosophical discourse on intentionality has centered on at least two types of attitude reporting sentences. The first, which has garnered the most attention, concerns the cognitive relation an agent bears to a proposition or state of affairs. Take, for example, the sentence "Bill believes that Ted is part of the fledgling rock band, 'Wyld Stallyns'." Here, the agent, Bill, possesses a belief-attitude towards a proposition which is expressed by a sentence (viz., that Ted is a member of a band). The content of Bill's attitude is the proposition towards which his attitude is directed. The second attitude reporting sentence has to do with the cognitive relation an agent bears to an individual or object. When one says, "I love so-and-so," her love-attitude makes reference to the individual(s) towards which her attitude is directed, without predicating anything of them and/or without relating the agent who bears the attitude to a proposition about the object of her love. In this way, the content of the agent's love-attitude is just the object of her attitude, *tout court*.

The dissimilar attitude reports described above reflect a larger debate concerning the nature of cognitive attitudes. Most philosophers are "propositionalists". They assume (either explicitly or implicitly) intentional states, like the attitudes, are fundamentally² propositional and have predicative³ structure, such that their content is evaluable by some standard, be it truth,

¹ For a brief history and discussion of the nature of intentionality, see George Bealer, "Materialism and the Logical Structure of Intentionality," in *Objections to Physicalism*, ed. Howard Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 101-26.

² Most propositionalists assume that the *propositional* content of propositional attitudes has explanatory primacy over other content that may be constitutive of the attitude or other content that may be derived from the propositional content of the attitude. It is, perhaps, an open question whether all propositional attitudes are *essentially* propositional, since there is disagreement over whether their object(s) is best construed as a proposition or whether they even take an object (c.f., Sellars, 1956; Kiteley, 1964).

³ It is important to bear in mind that the predicative elements of structured propositional attitudes may be located at different levels: solely at the state level, or at both the state and content level.

accuracy, veridicality, or satisfaction. While this may be the standard view, it has recently found a variety of opponents. Alex Grzankowski,⁴ Michelle Montague,⁵ and Paul Thagard,⁶ to name a few, are all, in some sense, "objectualists" or "non-propositionalists". They argue that a particular class of intentional attitudes—for example, love, fear, like, and hate—are essentially non-propositional. Such attitudes bear no relation to a proposition or state of affairs nor does their content make reference to objects by predicating something of them.⁷ As a result, objectualists think their content can neither be analyzed in terms of propositions nor can they be evaluated according to some standard such as those listed above.

To clarify, what is fundamentally at issue is whether provisions regarding intentional state contents require a "that"-clause, which inevitably involves an appeal to propositions or states of affairs. Propositionalists think intentional states call for such an appeal, while objectualists do not. One goal of this thesis is to examine the relationship between propositional and non-propositional attitudes in an attempt to explicate the nature of this appeal and determine whether it is reasonable. To that end, I aim to show that current non-propositional theories have not properly individuated polysemous non-propositional attitudes nor have they the resources to explain and predict a variety of intentional behaviors. I argue objectualists are at a considerable disadvantage since propositionalists can meet these individuative and explanatory demands, and, as a result, provide an intuitive framework to index cognitive states and their relations to one another.

⁴ Alex Grzankowski, "Not All Attitudes are Propositional," *European Journal of Philosophy* 23, no. 3 (2012): 374-91.

⁵ Michelle Montague, "Against Propositionalism," Nous 41, no. 4 (2007): 503-18.

⁶ Paul Thagard, "Desires Are Not Propositional Attitudes," *Dialogue* 45, no. 1 (2006): 151-56.

⁷ Following Evans (1982), one may argue that we cannot think *about* an object without also conceiving of that object as having certain properties. The objectualist may concede this point, but they will also argue that there is a reasonable sense by which we can think *of* objects without also thinking of an object's properties.

⁸ Alex Grzankowski, "Non-Propositional Intentionality: An Introduction," in *Non-Propositional Intentionality*, eds. Alex Grzankowski and Michelle Montague (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 3.

My thesis proceeds as follows. In § 2, I introduce objectualism, delineating its main assumptions and distinguishing it from propositionalism. I have done this, briefly, but additional exposition is required to secure a common foundation upon which to build. In § 3, I raise a methodological concern for non-propositionalism. As I see it, objectualists have taken for granted that the existence of expressions with non-propositional structures in language—expressions like "X loves Y"—bespeaks the existence of attitudes with non-propositional content in psychology. But this link has not yet been established. Since language is used in diverse ways, and there are a variety of semantic phenomena that muddle things (e.g., polysemy and ellipsis), it can be quite difficult to determine whether expressions convey information about one kind of attitude as opposed to another and whether matters of linguistics even have direct bearing on the metaphysical issues concerning (non-)propositionalism. We should be careful then not to read expressions and draw psychological conclusions solely on that basis.

In § 4, I raise two objections to non-propositionalism. The first concerns whether objectualists can individuate non-propositional attitudes without appealing to propositionalism. The second concerns whether non-propositional attitudes can explain behaviors without appealing to propositionalism. I argue that it fails on both accounts, and such a failure threatens the explanatory usefulness of the theory. In § 5, I situate myself within the current dialectic by adopting a form of propositionalism. I do not deny that non-propositional attitudes are real mental states. What I *do* deny is that non-propositional attitudes are metaphysically independent from propositional ones. ¹⁰ In contrast to objectualists, I argue that non-propositional attitudes—specifically the ones identified above—supervene on possible disjunctive complexes or sets of

⁹ Montague, "Against Propositionalism," 504.

¹⁰ Objectualists are committed to metaphysical independence. They do not think there is a constitutive or conceptual connection between propositional and non-propositional attitudes.

propositional attitudes (e.g., beliefs, hopes, desires, expectations, imaginings, emotions, and so forth), but may also be multiply realized to capture attitudinal variation. When one says, "I love so-and-so," for example, I take it that the agent's love-attitude is a distinct cognitive relation between herself and the qualities—recognized via propositional complexes—which are possessed by the attitude-directed object(s). Since there are several important ideas embedded in this example, I spend most of § 5 unpacking this supervenient account. One of its merits, I think, is its potential for reconciliation. Since non-propositional attitudes are real, objectualists get what they want (in some sense); and since non-propositional attitudes are "built out of" propositional ones, propositionalists get what they want.

However, some objectualists may still resist, insisting that non-propositional attitudes are fully autonomous (i.e., metaphysically independent) cognitive states. Grzankowski has the most developed account of non-propositional attitudes, so, in § 6, I respond to his primary objections to propositionalism. § 7 concludes. As I mentioned earlier, my main contribution to this debate is to challenge the idea that current non-propositional theories, in light of their core assumptions, can account for the polysemy of non-propositional attitudes and explain a variety of intentional behaviors. Propositionalism can meet these demands while objectualism cannot, so the former appears to be a better intentional theory.

2 SETTING THE STAGE: SOME DISTINCTIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

The debate concerning whether some intentional attitudes are non-propositional is populated by two conflicting camps. One camp, those who endorse "propositionalism", commit themselves to a metaphysical thesis whereby intentional attitudes are assumed to be states or events which relate agents to something that is propositional or proposition-like—something that is, as Michelle Montague points out, "essentially discursive in form...perspicuously conveyed by verb-involving sentences." Consider a few examples: Frank believes that the sky is blue, Ed perceives that he is in danger, Margo desires that she gets the job, and Sally imagines that dragons exist. Beliefs, perceptions, desires, and imaginings, such as these, are paradigmatic propositional attitudes, since they each express a distinct way in which a subject term (e.g., Frank, Margo, etc.) is cognitively associated with a structured proposition or "that"-clause (e.g., that the sky is blue, -that dragons exist, etc.). 1213 While the nature of these attitudes lends itself to considerable interpretation and/or disagreement, it is generally acknowledged that because their content is propositional, they are evaluable (i.e., they have conditions of satisfaction). As previously noted, an agent possesses an attitude when she is in a certain mental state, such as a perceptual-state or a belief-state. But an agent's attitude is satisfied when its content—the represented proposition—is true or accurate (in the case of belief), fulfilled or realized (in the case of desire), veridical (in the case of perception), executed (in the case of intention), and so

¹¹ Montague, "Against Propositionalism," 503.

¹² Sometimes a "that"-clause may not follow a propositional attitude verb. Bill may say, for instance, "I *desire* a new guitar." While this sentential expression does not look like a typical propositional attitude ascription, it is often analyzed as one. Most think Bill's claim is just a covert way of saying, "I *desire that* I have a new guitar." For a brief discussion of this type of analysis, see John Searle, "Are There Non-Propositional Intentional States?," in *Non-Propositional Intentionality*, eds. Alex Grzankowski and Michelle Montague (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 259-271.

¹³ For alternatives to *structured* propositionalism, see Robert Stalnaker, *Inquiry* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984) and David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Press, 1986). My arguments do not rely on any particular view of propositionalism.

forth. To illustrate, a person's belief that Minnesota is North of Iowa is true or accurate when Minnesota *is* North of Iowa and false or inaccurate when Minnesota is not North of Iowa. Likewise, my desire that I run a marathon is fulfilled or realized when I run a marathon and unfulfilled or unrealized when I don't run the marathon. In both cases, the content of the attitude is the proposition to which the attitude is directed. And since propositions are assumed to be the bearers of truth and falsity, reflecting the *way things are* at a particular world, they are evaluable.

The opposing camp, which operates under the moniker "objectualism" or "non-propositionalism", either denies propositionalism about several intentional attitudes and/or argues that some attitudes are essentially non-propositional. Michelle Montague¹⁴ and Alex Grzankowski, ¹⁵ for instance, deny propositionalism about loving, hating, fearing, and liking; ¹⁶ and Paul Thagard ¹⁷, Talbot Brewer ¹⁸, and William Lycan ¹⁹ deny propositionalism about desiring. ²⁰ They argue such attitudes do not represent the same as a proposition or state of affairs. Instead, they are metaphysically distinct.

To understand why objectualists deny propositionalism about certain intentional attitudes, it is helpful to examine their core assumptions. I focus on the three most prominent in the literature. Consider a few sentences: Scott *loves* Marie, Johnny *fears* the Bogeyman, Yasmin *likes* a unicorn, and Humphrey *hates* his neighbor's dog. These sentences express intentional

¹⁴ Montague. "Against Propositionalism," 503-518.

¹⁵ Grzankowski, "Not All Attitudes are Propositional," 374-91; See, also, Alex Grzankowski, "Non-Propositional Attitudes," *Philosophy Compass* 8, no. 12 (2013): 1123-37; Alex Grzankowski, "Attitudes Towards Objects," *Nous* 50, no. 2 (2014): 314-28; Alex Grzankowski, "Limits of Propositionalism," *Inquiry* 59, no. 7 (2016): 819-38; Alex Grzankowski, "A Theory of Non-Propositional Attitudes," in *Non-Propositional Intentionality*, eds. Alexander Grankowski and Michelle Montague (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 134-51; and Alexander Grzankowski, "Non-Propositional Contents and How to Find Them," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 25, no. 3-4 (2018): 233-41.

¹⁶ Montague is also an objectualist about hope, wonder, contemplation, adoration, missing, and mourning.

¹⁷ Paul Thagard, "Desires Are Not Propositional Attitudes," 151-56.

¹⁸ Talbot Brewer, "Three Dogmas of Desire," in *Values and Virtues: Aristotelianism in Contemporary Ethics*, ed. T. D. J. Chappell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006): 257-84.

¹⁹ William Lycan, "Desire Considered as a Propositional Attitude," *Philosophical Perspectives* 26 (2012): 202-15.

²⁰ I do not focus on non-propositional desire in this paper since there is good reason to reject it as a non-propositional attitude. See footnote 11.

attitudes which are not evidently directed at a proposition. Instead, they are directed at an object or individual without relating the agent who possesses the attitude to a proposition about the object. As it goes, Scott may love Marie without loving anything about Marie, that is, any proposition about Marie, and Yasmin may like a unicorn without liking any particular aspect of the unicorn (e.g., that they are equine creatures, that they are mythical, that they are elusive, etc.). Since there is no relation between the agent and a proposition in these cases—since the agent's state, as objectualist's point out, "represents differently than any proposition"—the content of his or her attitude is considered non-propositional.²¹ This is the objectualist's first assumption.

The objectualist's second assumption concerns predication and evaluability. I noted that propositional attitudes are evaluable because their content is propositional. But they (i.e., the contents of propositional attitudes) also seem to be predicative. When Frank says, "I believe that the sky is blue," he takes the sky to have a certain property, namely, blueness. Likewise, when Yasmin imagines that a unicorn exists, she attributes existence to unicorns for pretensive purposes. In both cases, the agent makes reference to a propositional object and predicates something of it. But, according to objectualists, predication and evaluability does not apply to non-propositional attitudes.²² When Scott loves Marie, for example, his mental state is about Marie, but he does not predicate a property to Marie or represent her as *being some way*. He merely brings her to mind.²³ Because non-propositional attitudes represent in this way, objectualists argue they cannot be evaluated according to some standard. Questions of whether Scott's love is true, Johnny's fear is accurate, or Humphrey's hate is satisfied are, as

²¹ Alex Grzankowski, "Non-Propositional Contents and How to Find Them," 3.

²² Alex Grzankowski, "Non-Propositional Attitudes," 1124.

²³ Ibid., 1124.

Grzankowski claims, misplaced.²⁴ Conditions of evaluability do not bear on non-propositional attitudes in an appropriate or relevant way.

Finally, objectualists assume that non-propositional attitudes feature in predictive and/or psychological explanations such that they can be brought to bear on our motivations, actions, omissions, and behaviors.²⁵ Though Johnny may not represent the Bogeyman as being some way, his fear of the Bogeyman may motivate him to act in specific ways. He may, for example, conduct himself properly in formal situations or obey the commands of authority figures to avoid encountering the Bogyman. And, more somatically, he may break out in nervous sweats, fail to get adequate sleep, and experience stress as a result of his fear. From an explanatory standpoint, the objectualist insists that Johnny can cite his non-propositional fear as a reason for his wellmannered behavior. Indeed, Johnny is obedient because he fears the Bogeyman. The objectualist also insists that observers can predict Johnny's behavior by referencing his non-propositional fear. One may predict, for example, that Johnny will comport himself or Johnny will experience stress because he fears the Bogeyman. In both instances, non-propositional attitudes help us explain and predict why agents act as they do in a way that does not obviously appeal to something propositional in nature. So, in this regard, non-propositional attitudes do relevant and important work to elucidate agential behaviors.

²⁴ Ibid., 1124.

²⁵ Alex Grzankowski, "Limits of Propositionalism," 821-29.

3 A METHODOLOGICAL CONCERN

Certainly, more may be said regarding non-propositional attitudes, propositional attitudes, and their relevant distinctions. But I have provided an adequate framework to proceed. I now want to consider a methodological concern I have with the objectualist's attempt at providing a general theory of non-propositional attitudes. As I see it, the relationship between linguistic expressions of non-propositional attitudes and the non-propositional attitude psychologies to which those expressions supposedly track has yet to be established. To the objectualist's credit, we definitely use expressions like "X loves Y", "X likes Y", or "X hates Y" in ordinary language. But we should be careful not to read these expressions, and conclude solely on their bases, that they provide conclusive *psychological* evidence (as opposed to linguistic evidence) for the existence of non-propositional attitudes or that they even convey meaningful information about non-propositional content and its mental representation. This is because language is used in remarkably manifold ways. A single expression can communicate thoughts that have related but different structures, it can communicate a partial thought that stands as an abbreviated version of a related but more complete thought, and it can communicate thoughts that are modulated by context. These various uses make it difficult to discern whether expressions of non-propositional attitudes convey information about the psychological phenomena they supposedly track (viz., attitudes with non-propositional content), or whether they really convey information about other phenomena (viz., attitudes with propositional content), albeit in irregular or indirect ways. A couple examples may help to illustrate this point.

Consider first polysemy. This is a phenomenon whereby a single term is associated with multiple related senses.²⁶ The term *healthy*, for example, can denote someone who is in good

²⁶ Polysemy may be contrasted with monosemy, whereby a single term only has one meaning, and homonymy, whereby a single term has multiple *unrelated* senses. For a helpful discussion of polysemy and related phenomena,

health (as in "Tara is *healthy*"), something that promotes health (as in "eating vegetables is *healthy*"), or something that is just indicative of health (as in "a *healthy* mind"). It is perhaps unclear how best to construe the relatedness of polysemous senses, in terms of a core meaning, shared features, semantic overlap, or productive rules. But, for our purposes, it is enough to say that there is at least some substantive generative system or principle that ties a term's polysemous senses together.

What I find interesting from a linguistic standpoint is that many terms used in non-propositional expressions, especially "love" and "fear", also appear to have polysemous natures. ²⁷ The term "love", for example, can express romantic or passionate love for a significant other, filial love for a parent, maternal love for a child, platonic or companionate love for a friend, or a treasuring-type love for possessions. ²⁸ It can also express a type of enjoyment (as in "I love to hang out at the beach"), a type of approval (as in "I love your plan"), a type of respect or positive regard (as in "I love myself"), a type of comfort (as in "I love it here"), a type of feeling (as in "I am in love"), or a type of desire (as in "I'd love for you to tag along"). As above, it is unclear how these senses are related to each other and how they are represented in the head. But we may reasonably ask whether a general theory of non-propositional attitudes can adequately capture and explain polysemous senses, particularly objectual ones, or whether that

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(2010): 1-25.

see Ingrid Falkum and Agustin Vicente, "Polysemy: Current Perspectives and Approaches," *Lingua* 157, no. 1 (2015): 1-16.

²⁷ Davis has previously argued that the term "fear" denotes several different, though related, psychological states: one is propositional attitude, one is a bodily state, and one is a relation between a person and a non-propositional object. C.f., Wayne Davis, "The Varieties of Fear," *Philosophical Studies* 51, no. 3 (1987): 287-310.

²⁸ It is worth noting that other languages may denote polysemous senses of love with other words. In Greek, there are words like *eros* (i.e., romantic or passionate love), *ludus* (playful love), *storge* (filial or fraternal love), *pragma* (sensible or rational love), *mania* (possessive love), and *agape* (selfless love). C.f., Tim Lomas, "The Flavors of Love: A Cross-Cultural Lexical Analysis," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior* 48, no. 1 (2018): 134-152; Tia Xenia, "The Contrastive Componential Analysis of the English Verb 'to love'," *Journal of Language and Literature* 19, no. 1 (2019): 65-71; and Ellen Berscheid, "Love in the Fourth Dimension," *Annual Review of Psychology* 61

theory, instead, offers only generalizations about a term whose meaning is in some way abstracted from its distinct senses such that it functions as a generic catch-all for a range of related thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. My contention, which I will discuss in the following sections, is that objectualists do something like the latter. They characterize non-propositional attitudes univocally and then analyze them as such, without considering whether and how polysemy might bear on that analysis. This is a failure on their part not only because it oversimplifies a psychological picture that is often messy but also because it dilutes the explanatory power of their theory. Since they do not specify polysemous relations, it is not easy for them to explain why, for example, two people who love the same object behave in different ways towards it. But more on this later. For now, it is worth observing that the same form of words—for example, "I love you"—can express a variety of related but different thoughts, and it is debatable whether all these thoughts are represented non-propositionally since objectualists have neither acknowledged nor analyzed the extent to which non-propositional attitudes are polysemous. Upon further investigation, it may turn out that many of the polysemous senses of, say, "love" or "like", are represented propositionally. If so, it may diminish the scope of nonpropositionalism as well as its capacity to provide fruitful explanations and predictions of intentional behaviors.

Now consider elliptical expressions or explanations. An elliptical expression or explanation is, more or less, a way of communicating partial or incomplete thoughts about a thing—thoughts that stand in relation to a more complete thought about that thing. Most expressions are elliptical because they omit information that is blatantly obvious in a context or not of especial importance. For instance, one may say, "It is snowing," if asked about the weather in Minnesota, instead of saying, "It is snowing *in Minnesota*." While the latter

expression is more explanatorily complete than the former, it is not used because the speaker assumes the hearer will understand the expression in the context to which it is given, perhaps by supplementing the expression with elided, though accessible, material.

It also appears that expressions of non-propositional attitudes can be elliptical. In the context of a restaurant, for example, the expression "I like fish" can be an elliptical way to express the following thought: I like to have fish for dinner. In different contexts—that of a pet store or that of an aquarium—the same expression can be an elliptical way to express other thoughts: I like to have fish as pets or I like to observe fish, respectively. As above, the meanings of these expressions are apprehended through contextual cues or background knowledge. We supplement the expression with the information we need to make sense of it unless we query for additional information or are content with ignorance. But, as with polysemy, it is unclear how these elliptical expressions are represented in the head. We might be quick to assume that they are non-propositional because they are presented as such: there is a supposed non-propositional attitude verb flanked by two noun-phrases. But further analysis reveals that, within a given context, such expressions are really just rough-and-ready vehicles we use to quickly communicate information about more complete *propositional* thoughts. The result of this phenomenon is a "mismatch" between a non-propositional expression and the propositional representation that ostensibly grounds it—between, say, an utterance that I like fish and a representation that I like it only insofar as I eat it for dinner, or have them as pets, or what have you. So, while it is still unclear whether non-propositional expressions reflect attitudes with nonpropositional content, it is likely true that they do not always do.

To be fair, it is probably premature to claim that *all* non-propositional expressions are either elliptical or polysemous. So, I will, instead, end this section with a more modest claim:

looks can be deceiving. Though we often encounter expressions that have a non-propositional linguistic structure, that does not mean that they reflect or convey information about something that *is* non-propositional. They are, rather, imperfect guides to what is going on in the head. Sometimes they offer accurate portrayals of psychological phenomena, but sometimes they do not. As a result, we should be careful not to attribute "real" attitudes to people based solely on the existence of expressions concerning them. Further detailed studies, using the methods of both linguistics *and* psychology, are needed to make such attributions.

4 TWO OBJECTIONS TO NON-PROPOSITIONALISM

The potential concern I highlight above does not sound the death knell for non-propositionalism. But I do think there are several objections that call into question its explanatory usefulness. I'll expand on these objections below and then I'll attempt to resolve them with a supervenience account.

The first objection concerns whether objectualist theories can individuate nonpropositionalist attitudes finely enough to explain or predict a variety of behaviors.²⁹ Recall, nonpropositional attitudes represent things without representing them as being some way. Scott may love Marie, for instance, without predicating a property of her. He simply brings her to mind. However, this turns out to be problematic when we introduce other elements into the picture. To illustrate, suppose an objectualist holds that Scott loves Marie and Ryan loves her, too. We may predict, then, that since both Scott and Ryan exhibit similar attitudes towards Marie, they will act in similar ways towards Marie. But now suppose that Scott loves that he be near Marie and Ryan loves that he tortures Marie. Technically, they love the same thing but, crucially, in ways that would generate divergent behavioral predictions and/or explanations. The worry is that since non-propositional attitudes do not represent objects as being some way, the objectualist is not able to make fine-grained distinctions between Scott and Ryan's love in order to provide adequate descriptions or predictions of their divergent behaviors. So, he is at a considerable disadvantage against propositionalists who can easily make distinctions using propositions or something proposition-like.

An initial response may be to distinguish Scott and Ryan's love according to the different reasons they have for their attitudes. Thus, Scott and Ryan may simply love Marie, but they

²⁹ For this objection, see Neil Sinhababu, "Advantages of Propositionalism," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 96, no. 1 (2015): 165-80.

behave differently towards her because they have different reasons for their loves: Scott's reason is to be near Marie and Ryan's is to torture her. The advantage of this response is that it allows the objectualist to explain attitudinal differences and divergent behaviors without ceding the objectual character of the attitudes since reasons need not be constitutive of the attitudes. They are, instead, causal antecedents of the attitudes (i.e., things that lead X to love Y) or after-the-fact rationalizations for the attitudes (i.e., explanations for why X loves Y). 30 Nevertheless, I think this response will end up undermining the objectualist's case. If we assume that reasons are propositions, or mental states with propositional content, or even things that derive from mental states with propositional content, and those reasons are required to either individuate nonpropositional attitudes or generate predictions of non-propositional behaviors (i.e., behaviors that are a result of non-propositional attitudes), then the objectualist will have to rely on a propositional framework to make sense of their theory. The objectualist's overarching goal is to secure a robust theory of intentionality such that non-propositional attitudes are metaphysically distinct from propositional attitudes and non-propositional attitudes can themselves feature in predictive and/or psychological explanations—not just reasons for those attitudes. But the more they surround non-propositional attitudes with other things (e.g., propositional reasons) to make sense of intentional behaviors, the more those things get bound together as an explanatory complex. The end result is an attitude that is not as metaphysically distinct or as explanatorily efficacious as the objectualist would like. It may be best, then, that the objectualist avoids this dialectical route.

A similar response is to embrace both propositional and non-propositional characterizations of an attitude (e.g., fear, love, hate, etc.).³¹ Scott may love Marie, for example,

³⁰ Thanks to Dan Weiskopf for this type of reply.

³¹ Grzankowski, "Limits of Propositionalism," 824-25.

but he may also love that he be near Marie. The same goes, *mutatis mutandis*, for Ryan. With this expansion, the objectualist is in a better position to explain why Scott and Ryan act differently towards Marie even though they love the same object. So long as the situation draws our attention to propositional characterizations of love in addition to non-propositional characterizations, there is a sense in which Scott and Ryan's love is different and a sense in which their love is the same.³² All the objectualist needs to do to generate explanations and predictions of their behavior is focus on the contents of the former attitudes rather than the contents of the latter.

This reply may resolve the immediate worry, but it suffers the same fate as the first. As I see it, an appeal to supplementary propositional attitudes is problematic because it renders non-propositionalism increasingly superfluous. To the extent the burden of explaining and predicting non-propositional behaviors falls on propositional attitudes instead of their non-propositional counterparts, there does not seem to be a point in positing the latter. They become more of a placeholder, existing in name only, rather than a robust cognitive state which helps to elucidate agential behaviors.

But let us grant, for the sake of argument, that non-propositional attitudes can do some (co-)explanatory work with respect to behavior. Even so, it is still unclear how objectualists could make sense of graded non-propositional relations without presupposing a propositional framework. Consider that Sally may love her partner romantically, her parents selfishly, her daughter selflessly, her friend platonically, her fish affectionately, and a book nostalgically. And she may love any one of these objects conditionally or unconditionally, a lot or a little, always or sometimes, and so on. The fact that love is so motley in character suggests that the attitude may

³² Ibid., 825.

not be as categorically univocal as one might assume. Instead, it may be divided into polysemous sub-categories, each of which is characterized by patterns of thought and behavior that are governed by one or more propositional relation. Such a construal, I think, more accurately maps on to the diverse psychological landscape, and it allows for more discrete explanations and predictions of behavior. A generic "love", "hate", or "fear" does not do much to explain why an agent behaves as s/he does. "Because I love so-and-so", for instance, does not suffice to explain why Sally acts romantically towards her partner and non-romantically towards her friend provided she loves them both, or why she may act more romantically to one partner as opposed to another. If it does, it is empty and uninformative. Sally's dissimilar behaviors only make sense once we have specified the nature of the propositional relation(s) undergirding them. We can distinguish Sally's behavior to her partner from that of her friend by specifying, among other things, that she is in a romantic relation towards the former and a platonic relation towards the latter. In either case, the nature of the relation gives formative quality to the attitude, such that romantic love produces markedly different thoughts, feelings, and behaviors from platonic love. The problem is that objectualists cannot specify such relations without appealing to propositions or states of affairs. They are stuck, instead, with generic attitudes that inadequately capture behavioral nuances—attitudes that may not even be generic to begin with. Of course, they can always appeal to the propositional characterizations of non-propositional attitudes. But the advantage of propositionalism is that it can already explain non-propositional behaviors without positing additional entities, and it does so in a way that is psychologically informative. Nonpropositionalism, on the other hand, relies on propositionalism to get off the ground. It posits additional entities, at the cost of parsimony, to proffer uninformative psychological explanations that demand further elaboration.

The second objection is related to the first. It concerns whether non-propositional attitudes can feature in predictive psychological explanations *without* appealing to propositions. The objectualist thinks they can. Consider a few examples from Grzankowski: Lynn will not go to the party because only gin is being served and Lynn hates gin, Lex Luthor will avoid the Fortress of Solitude because he suspects Superman is there and Lex fears Superman, and Bill wants to go to the bar because he heard John will be there and Bill loves John.³³ In each case, the agent's motivations for prospective behavior make reference to mental ascriptions that are not obviously propositional in nature. It is the non-propositional attitude alone—not some other propositional attitude—that does relevant work to elucidate behavior. So, according to the objectualist, they should not be considered idle posits or placeholders.

I disagree with the objectualist. To me, it is not the non-propositional attitude that explains why an agent behaves in a particular way. More likely, it is the specific, predicated qualities of the object, a state of affairs surrounding the agent, or some further propositional relation that explains why. Consider the examples once more. We could just as well say that Lynn will not go to the party because only gin is being served and she hates the taste of gin, or that Lex Luthor will avoid the Fortress of Solitude because he suspects Superman is there and he fears the traits of Superman or that his schemes will be thwarted. These formations retain the agent's original motivations, but they have the advantage of providing additional specificity. We do not need to settle on a generic or overbroad explanation of why Lynn and Lex behave as they do. We can utilize one that provides additional context to their behaviors. Propositional construals help us discern what it is about Superman that Lex fears and inevitably causes him to avoid the Fortress of Solitude. Of course, the objectualist may be okay with leveraging generic

³³ Grzankowski, "Limits of Propositionalism," 828.

explanations of behavior. But, as Sinhababu notes, without specifying certain propositional relations, the objectualist is not in a good position to explain why a non-propositional attitude does or does not obtain and/or why a non-propositional attitude produces psychological effects in one situation but not another.³⁴

To illustrate, suppose, on a separate occasion, that Lex does *not* avoid the Fortress of Solitude even though he suspects Superman is there and he fears Superman. In this example, it is not clear what explains the difference in his behavior unless some relation between Lex and Superman has changed. Perhaps his fearful-avoidant behavior is sensitive to whether he can exploit a weakness or secure an advantage, or, on the contrary, whether his plans will be thwarted. But it is not sensitive to whether he will be apprehended, injured, or even killed. Whatever the case, being able to specify these various relations gives us a clearer, more complete account of the manifestation conditions regarding non-propositional behaviors. They help to illuminate the parameters circumscribing the attitude. Since objectualists cannot reference these relations without adopting some form of propositionalism, they must contend with explanations that are lacking in specificity and scope. Granted, such explanations are sometimes preferable because they are easily communicable. But only up to a point. Their utility is often tied to how much contextual information one has access to.³⁵ If one has a lot of information regarding a subject and his/her circumstances, then a generic or elliptical explanation of the subject's behavior is preferable only insofar as one is already able to fill in relational gaps quite quickly. It would be inefficient to spend considerable time and effort specifying relations provided one is already aware of those which are predominately operational. But if one does not have such information, then a generic explanation is not preferable for the very fact that one cannot fill in

³⁴ C.f., Sinhababu, "Advantages of Propositionalism," 175.

³⁵ Ibid., 170.

the relational gaps unless they are specified. In either case, the objectualist will end up relying on propositionalism to flesh out behavioral accounts. The result is a loss of explanatory power for non-propositionalism, for it no longer offers robust descriptions of why people think, feel, or act. It just provides an economical package for such descriptions.

5 A SUPERVENIENCE ACCOUNT

I think we can resolve the aforementioned objections by rejecting the assumption that non-propositional attitudes are metaphysically independent from propositional ones. While it may be true that non-propositional attitudes represent real mental states, I think such states are best understood when situated within a propositional framework that can not only individuate them finely enough but also deliver informative explanations for how we think, feel, and behave. That said, it is far from clear how propositionalism can account for non-propositional attitudes, so I will spend the rest of this paper developing and defending an account that elucidates their relationship. My main contention is that non-propositional attitudes supervene on possible disjunctive complexes of propositional attitudes. When an agent loves an object, for example, her attitude involves a cognitive relation between herself and the qualities—grasped via propositional complexes—which are possessed by the attitude-directed object(s). There is a lot to unpack, here, so I spend the rest of this section delineating the main assumptions of my account. The next section, I defend my account against two protentional objections.

My first assumption concerns the relata of non-propositional attitudes. As I see it, non-propositional attitudes involve the cognitive relation an agent bears to an object *as well as* an object's qualities or states of affairs surrounding that object. This means that to love so-and-so is to simultaneously love something about so-and-so. One benefit of incorporating relations to qualities or states of affairs is that they place parameters on non-propositional attitudes. Not every quality or state of affairs will consistently characterize love or effectuate loving behaviors, but some will more than others and in differing ways. An account sensitive to these dynamics not only appreciates the fundamental complexities of the attitudes but, as we will see, it also gives us

³⁶ I will focus on the non-propositional attitude of love. But my assumptions also apply to fear, hate, and liking.

a way to individuate familial and nonfamilial attitudes finely enough to explain patterns of behavior. To be sure, it is an open empirical question as to which relations and behaviors are commonly (dis)associated with love. But my account remains neutral to that question. It simply allows us to *fill in* relations when there is evidence to support their existence and then analyze behavioral data in light of those relations. Without specifying such relations, we encounter many of the problems that face non-propositionalism: we have no way to explain why a given non-propositional obtains and why it produces select behaviors in select contexts.

According to my second assumption, objectual qualities and states of affairs are grasped and appreciated via a complex (or complexes) of propositional attitudes. One comes to know and love that her dog is loyal, for instance, by having a complex of perceptions, beliefs, desires, and so forth, which express that fact. This assumption gives us a way to trace the developmental history of a non-propositional attitude and it helps to explain why some elements of an attitude change, progress, or remain stable over time. To illustrate, suppose we discover that an agent no longer loves her dog because she no longer believes her dog is loyal. This tells us that the agent's love was at least partly dependent on her belief for its sustainment. My account can readily capture these types of dependencies because it incorporates propositional attitudes. We need only look at changes within the propositional complex to explain changes in the attitude, for the latter supervenes on the former. Non-propositionalism, on the other hand, cannot explain attitudinal or behavioral changes because it cannot specify relations beyond those that are purely objectual.

It follows from my first two assumption that since non-propositional attitudes involve relations to objectual qualities, they are associated with propositional complexes and/or interactions among and between propositional complexes. I think that it is in virtue of believing certain things about an object (e.g., that the dog is loyal), imagining certain things about an

object (e.g., that the dog will comfort an agent when she is sad), perceiving certain things about an object (e.g., that the dog is cute), desiring certain things about an object (e.g., that the dog will be the agent's companion), and so forth—and in virtue of possible interactions between propositional attitudes and/or sets of propositional attitudes (e.g., interactions between beliefs, desires, imaginings, etc.)—that the agent bears a distinct attitude towards the object (viz., her love of the dog). To be sure, a single non-propositional attitude need not be associated with one particular complex, such that any agent who does not grasp or entertain that particular complex cannot be in a state of love. Rather, a single non-propositional attitude may be multiply realized such that it can be associated with many different complexes. This leaves us room to specify differences in people, but it still allows us to accommodate commonalities. We may discover that all states of love have a type of belief-desire interaction at their core, but that each individual state is distinguished by a host of other interactions that impinge on the core, or the strength of the interaction between the belief and the desire, or the contents of the beliefs and desires, etc. Or we may discover that while some types of love are characterized by a rigid belief, other types lack a belief altogether. Being able to specify these differences enables us to capture the polysemy of many non-propositional attitude verbs, since all verbs will likely be associated with different complexes (e.g., platonic love may lack a type of desire that is characteristic of romantic love). And such specification may help to explain strength of attitude, since differences may depend on variances in how complexes interact or the level of connectivity that exist among or between complexes.

Let us stop and take stock. If you recall, the two objections leveraged against non-propositionalism concern whether it can individuate non-propositional attitudes finely enough and whether it can explain a variety of behaviors. With the addition of supervenience,

objectualists now have the resources to effectively respond to both of these objections. They can flexibly individuate non-propositional attitudes according to the propositional complexes that they are built out of as well as the composite interactions among and between said complexes. And they can offer *informative* explanations and predictions of behavior by appealing to objectual qualities and objectual states of affairs rather than the object itself. The draw of supervenience, then, is that it can restore the explanatory power of objectualist accounts. But the trade-off is that objectualists must concede that both non-propositional attitudes and propositional attitudes are not fully autonomous (i.e., metaphysically independent) cognitive states. This does not mean that they must concede that non-propositional attitudes are not *real* states. They just have to reexamine its relationship to other states.

6 OBJECTIONS TO NON-PROPOSITIONAL SUPERVENIENCE

Some objectualists, like Grzankwoski, may want to resist examining non-propositional attitudes in light of propositionalism. So, in this section, I identify and respond to two objections to my account. The first objection states that non-propositional attitudes cannot be analyzed in terms of propositions or propositional attitudes because any propositional formulation that is introduced (e.g., substituting X loves that Y is such and such for X loves Y) will either mispredict or overpredict what is represented by the non-propositional attitude. As an illustration, consider the following examples: Bill fears a man and Jones loves a woman. Grzankowksi argues that these non-propositional attitudes *only* have specific readings because they relate an agent to a particular/specific object or individual.³⁷ For Bill to fear a man, for instance, it must be the case that he fears a particular man (John or James, perhaps). The same goes, mutatis mutandis, for Jones. But, notice, that any propositional complement of such attitudes—like Bill fears that a man is out to get him, or Jones loves that a woman is pretty—will always allow for non-specific readings because there is no particular object or individual at issue. While it may be true that Bill fears that a man is out to get him, there need not be a particular man that he fears since anyone could theoretically fit the bill (pun unintended). Grzankowski argues that these non-specific readings are overpredicted. They result in an ascriptive attitude inequivalence, which means non-propositional attitudes cannot be analyzed propositionally.

I think there are several counterexamples to the claim that non-propositional attitudes only have specific readings. Here are a few: Bill fears dogs, Bill likes the color red, Bill loves squareness, Bill hates politics, Bill loves the smell of flowers, Sally hates someone who is in love with her, and Sally loves whoever pursues her. The range of "objects" in the examples I proffer,

³⁷ Grzankowski, Alex. "Limits of Propositionalism." *Inquiry* 69, no. 7 (2016): 819-38.

here, include kinds, properties, determinables, determinates, and other functional roles. They are intended to represent cases wherein a non-propositional sentence has a non-specific reading in addition to a specific one. Take the last example, for instance. On a de re interpretation, "whoever" is specific in that it picks out a particular individual that Sally has in mind. But on a de dicto interpretation, "whoever" is unspecific. It does not pick out a particular person, but rather anyone who pursues Sally. Bill's fear of dogs is another example that is ambiguous between a specific and non-specific reading. While it may be true that Bill fears a particular dog, he may just as well fear dogs *qua* natural kind, such that any unspecific creature that exhibits the intrinsic properties that are common to dogs causes him fear. Grankowski's thesis is that "for any sentential completion that the propositionalist offers, a non-specific reading that *isn't supposed to be available* will become available" (my emphasis). As I have shown, though, there is at least one non-propositional attitude that has a non-specific reading available to it. So, there is reason to reject his thesis.

The second objection states that non-propositional attitudes do not supervene on propositions or propositional attitudes, because there are no propositional attitude candidates that are *sufficient* for every non-propositional attitude.³⁹ As an illustration, consider the following example from Grzankowski:

Suppose that if Jim likes Jackie this requires that Jim stand in some propositional attitude relation or other to some proposition or other concerning Jackie. But what propositional attitude will meet the requirement? One might suggest that Jim wouldn't like Jackie if he didn't think she existed, so perhaps *believing that Jackie exists* could serve as a first pass suggestion. But is this belief sufficient for

³⁸ Ibid., 838.

³⁹ For this objection, see, Grzankowski, "Not All Attitudes are Propositional," 383-86.

Jim's liking of Jackie? Quite obviously it is not. But how might we do better? Jim believes that Jackie is nice? Jim likes that Jackie is kind? Let us just grant that both are true of Jim. Not only are they probably not necessary, but counterexamples to their sufficiency are still forth-coming. And combining the candidates doesn't seem to help: Jim believes that Jackie is kind, he hopes that she gets a good job, he likes that she helps the needy, but for all of that, he can't stand her. With just a bit of reflection, it strikes one that offering a sufficient condition in every case is anything but easy.⁴⁰

The objectualist will claim that no matter what propositional attitudes we attribute to Jim, they will not be enough to satisfy his non-propositional liking. Thus, supervenience appears to be a non-starter. Such an account should be able to offer us a set of minimally sufficient conditions upon which propositional attitudes elicit non-propositional attitudes, but it cannot.

I somewhat agree with Grzankowski. One propositional attitude or a small combination of propositional attitudes does not seem to be sufficient for a non-propositional attitude. In my view, it is a variety of disjunctive propositional complexes that are sufficient. Grzankowski underestimates the complexity of non-propositional attitudes as well as the extent to which different types of attitudes co-mingle to manifest various behaviors. While it may not be the case that one belief (or belief-desire combination) "makes" a non-propositional attitude, it may be the case that a variety of conditional beliefs, desires, imaginings, expectations, emotions, and so forth—all interacting with each other—make a non-propositional attitude. Similarly, while one

⁴⁰ Ibid., 383-84.

⁴¹ Here, it may be worth pointing out the similarities between my view and both the dispositionalist and functionalist views. Dispositionalists, like Ryle, observe that mental states are best construed as "multi-track" dispositions in that they are tied to multiple triggering manifestation conditionals. Functionalists, like Fodor, observe that mental states are best construed as causal roles (i.e., sensory inputs, behavioral outputs, interactions, etc.) within a given cognitive system. My account just substitutes dispositions and causal roles for clusters of propositional attitudes, at least regarding one type of mental state (i.e., non-propositional attitudes). C.f., Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*

propositional attitude (or belief-desire combination) may not be sufficient for being in a non-propositional attitude *category*, like love, that does not mean a propositional attitude or complex is not sufficient for being in *sub-categories* of love (e.g., platonic love, romantic love, etc.), which may or may not exhaust the category. If so—if the polysemy of non-propositional attitude verbs does correspond to a bunch of sub-attitude states—then we would not expect there to be a single sufficient condition for being in a non-propositional attitude state. Instead, we would expect multiple sufficient conditions, each corresponding to a different sub-category.

Remember, too, that on my account non-propositional attitudes are multiply realized such that a single non-propositional attitude can be realized by more than one type of propositional complex. This means that there may not be one global-type propositional complex that is sufficient for one to be in a non-propositional attitude state. Rather, each person may have their own local-type propositional complex that is sufficient for *them* to be in a non-propositional attitude state. Thus, my love may involve beliefs, desires, and so on. But your love may involve different beliefs, desires, and so on, or maybe even no beliefs.

I think part of the difficulty with specifying sufficient elicitation conditions has to do with the complexity of the attitudes. We simply do not know enough about the attitudes to make adequate judgements or generalizations about them, especially ones as rich and polysemous as love. This does not mean that we cannot make them. It just means we ought to be more careful when we do. Nevertheless, if the objectualist wants to object to my supervenience account on the grounds that the manifestation conditions for non-propositional attitudes are complicated messes of states, then I have two responses. First, I would point out that complexity is not really a new

⁽Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1949).; and, Jerry Fodor, *Psychological Explanation* (New York: Random House Press, 1968).

problem. 42 It bedevils any theory of mind. The functionalist, for example, has difficulty specifying causal roles because it is quite complicated to determine all the sensory inputs, behavioral outputs, and interactions that are associated with a single mental state, like pain, let alone many. The same goes, mutatis mutandis, for dispositionalists and identity theorists. Of course, it would surely be nice to have a set of conditions for any given mental state, but since said states are potentially multi-track, overlapping, disjunctive, and/or multiply realized, we ought to acknowledge the long road it will take to get to that point. We cannot simply throw a bunch of conditions at the proverbial wall and hope that something sticks. Second, I would argue that objectualists have not given any sufficient conditions for non-propositional attitudes, either. They claim that they are metaphysically distinct states, and then place the burden on propositionalists to come up with propositional analyses of them. But they are reluctant to provide their own non-propositional analyses of how we come to be in such states or what it is to be in such states. My guess is that if they try to work out the details, they will quickly realize that it is not so simple. The conditions they posit will not be any less complex than the ones the propositionalists posit, and it is perhaps naïve to think otherwise.

⁴² See, e.g., Ned Block and Jerry Fodor, "What Psychological States are Not," *The Philosophical Review* 81, no. 2 (1972), 159-60.

7 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper has been threefold: first, to argue that sentential expressions of non-propositional attitudes may not always reflect non-propositional attitude psychologies if the former are polysemous or elliptical; second, to argue that current non-propositional theories have neither the resources to individuate non-propositional attitudes nor the resources to explain and predict a variety of intentional behaviors; and, finally, to argue that such resources become available if non-propositional attitudes supervene wholly on propositional attitude clusters. To be sure, the limitations of a supervenient approach are unclear given the inherent complexity that goes along with it. But, right now, it has the advantage of being able to account for the polysemous senses of non-propositional attitudes according to the propositional complexes out of which they are built. And it offers more specific and/or complete descriptions of human psychology because it has various propositional relations and interactions at its disposal. So, unless there is good reason to reject my propositional account, it appears to be a more successful psychological theory.

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