

# **A Relational Theory of Non-Propositional Attitudes**

## **Introduction**

According to the ‘standard theory’, propositional attitudes are two-place relations holding between subjects and propositions. In the present paper, I consider the prospects of offering an analog for non-propositional attitudes. As we will see, many of the same types of motivations and advantages that have made the standard theory of propositional attitudes attractive apply to non-propositional attitudes as well. Of course, in the case of non-propositional attitudes, objects other than propositions are called for and the suggestion to be offered is that non-propositional attitudes are two-place relations holding between subjects and properties.

One might harbor concerns about the standard theory of propositional attitudes and I fear that many of those concerns will reemerge when considering the closely related ‘property-view’ of non-propositional attitudes. But I think there are good reasons for pursuing the view nevertheless. First, the positive proposal might just be a good one. The standard theory of propositional attitudes didn’t get to be standard for no reason at all. For those who like it, what follows may be a view worth adopting, indeed a view that will come with familiar support. Second, many alternative views of the propositional attitudes that exist in the literature take the standard theory as a point of departure. For example, some theorists who have independent reason for taking propositions to individuate in a relatively coarse grained way have found a lot to like in the standard theory but have wanted to make room for modes of presentation or some kind of vehicle of content and so have taken propositional attitudes to be three-place

relations.<sup>1</sup> Others have adopted much of what's attractive about the standard theory but have argued that the relata of attitude relations are subjects and sentences or subjects and structures of concepts (conceived of as mental particulars or as abstract representational vehicles) rather than subjects and propositions. Since non-propositional attitudes are relatively under-explored, I think it will be valuable to have something resembling the standard view on the table even if only as a point of departure.<sup>2</sup> What follows is an attempt to both motivate and offer the outlines of such a view, aiming to abstract wherever possible from the very long list of controversies surrounding the attitudes. My primary aim is to highlight important similarities and differences holding between propositional and non-propositional attitudes so that we may see where the hard work that has already been done on propositional attitudes can be imported into our theorizing about non-propositional attitudes and where new work will be required.

The paper will proceed as follows: First, to serve as a guide, I will offer some important even if familiar motivations for the standard theory of propositional attitudes. Second, guided by points of similarity and contrast with the propositional attitudes, I will offer the property-view of the non-propositional attitudes. Finally, I will defend the view against a seemingly obvious objection – namely that subjects don't typically fear, like, love, and so on, properties.

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<sup>1</sup> For the sake of clarity and space, I won't spend much time on problems of substitution, Frege-puzzles, and other related puzzles. I'll aim to present both the standard view of propositional attitudes and the proposal for non-propositional attitudes at a level of abstraction that allows different views on those difficult issues to be slotted in.

<sup>2</sup> In other work (Grzankowski 2014), I've encouraged a departure from a relational view though I now think there is room for a more nuanced position. For others who depart from a typical, relational view of the attitudes, see Forbes (this volume), Kreigel (2007), and Pietroski (2000).

Before proceeding it is worth noting that the view to be offered has precedent in the work of Richard Montague (1969, 1970a, 1970b, 1973) and those following him. His seminal work on intensional transitive verbs and developments of it by Moltmann (1997), Richard (2001), and Zimmerman (1993) suggest that the states reported by intensional transitive verb constructions are relations holding between subjects and properties (or properties of properties). The present paper converges with their views in important ways, but the motivations and details differ in three noteworthy respects. First, many of the motivations for the view I'll offer are metaphysical in nature rather than linguistic or semantic. Second, the existing discussions typically center on attitudes reported with sentences featuring quantified noun-phrases in object position, e.g. 'John seeks every unicorn'. The reason, I believe, is that linguists have been especially concerned with quantifiers in their own right and with 'non-specific' readings of quantifiers in attitude contexts, which raise a number of special concerns. In contrast to those discussions, I'll be especially interested in attitudes that are reported with a name in object position. (And in fact, to keep the discussion simpler, I won't say much about the quantified cases. If the property view can be made to look attractive for the cases in which I'm interested, it will be relatively straightforward to extend it to attitudes towards kinds or attributes (e.g. liking cats or hating the color blue) and to make use of the insights of those who have focused on quantified cases if they can be shown to apply

to the attitudes on which I focus.)<sup>3</sup> Third, an account that says that some mental states of ours are relations to properties requires a philosophical gloss – we ought to ask, ‘what is it to stand in such a relation to a property?’. Moltmann and Richard aim to offer glosses for various cases, but they focus their attention on verbs that plausibly pick out states with satisfaction conditions such as ‘to seek’.<sup>4</sup> Importantly, the states reported by the intensional transitive constructions that I’ll be most interested in (states such as non-propositional fearing, liking, loving, hating, and thinking-of) are different in that they don’t have satisfaction conditions,<sup>5</sup> so a gloss like that given by Moltmann or Richard won’t serve our needs. I’ll have quite a lot more to say about having satisfaction conditions below.

## **The Standard Theory - Advantages and Motivations**

The ‘standard theory’ has it that propositional attitudes are two-place relations holding between subjects and propositions. It should be uncontroversial (if not analytic)

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<sup>3</sup> As noted, quantified noun phrases in object position give rise to a distinction between specific and nonspecific readings of some attitude sentences. For example, if it is true that I seek a car, it might be that I’m seeking a specific car or I might seek a car but no car in particular. Moltmann (1997) and Richard (2001) are especially interested in this phenomenon, but there is a range of mental verbs for which it is at least unclear whether there are non-specific readings. For example, it’s not clear that one can fear a monster but no monster in particular or that one can like exactly two puppies but no puppies in particular. See Hallman (2004). If non-specific readings can be motivated, then we might appeal to the insights of Moltmann and Richard at that juncture. See Forbes (2006) for additional discussion. If they cannot, we might aim to capture some of the non-propositional attitudes reported by sentences featuring quantified noun-phrases in object position with the theory offered in the present paper. Because of the layers of controversy I think it best to put quantified cases aside.

<sup>4</sup> Roughly, their views both converge on the following idea: sentences of the form ‘S V’s QNP’ have, roughly, ‘matching conditions’. Both accounts offer a modal analysis of the situations in which an attitude is matched or satisfied. For example, a seeking is matched by possible situations in which the search concludes successfully, and Moltmann and Richard offer an account of which possible situations are relevant. Although their views are not reductive with respect to the non-propositional attitudes, one ends up with satisfaction conditions back in the story. As noted in the main text, a novel feature of the cases on which I wish to focus is that they plausibly lack satisfaction conditions or matching conditions.

<sup>5</sup> Many non-propositional attitudes have propositional counterparts and those counterparts *do* have satisfaction conditions. For example, there are propositional and non-propositional instances of fearing – one might fear Santa Claus or one might fear that Santa Claus won’t visit this year.

that subjects are those things that are sometimes in propositional attitude states, so motivating the view requires offering support for the other two components – support for the relational claim and support for selecting propositions as relata alongside subjects.

The relational claim is typically supported by considering valid inferences concerning the attitudes.<sup>6</sup> For example, the following appear to be valid:

1. Sally believes that Texas is a state and so does Mary.
2. So, there is something they both believe.
  
3. Claire believes everything that John doubts.
4. John doubts that dualism is true.
5. So, Claire believes that dualism is true.
  
6. Steve thinks that summer will never end.
7. That summer will never end is implausible.
8. So, Steve thinks something implausible.

A very straightforward way of accounting for the validity of these inferences is as follows:

1.  $\dot{\ } B(s, p) \ \& \ B(m, p)$
2.  $\dot{\ } \exists x (B(s, x) \ \& \ B(m, x))$
  
3.  $\dot{\ } \forall x (D(j, x) \rightarrow B(c, x))$

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<sup>6</sup> See especially Schiffer (2003).

4.  $\dot{D}(j, p)$

5.  $\dot{B}(c, p)$

6.  $\dot{T}(s, p)$

7.  $\dot{I}(p)$

8.  $\dot{\exists}x (I(x) \ \& \ T(s, x))$

But such formalizations are plausible only if the semantic contributions of the attitude verbs are two-place relations taking singular arguments. We have, then, very good *prima facie* reason for thinking that the attitudes in question are indeed two-place relations holding between subjects and some other entities.<sup>7</sup>

Next, we need support for the claim that the non-subject arguments are propositions. Let's call the entities answering to the non-subject terms, whatever they turn out to be, the 'objects' of the propositional attitudes. A disclaimer is necessary when using this familiar terminology. I'm taking 'object', as in 'object of the attitude', to be a technical term for an entity that plays various roles. One role is to be the kind of entity picked out by the *grammatical object term/phrase* in an attitude report. We will return to additional roles in a moment in order to see whether propositions are the best candidates for fulfilling them. But before doing so, it is important to notice that the object of an attitude needn't be what the attitude is 'directed towards' or 'about' and in typical cases it isn't. Suppose for a moment that the objects of the propositional attitudes are in fact propositions. It is typically misguided to say that propositional

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<sup>7</sup> For present purposes and because I don't find the putative countervailing data very compelling, I'll follow the philosophical mainstream in taking these inferences to have the form just offered (but see Moltmann (2010) for reasons to question the mainstream assumption).

attitudes are *about* or *directed towards* propositions.<sup>8</sup> Suppose I fear that Fido has fleas. Intuitively, my fear is about Fido and about fleas – these are, as it were, the things on which I’m mentally focused. I’m typically not mentally focused on the proposition that Fido has fleas or any other proposition. One *can* mentally focus on a proposition, but when one does, the *object* of that state isn’t that very proposition. For instance, I might think that the proposition that mathematics reduces to logic is true. Such a propositional attitude is about a proposition (the proposition that mathematics reduces to logic), but the object of the attitude is whatever is picked out by ‘that the proposition that mathematics reduces to logic is true’. If that is indeed a proposition, it is a different proposition than the one the attitude is about. Attitudes have objects (in the technical sense) and are about things, but it shouldn’t be assumed that their objects and what they are about are the same things.<sup>9</sup>

So what are the objects of the propositional attitudes? I believe that this question is best answered by looking at the roles we ask the objects to play. They are, as we have seen, related to attitude-relations, but they play other important roles as well.

First, we ask them to help us make sense of the *content* of the propositional attitudes. To say that a state has content is to say that it has accuracy, veridicality, or satisfaction conditions. Propositional attitudes have such conditions and so have content. My belief that The CN Tower is taller than any structure in Cambridge can be evaluated for accuracy. It is accurate just in case The CN Tower is taller than any

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<sup>8</sup> See also Searle (this volume).

<sup>9</sup> Although he uses his terminology a bit differently, Crane (2001) offers persuasive reasons for thinking we need both what I am calling the objects of the propositional attitudes and, distinctly, what the attitudes are about. See also Forbes (this volume) for a similar distinction but in terms of contents and themes of attitudes.

structure in Cambridge, inaccurate otherwise. My desire that the Buffalo Bills make the playoffs may be satisfied or unsatisfied. It is satisfied just in case the Buffalo Bills make the playoffs, unsatisfied otherwise. My perception that there is a red object before me may be veridical or non-veridical. It is veridical if there is a red object before me, non-veridical otherwise. And so on. The objects of the propositional attitudes are asked to contribute to our understanding of these facts.

One attractive way of advancing our understanding of the evaluability of the propositional attitudes is to appeal to objects that are themselves truth-evaluable or which admit of some other notion of correspondence or correlation – for concreteness I'll focus on truth.<sup>10</sup> For example, we might take the object of my belief that The CN Tower is taller than any structure in Cambridge to be a truth-evaluable entity that is true just in case The CN Tower is taller than any structure in Cambridge. Understanding the objects of the propositional attitudes in this way provides at least two benefits.

The first benefit is that truth-evaluable objects whose truth-conditions correlate with the evaluability-conditions of the propositional attitudes allow us to explain facts concerning the evaluability of the attitudes. On classical views of the attitudes, the objects of the attitudes are taken to be the primary bearers of intentionality and it is *in virtue* of the evaluability conditions of the objects of the attitudes that the attitudes

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<sup>10</sup> Richard (2014) has argued that propositions are not *fundamentally* truth-evaluable (rather, sentences and certain mental states are), though he maintains that propositions correspond or fail to correspond to the world and can be said to be true or false *derivatively*. More specifically, Richard argues that propositions are a special kind of property and that their correspondence with the world is explained in terms of instantiation and their being truth-evaluable is a function of being expressed by a fundamentally truth-evaluable sentence or mental representation. See also Speaks (2014), though Speaks and Richard are certainly not in complete agreement. A possible-worlds theorist about propositions could say something similar by giving up the claim that propositions are fundamentally true or false while holding that they correspond to the world via set membership. Nothing presently turns on these choices, but I wish to make room for these options.



themselves are evaluable.<sup>11</sup> If correct, truth-evaluable objects of the attitudes explain how it is that the attitudes themselves are evaluable for accuracy. But one needn't commit to this classical view in order to find the objects of the attitudes explanatorily beneficial. One might hold, as many who have aimed to naturalize intentionality hold, that the objects of the attitudes are not that which has intentionality in the first instance. A naturalizer about intentionality might argue that mental states have the intentional properties they do in virtue of their causal co-variation with situations in the world and perhaps with each other. On such a view, the objects of the attitudes do not tell us 'in virtue of what' our mental states have the intentional properties they have. But even on such a view, truth-evaluable objects of the attitudes support explanations like the following: if the object of my desire were q rather than p, the conditions under which my desire would be satisfied would be otherwise; because the object of my belief is the proposition that p and the object of your desire is the proposition that p, my belief will be true in exactly those situations in which your desire is satisfied, and so on. On this understanding, the objects of the propositional attitudes 'model', 'track', or 'index' the intentional properties of the states.<sup>12</sup> Whether a classical theorist or not, by making reference to truth-evaluable objects of the attitudes, we put ourselves in a position to offer true, counterfactually supporting generalizations concerning the attitudes.

The second benefit of appealing to objects that are themselves truth-evaluable (a benefit closely related to the first) is one of unification. We can capture the variegated ways that we evaluate the attitudes in terms of a single notion, namely truth. An attitude

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<sup>11</sup> See Hanks (2015) and Soames (2015) for further discussion of the classical view.

<sup>12</sup> See Crane (1990), Mathews (2007), Rattan (forthcoming), and Stalnaker (1984) or additional discussion of indexing mental states.

with a propositional content is such that, if the relevant proposition were true, the evaluability condition of the attitude would be met. When one fears that *p*, if *p* were true, one's fear would be *realized*. When one desires that *p*, if *p* were true, one's desire would be *satisfied*, and so on. Truth (or whatever your favored notion of correlation with the world might be in this context) provides an underlying similarity across the range of ways we evaluate mental states.

Turning now to a second role for the objects of the attitudes, the objects are asked to account for various relations the attitudes stand in to one another. My desire *that I have some coffee* gives me reason and indeed motivates me to walk to the kitchen (at least in part) because I also believe *that I can get some coffee if I go into the kitchen*. Subjects who believe that grass is green and that snow is white typically believe (and indeed should believe) that snow is white. Such relations holding amongst the attitudes look to be logical relations, and if the objects of the attitudes are themselves entities that stand in logical relations, we can make sense of the relevant properties of the attitudes in terms of the properties of their objects. So, as with having content, we look to the objects of the attitudes and their properties to help us understand various facts concerning the attitudes themselves.

So, in addition to being entities over which we can quantify, we also expect the objects of the propositional attitudes to help us understand the evaluability of the propositional attitudes and the important relations the attitudes stand in to one another. One tempting option in light of these demands is to maintain that *sentences* are the objects of the propositional attitudes. Sentences can be true or false and they stand in logical relations to one other. But there are familiar reasons for thinking this isn't

quite the right approach. One persuasive reason goes like this: I believe that Socrates was wise and Plato believed that Socrates was wise. Plato and I believe the same thing. It's attractive to capture this fact (as we saw with the enumerated inferences above) in terms of some entity to which we are both related. But it is implausible that there is any public language sentence to which we are both related by our belief. I don't know a word of Greek, let alone ancient Greek, and Plato didn't know any Modern English.<sup>13</sup> What appears to be needed is some way of abstracting from sentences to what they represent or mean.

Propositions are just the sorts of entities we are looking for. Whatever else they are, they are the meanings of, or what is expressed by, indicative sentences and they stand in logical relations to one another. Furthermore, they correspond or otherwise correlate with the world – standardly, by being true or false. So, with respect to two important jobs we want the objects of the propositional attitudes to perform, propositions seem to be a perfect fit. Moreover, since propositions are entities, they can serve as relata and so they fit smoothly into the formal representations of our simple inferences given above.

It is worth highlighting two more attractive features of propositions. First, since things aren't always as we, say, desire that they be and things aren't always as we, say, believe them to be, we need the objects of the propositional attitudes to be available even when we represent things as being a way they aren't or even couldn't be. We might

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<sup>13</sup> One alternative is to move from public language sentences to mental sentences. See Fodor (1975, 1983). It is noteworthy that Fodor still makes use of propositions – he holds that belief and other propositional attitudes are relations between subjects and propositions, but they are relations that obtain in virtue of subjects tokening sentences that express propositions. The import of propositions for a theory like Fodor's (as best I can tell) is that they allow one to abstract away from the sentences in the head that presumably have distinct syntactic structures for each individual. See Heck (2012) on this point. In more recent work, Fodor (2006) has suggested capturing the publicity of sentences in the head in functional terms.

have thought to go straight to the world and hold that the objects of belief, desire, and so on are facts. Such an option is especially salient for theorists who take the objects of the attitudes to index the semantic properties of mental states. Why not index mental states that are about the world in terms of the world itself? But of course, I might believe that grass is red even though it isn't a fact that grass is red. Propositions are a better fit for our needs at this juncture. Regardless of how we conceive of propositions, a common feature across the various theories has it that propositions can exist and 'say' that the world is a way even when the world isn't that way. So, even when the world doesn't cooperate, we have entities to serve as relata.

Second, propositions help us avoid an important puzzle about intentionality. Intentional states, as noted above, are about or directed towards things. On first pass, it is tempting to think of aboutness as a relation. But some intentional states are about or directed at things that don't exist. For example, I might be in an intentional state about Fido, an existing dog, or about things that fails to exist such as Zeus or the Fountain of Youth. But how might I be *related* to things that don't exist? One option is to reify non-existent objects, though many have found this unattractive if not paradoxical.<sup>14</sup> But we can give up the idea that aboutness is a relation if we understand aboutness in terms of propositional content.<sup>15</sup> For example, let us say that my belief is about Zeus just in case the content of my belief concerns Zeus. How to understand 'concerns' will depend on how we think about the proposition that either is, determines, or indexes the content of the state. For example, we might spell out 'concerns' in terms of the truth-conditions of

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<sup>14</sup> See Everett (2013), Sainsbury (2009), and Thau (2002) for helpful, recent discussions.

<sup>15</sup> Thau (2002) and Byrne (forthcoming) recommend such an approach.

the content of my belief, in terms of the constituents of the content of my belief, or in terms of constituent senses and their referents.<sup>16</sup> These views will need to be buttressed with, for example, some account of reference without entities referred to,<sup>17</sup> ‘gappy’ propositions,<sup>18</sup> or senses without referents<sup>19</sup> – all avenues that have been explored in the existing literature and which have struck many as more plausible than positing entities to which we stand in the aboutness-relation in ‘empty’ cases. The propositional attitudes such as belief and desire, then, are indeed relations to propositions but their *aboutness* can be understood in terms of their contents rather than as an additional relation.

Holding that propositions are the objects of the attitudes is well motivated. I wish to turn now to non-propositional attitudes. As we will see, we can offer a view that looks a lot like the standard view and which shares many of its motivations and merits.

### **Non-propositional Attitudes**

Non-propositional attitudes are mental states that are (i) about or directed at things but (ii) not in virtue of having a propositional object (in the sense of ‘object’ given above). These features aren’t simply a matter of stipulation. The non-propositional attitudes’ claim to having aboutness is as strong as the claim in the case of propositional attitudes. Just as we are inclined to hold that my belief that Fido has fleas is about Fido and about fleas, my fear of Fido is about Fido. And concerning the lack of a propositional object, recall that one of the reasons for taking propositional attitudes to

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<sup>16</sup> Though see Keller (2014) for a discussion of what constituency might come to in this context.

<sup>17</sup> See Sainsbury (2005).

<sup>18</sup> See Braun (1993).

<sup>19</sup> See Frege (1892).

have propositional objects is that propositional attitudes have content and so are evaluable for accuracy/satisfaction. As we saw, on classical views, the evaluability is had in virtue of the intentional properties of the proposition. On indexing views, relevant properties of propositions make them good entities for tracking the intentional properties of the attitudes. But non-propositional attitudes don't have accuracy or satisfaction conditions. Consider a few examples: Harry is thinking of the number seven, Bill loves Sally, and Mary fears Fido. When is Harry's thought *satisfied* or *accurate*? The question seems misplaced. Similarly for Bill and Mary, there is no admissible question of the form 'when is Bill's love satisfied/accurate?', 'when is Mary's fear satisfied/accurate?'. Even if we broaden our notions of evaluability to include *realization* conditions, *veridicality* conditions, or so on, the question is still misplaced. To avoid confusion, recall that there are, as mentioned above, propositional varieties of many of the non-propositional attitudes and they *do* have satisfaction or accuracy conditions. Thinking-that, loving-that, and fearing-that, and so on can be true, satisfied, realized, and so on. But the non-propositional instances are not like this, as indicated by the misplaced nature of questions such as 'When is Bill's love of Sally satisfied/accurate/true/etc.?'. If these states did have propositional objects, we would expect them to be evaluable for accuracy or satisfaction. Since they are not, we have good reason to believe that they don't have propositional objects (mutatis mutandis for other candidate entities such as sentences that would wrongly imbue the non-propositional attitudes with accuracy/satisfaction conditions).

If non-propositional attitudes don't have propositional objects, what are their objects? On first pass, we might (as is common in logic text books) hold that states

picked out by sentence such as ‘Jane loves Mary’ and ‘Freddie fears Fido’ are two-place relations holding between subjects and Mary and Fido respectively. The objects of these states, the suggestion continues, are Mary and Fido respectively.

This is an attractive first pass suggestion, but we can like, fear, hate, think-of, and so on things that don’t exist. In light of this fact, the view that says the objects of the non-propositional attitudes are the entities they are about can’t be quite right. I might fear Pegasus, love Sherlock Holmes, or hate the Easter Bunny. Provided that we hold that there are no entities referred to by those names, we cannot maintain that one stands in a relation to such entities.

One reaction to this observation is to give up the relational analysis of the non-propositional attitudes,<sup>20</sup> but for reasons similar to those given above, it is attractive to hold that the non-propositional attitudes are indeed relations:

9. Sally fears Bill and so does Mary.
10. So, there is something they both fear.
  
11. Claire loves everything that John hates.
12. John hates Conan Doyle.
13. So, Claire loves Conan Doyle.
  
14. Steve likes the moon.
15. The moon is made of cheese.
16. So, Steve likes something that is made of cheese.

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<sup>20</sup> See footnote 2.

A straightforward way of accounting for the validity of these inferences is as follows:

9.  $\neg F(s, b) \ \& \ F(m, b)$

10.  $\neg \exists x (F(s, x) \ \& \ F(m, x))$

11.  $\neg \forall x (H(j, x) \rightarrow L(c, x))$

12.  $\neg H(j, d)$

13.  $\neg L(c, d)$

14.  $\neg L(s, m)$

15.  $\neg C(m)$

16.  $\neg \exists x (C(x) \ \& \ L(s, x))$

But such formalizations are plausible only if the semantic contributions of the attitude verbs are two-place relations taking singular arguments. We have, as we do with propositional attitudes, very good *prima facie* reason for thinking that the non-propositional attitudes are indeed two-place relations holding between subjects and some other entities.

If we don't give up relationality, another reaction to 'empty' cases is to look for some other entities, things other than what the attitudes are about, to serve as the objects of the non-propositional attitudes. The standard view of propositional attitudes is suggestive here. Recall the implausible idea that the objects of the propositional attitudes are facts. We saw that in the case of false beliefs, such a view wasn't going to work. What we needed was an entity to serve as object of the attitude even when the world isn't cooperating. Here too the world isn't cooperating – Pegasus, Sherlock



Holmes, and so on don't exist so they aren't candidates to be the objects of relational attitudes. We might look for entities that are relevantly similar to propositions to fill the gap. As above, our choice of entity is guided by the role they are asked to play.

Propositions aren't the right objects since, as we've seen, non-propositional attitudes aren't evaluable for accuracy or satisfaction. But if we abstract away from satisfaction or accuracy and look to representation more broadly, we find a similarity between propositional and non-propositional attitudes. For any attitude, we can ask 'what is represented by the attitude?'. In the case of propositional attitudes, that question comes to 'how are *things* represented *as being*?'. Their propositional objects answer that question, for propositions are themselves truth-evaluable entities that are true just in case things are a certain way. In the case of non-propositional attitudes, the question 'what is represented by the attitude?' comes to '*which thing* is represented?'. Their objects should answer this question. The simplest view would have been to let the very entity that the attitude is about tell us which thing is represented, but in light of 'empty' cases, the story must be a bit more complicated.

So, one role of the objects of the non-propositional attitudes is to contribute to our understanding of *which things* non-propositional attitudes represent. But we also want the objects of the attitudes to contribute to our understanding of action and behavior. Interestingly, which thing an attitude represents is again crucial.

Quite obviously, there are effective psychological explanations that appeal to the non-propositional attitudes. For example: Tim and Tom are staying home tonight. They both believe that staying home is a way of avoiding Bill and both want to avoid Bill. Tim, because he fears Bill. Tom, because he hates Bill. In a case like this one, the non-

propositional attitudes explain why Tim and Tom have the desires they do and, in turn, why they act the way they act. Underwriting effective explanations of this sort, we expect to find generalizations:

- Subjects who like a person tend to want to be around that person.
- Subjects who fear things tend to want to be away from those things.
- Subjects who think of a thing are poised to make judgements about that thing.

The psychological generalizations that are true of non-propositional attitudes deserve more philosophical attention than they have received. As a first pass generalization, I'm inclined to hold that subjects in non-propositional states such as fearing, loving, liking, and hating, tend to form desires about the things they fear, love, like, or hate. Just which desires will depend on which non-propositional state it is (say fearing vs. liking) and what other beliefs and desires the subject has. In the case of thinking-of, one brings an object before the mind and thereby puts herself in a position to predicate something of it. You might think of the number seven, consider what it takes to be an odd number, and on that basis judge that the number seven is indeed odd. Again, these are issues that deserve more attention and mark an area of, I hope, fruitful future research on the non-propositional attitudes. Of special importance to us presently, however, is the need once again for a kind of 'matching'. In the case of Tim and Tom, noting that Tim fears *Sally* wouldn't help us explain why he wants to avoid *Bill*. Thinking of the number seven puts me in a position to make judgements about *it* in a way that it does not put me in a position to make judgements about the number three. The relations non-propositional

attitudes bear to other attitudes depends (at least in part) on their representational or intentional properties, that is, on *which thing* is represented.

So, twice over it appears we need objects of the non-propositional attitudes that tell us which thing is represented. Furthermore, we need objects that we can quantify over even when the world fails to provide us with ‘ordinary’ entities. So what are the objects of the non-propositional attitudes? Natural candidates are entities that correlate with objects in much the same way that propositions correlate with things being a way. There are two immediately attractive ways to proceed: in terms of properties and in terms of concepts. I’ll focus on properties, though I think most of what I want to say could be put in terms of concepts if one preferred.<sup>21</sup>

Properties have two important features we need. First, whereas propositions have truth-conditions and so correlate with things being a way, there are properties such as being the queen of England and being Aristotle that have ‘true-of conditions’ and so correlate with objects.<sup>22</sup> As in the case of propositions, we face options here. We might account for this correlation in terms of properties being true-of things, in terms of instantiation, in terms of exemplification, or so on. I intend to be officially neutral on these details (if they are more than terminological variants), though I’ll turn to ‘being

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<sup>21</sup> One might prefer properties to concepts if one believes that concepts are too idiosyncratic to be shared across subjects. I think concepts are sharable, so I’m not motivated by this consideration. I prefer properties to concepts because I think there are plausibly non-conceptual instances of non-propositional attitudes. Detail on the debate over non-conceptual content and non-conceptual mental states would take us too far astray presently. Only briefly then: some states are such that being in them requires the deployment of concepts. Belief is often given as an example. But many theorists also think some representational states do not require the deployment of concepts. Perceptual states are often given as an example. One might perceptually represent something as red even though she lacks the concept *red*. To the extent that one is convinced by this type of distinction, I think one will find intentional states that are good candidates for being both non-conceptual and non-propositional. Suppose, for example, that one is convinced that baby birds lack the concept *hawk*. We might nevertheless think the chicks fear hawks.

<sup>22</sup> See Adams (1979) for discussion of such properties. My own sympathies lie with a view very near that of Van Inwagen (2004) according to which properties are things that can be said of something.

true-of' for concreteness. Second, properties help us in the empty cases since there are properties that exist even if there are no entities in the world that they are in fact true of. There are two ways we might flesh this out. First, following Platonists about properties, we can hold that there are properties true of things that don't exist. For example, the property of being Pegasus could only be true of Pegasus and not of any other thing. Of course, since Pegasus doesn't exist and (let us suppose) couldn't have existed, the property will never be instantiated. Since Platonists give up the principle of instantiation, we needn't take this to rule out the existence of the property itself.<sup>23</sup> A second way to proceed is to hold that the property of being, say, Pegasus is to be understood in terms of other properties such as being mythical, being a horse, and being winged – properties that are (at least possibly) instantiated. If one finds the dismissal of a principle of instantiation to be a great cost, the second option might be more attractive. Moved by externalist considerations, my own view is that we will need properties that are uniquely (and indeed rigidly) true of objects (if they are true of anything at all) as well as a notion of 'being true-of' that is not existence entailing, so I prefer the first option. Minimally, all that is required at the moment are properties that (i) correlate with *things* (such as Pegasus or the unique winged horse of mythology, or

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<sup>23</sup> Much like propositions that concern things that don't exist, difficult questions arise, especially when we face properties that are intuitively different but which are both 'empty'. For instance, the property of being Pegasus has the same extension (and indeed the same set-theoretic intension) as the property of being Zeus. Two options are forthcoming, options which are familiar from the propositional attitude literature on the substitution of co-referring terms. First, one might add another element to the story such as a mode of presentation or concept. Second, one might take properties themselves to be individuated in a very fine grained way. A full discussion of these issues requires a paper of its own.

whatever) rather than *things being a way* and that (ii) exist even if they do not correlate with any object at all.<sup>24</sup>

Properties of the sort just outlined will allow us to retain relationality of the attitudes in all cases. Non-propositional attitudes are relations to properties, though some of the properties aren't instantiated. Furthermore, because those properties correlate with objects, they contribute to our understanding of action and behavior in the desired way. What was needed was a way of explaining or indexing *which things* the non-propositional attitudes represent. The properties in question provide exactly this. And much like in the case of propositional attitudes, we can now offer a view of aboutness that makes room for states that are about things that fail to exist. Non-propositional attitudes, which are relations to properties, are *about* that which the property would be true of.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Wrong Object Worry**

There is a tempting, very general worry for the view on offer. One might hold that, at least in typical cases, we don't fear, love, like, and so on *properties*. They are

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<sup>24</sup> As noted above (fn. 10), a number of theorists have suggested that propositions are a kind of property. For example, Mark Richard (2014) has recently argued that propositions are states of affairs and, in turn, that states of affairs are 'certain properties, ones picked out by terms of the form *the property of being a situation in which the objects  $o_1, \dots, o_n$  instantiate the properties  $p_1, \dots, p_j$  in way  $I$ .*' Jeff Speaks (2014) has argued that the proposition expressed by a sentence such as 'Amelia talks' should be identified with the property of being such that Amelia talks. Notice that the properties offered by Richard and Speaks correlate with things being a way – they are instantiated by complex situations in which objects instantiate further properties. Also worth mentioning in this vein are views like that offered by Lewis (1979) and Chisholm (1981) according to which the objects of the propositional attitudes are properties ascribed to one's self. See Speaks for further discussion of these views and a helpful comparison with his own view. I'm amenable to an approach that unifies the objects of the attitudes – propositional and non – but we will need to make room for the distinction between attitudes that represent things as being a way and those that simply represent things. If this can all be done in terms of attitudes with properties for objects, all the better.

<sup>25</sup> In an empty case, such as fearing Pegasus, two answers to the question 'what is my fear about?' seem to be available – 'Pegasus' and 'nothing'. Happily, this appears to be mirrored by the fact that both answers are also available to the question 'what is the property of being Pegasus true of?'

simply the wrong things. When I fear Sally, for instance, I fear *her* and not a property. Any view that predicts that we typically fear, love, and like properties is obviously mistaken.<sup>26</sup> Although this is an important and instructive objection, it fails.

Here is one way to sharpen the worry: The view just offered has it that ‘Sally fears Mary’ ascribes a relation between Sally and the property of being Mary, but let us assume that Sally fears no properties. Given the view on offer, it looks as if all of the following are true:

- (A) Sally fears Mary.
- (B) It is not the case that Sally fears the property of being Mary.
- (C) The semantic contribution of ‘Mary’ in (A) is the same as the semantic contribution of ‘the property of being Mary’ in (B) so (B) is the negation of (A).

But all three can’t be true, so something must be given up.

The objection can be met by giving up (C). The metaphysical considerations in favor of the property view of non-propositional attitudes will have to interface at some juncture with our reports of those attitudes and it’s not at all unreasonable that the view will require that the semantic contribution of a name such as ‘Mary’ and other noun phrases in grammatical object position will be, not their ordinary referent, but a property. But any systematic treatment of language will have to make such shifts *systematically*, which means (C) isn’t correct. The semantic contribution of ‘Mary’ in (A) is the property of being Mary but the semantic contribution of ‘the property of being Mary’ in (B) is the property of being the property of being Mary. Since those are distinct

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<sup>26</sup> In other work, I took this worry seriously without much further argumentation. I now think things are more complicated (See Grzankowski 2014).

properties, ‘Sally fears the property of being Mary’ doesn’t follow from ‘Sally fears Mary’.<sup>27</sup>

I suspect many people will find this solution unsatisfying. It is tempting to react as follows:

I was unsatisfied that the property view has people like me, people who don’t fear abstract objects, fearing properties. The response doesn’t replace the *wrong* objects (abstract objects) with the *right* objects (scary people, spiders, etc.), the response simply replaces wrong objects with more wrong objects. I wanted to get away from properties altogether and so I can’t see how the denial of (C) just provided really amounts to an improvement. You’ve perhaps shown me that expressing my worry in ordinary English is challenging and that from a sentence like ‘Sally fears Mary’ I had better not thereby take ‘Sally fears the property of being Mary’ to be true, but the view still looks to have it that the truth-maker of ‘Sally fears Mary’ is Sally’s standing the fearing relation to a property. After all, ‘Sally’ refers to Sally, ‘fears’ designates a relation, and ‘Mary’ in this context designates the property of being Mary. This is still a problem.

I think this is a reasonable reaction but it rests on a mistake. The mistake is to understand the view as explicating what it is to fear, say, a person in terms of *fearing* a property. But this simply isn’t the view. A good way to appreciate this point is to return for a moment to a propositional attitude case.

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<sup>27</sup> See Zimmerman (2006) for further discussion.

Suppose that Sally desires that Mary sing. According to the standard theory, Sally enters into a relation with the proposition that Mary sing. The relational aspect of the theory was motivated by the inference patterns we saw earlier and the propositional aspect was motivated by the role the objects of the attitudes must play. Under what conditions, then, are Sally and the proposition that Mary sing related such that it is true that Sally *desires* that Mary sing? It is important to see that the standard theory tells us very little about the nature of the relation designated by 'desires'. That's something we need to work out through philosophical analysis. When Sally desires that Mary sing, Sally is in a state (i) that plays a certain role in her mental economy – that's what makes the state a desire rather than, say, a belief or a fear – and (ii) that has certain representational features. In particular, the state is about Mary, about singing, it is satisfied just in case Mary sings, and (at least in part) because of the representational features it has, the state is apt to interact with various other mental states that have the right representational features (e.g. with the belief that Mary sings anytime bluegrass is on the radio). There should be very little temptation to conclude from all of this that Sally desires that Mary sing just in case Sally *desires* a proposition. 'Sally' refers to Sally, 'that Mary sing' designates the proposition that Mary sing, and 'desires' designates a relation that holds between Sally and the proposition just in case Sally is in a state that is 'representationally characterized' by the proposition (more on this notion in a moment). In light of this, the relation designated by 'desires' that a subject enters into with a proposition is:  $\lambda x \lambda y. x$  is in a state that plays such and such role in one's mental economy and which representationally characterized by  $y$ . Again, nothing in this story



should tempt one to conclude that the standard theory as applied to desire predicts that subjects desire propositions.<sup>28</sup>

More needs to be said about a proposition ‘representationally characterizing’ a mental state. Above I noted there are a number of ways we might think of the connection between propositions and the mental states that have them as their contents. We might, for example, hold that it is *in virtue of* being related in the appropriate way to a proposition that a subject represents. Alternatively, we might hold that mental states are the more fundamental representational units and that propositions measure or index the representational properties of those mental states. What’s common to both options (and I think it’s something that must hold of any approach to the propositional attitudes) is that *the mental state and the proposition both represent the same things as being the same ways*. When I believe that grass is green, I represent grass as being green. The proposition that grass is green represents that too. The proposition characterises my mental state in the sense that both represent the same things as being the same way. By making reference to a proposition, I make reference to something that (on the classical theory) determines the representational properties of the mental state or which (on a naturalizing theory) indexes/measures the representational properties of

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<sup>28</sup> I suspect that one source of confusion is that so much focus has been placed on belief. It is tempting to say that the standard theory as applied to belief has it that a subject believes that p just in case the subject believes the proposition that p. This is, I think, a mistake. I’m not sure what it is to believe a proposition. To believe the letter that arrived this morning is to believe what the letter says. Propositions don’t ‘say’ things, though perhaps they are or perhaps they encode information and so we are *tempted* to treat them along the lines of letters, newspapers, people who tell us things, and so on. Forbes (this volume) has this exactly right, I think. See also Hacker (2004). The correct application of the standard theory to belief has it that a subject believes that p just in case the subject is in a mental state that plays a certain role in her mental economy and which has the intentional properties characterized by the proposition. It is tempting to say that one believes that p just in case one believes (that) the proposition that that p is true, but if what we seek is some understanding of what it is to believe that p, this sets us on a regress.

the mental state. The locution ‘representationally characterizes’ aims at neutrality on these matters as well as matters about to follow.

Return now to Sally fearing Mary. As with desire, the motivations for the relational aspect of the relational view of the non-propositional attitudes tells us very little about the nature of the relations themselves. The motivations reveal only a relational structure, that is, they reveal that ‘fear’ and the other verbs in question designate a relation. So we know that to be in a fear state is to enter into a relation, but the nature of that relation is something we learn through further philosophical investigation. Under what conditions, then, are Sally and the property of being Mary related such that it is true that Sally *fears* Mary? When Sally fears Mary, Sally is in a state (i) that plays a certain role in her mental economy – that’s what makes the state a fear rather than, say, a liking or a loving – and (ii) that has certain representational features. In particular, the state is about Mary and it is apt to interact with various other mental states that have the right representational features (e.g. with the belief that Mary is in the other room). As with desire, there should be very little temptation to conclude from all of this that Sally fears Mary just in case Sally *fears* a property. ‘Sally’ refers to Sally, ‘Mary’ (in this context) designates the property of being Mary, and ‘fears’ designates a relation that holds between Sally and the property just in case Sally is in a state that is representationally characterized by the property. We can represent the relation designated by ‘fears’ thus:  $\lambda x \lambda y. x$  is in a state that plays such and such role in one’s mental economy and which is representationally characterized by  $y$ . The view does maintain that fearers enter into relations with properties, but there should be no temptation to conclude that fearers fear properties. And as above, we will face options

concerning the role of the property as it relates to the representational mental state. Perhaps the mental state represents in virtue of a subject's relation to the property or perhaps the mental state is the more fundamental representational unit. In any event, properties are true of things and the mental states in question represent the very things the properties are (or would be) true of. In this way, they representationally characterize the non-propositional states.

## **Conclusion**

I have argued that many of the motivations that have made the standard theory of propositional attitudes look attractive can be given for non-propositional attitudes as well. In light of this, I have aimed to offer a theory that bears similarity to the standard theory of propositional attitudes in important respects. In particular, I have aimed to provide a relational theory of the non-propositional attitudes. But in light of the fact that propositional attitudes have conditions of satisfaction and non-propositional attitudes do not, I have argued that properties rather than propositions are the objects of the non-propositional attitudes. In the final section of the paper, I addressed a tempting worry according to which such a view cannot be correct since people do not typically, say, fear or love properties. Although an instructive worry, I argued that it can be avoided. Moving forward, as gestured at above, there is a rich array of questions concerning the relationship between the propositional attitudes, the non-propositional attitudes, and their contribution to action and behavior.

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