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## Adverbialism, the many-property problem, and inference: reply to Grzankowski

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### ABSTRACT

A serious problem for adverbialism about intentionality is the many-property problem, one major aspect of which is the claim that natural inferences between thought contents are blocked if adverbialism is true. Kriegel (2007. "Intentional Inexistence and Phenomenal Intentionality." *Philosophical Perspectives* 21: 307–340. doi: 10.1111/j.1520-8583.2007.00129.x., 2008. "The Dispensability of (Merely) Intentional Objects." *Philosophical Studies* 141: 79–95. doi: 10.1007/s11098-008-9264-7., 2011. *The Sources of Intentionality*. New York: Oxford UP) argues that the determinable-determinate relation can be pressed into service by adverbialists to respond to this problem. Grzankowski (2018. "The determinable-determinate relation can't save adverbialism." *Analysis* 78: 45–52. doi: 10.1093/analys/anx068) argues that this doesn't work because when applied to intentional properties absurd results follow and thus the victory is pyrrhic. In this paper, I examine how we must understand the inferences at the heart of the many-property problem if we are to avoid attributing unwanted assumptions to adverbialists. With this understanding in place, there is a reply to Grzankowski on behalf of the adverbialist that holds that the determinable-determinate relation can be used as one tool among others for assessing the thought content of others. So, Grzankowski's objection to Kriegel can be met. In the end, however, this entire dialectic is a dead end because it treats the ascriptions of intentional states as fused adverbs forming compound adverbial modifiers, and these fused adverbs lack compositionality and are syntactically simple. As such, interpreters cannot decompose the linguistic content of adverbialist ascriptions, which is nearly always a necessary step in assessing the thought content of others. So, the determinable-determinate reply actually fails because we do need these ascriptions to be subject to compositionality. In the end, adverbialists must opt for a structural approach to the many-property problem, as recently seen in the work of Banick (2021. "How to be an adverbialist about phenomenal intentionality." *Synthese* 198: 661–686. doi: 10.1007/s11229-018-02053-0) and D'Ambrosio (2021. "The many-property problem is your problem, too." *Philosophical Studies* 178: 811–832. doi:10.1007/s11098-020-01459-2).

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## 1. Introduction

Having gotten its start as a theory about sensory states (Chisholm 1957; Ducasse 1942), adverbialism has more recently been dusted off and redeployed as a theory of thought content (Kriegel 2007, 2008, 2011). The main motivation for adverbialism about sensory states was to develop a theory that avoided commitment to sense data. Speaking of adverbialism about sensory states, Albert Casullo writes, 'The chief goal of adverbial theorists has been to offer an account of perceptual experience which does not involve reference to nonphysical objects such as sense data or appearances' (Casullo 1983, 143). Because adverbialism about sensory states analyzes sensations as adverbial modifications of the subject having the sensations – as ways of sensing – it makes no essential appeal to objects in its analysis.<sup>1</sup> This freedom from commitment to such objects has been the main motivation for revitalizing adverbialism as a theory of thought content. It must be admitted that it is a *prima facie* attractive view when it comes to explaining how we can think about objects that do not exist. Kriegel (2007, 2008, 2011) has argued that adverbialism can avoid problems that beset act-object theories of intentionality, because it understands intentional states about non-existents as ways of thinking that make no ineliminable reference to objects. Thus, adverbialism seems to have gotten a second life as a theory of thought content given its ability to avoid commitment to intentional objects, a commitment seen as problematic by many.

So at the core of adverbialism is the idea that the content of intentional states can be cashed out without appeal to any objects – either ones internal or external to a subject's mind. Because of this feature, adverbialism is a non-relational view of intentionality that holds that intentional content reduces to certain ways of thinking.<sup>2</sup> No relational properties need to be posited to make sense of intentional states. Instead of being relational, intentional properties are non-relational in a very strong sense; they do not entail or require the existence of objects internal or external to subjects. Adverbialism holds that content properties reduce to adverbial properties.<sup>3</sup> Think of adverbial properties as the properties expressed by adverbial phrases. In the sentence, 'Lionel Messi plays beautifully' the adverb 'beautifully' obviously modifies 'plays'. This adverb in such circumstances expresses the adverbial property *doing x beautifully*. So, in the case of intentionality, when I think that Antananarivo is the capital of Madagascar, my thought has the adverbial property *Antananarivo-is-the-capital-of-Madagascar-ly*. Having this thought doesn't instantiate any relationship between my thought and the capital of Madagascar or any relationship to a proposition or fact or state of affairs for that matter. So, if adverbialism is true, it is not the case that our thoughts have content by being related to things in the world or by being related to internal items either. They have content in virtue of having adverbial properties like the one above. As noted, there are some *prima facie* advantages to this view: explaining intentional states without appeal to objects of any kind avoids seemingly problematic metaphysical and ontological commitment to intentional objects. In contrast to non-relational views of intentionality, relational views of intentionality make ineliminable reference to a relation in explaining the nature of intentional states for subjects. It can seem that all such views, then, face problems in explaining how we can think of non-existents. If in thinking of non-existents, non-existents become the *relata* of our thoughts, then these *relata* do exist after all and cannot be non-existent. Thinking of non-existents (very strangely) seems to bring them into some

sort of existence. Avoiding such difficulties appears to be the primary motivation for adverbialism about intentionality.

While adverbialism about intentionality can seem attractive for its lack of commitment to intentional objects, one serious problem for the view has given many thinkers pause. It is the many-property problem, which Frank Jackson (1977) originally raised against adverbialism about sensory states. A recent (partial) advocate of adverbialism, Uriah Kriegel (2007, 2008, 2011) argues that the determinable-determinate relation can be pressed into service to respond to the many-property problem (call this ‘the determinable-determinate-relation reply’).<sup>4</sup> Alex Grzankowski (2018) argues that this move doesn’t work because when applied to thought content the determinable-determinate relation yields absurd results and thus the victory is pyrrhic. The adverbialist can reply to Grzankowski by holding that the determinable-determinate relation can be used as one tool among others to draw inferences about the thoughts of others. To properly understand this point, though, a closer look at the many-property problem is needed. More specifically, I explain how we must understand the problem in order to avoid saddling the adverbialist with unwarranted assumptions. Once we properly understand how the problem must be posed without begging important questions against the adverbialist, we can see that Grzankowski’s objection can be answered.

The adverbialist line I pursue in parts of this paper is certainly not the only move for the adverbialist to make in responding to the many-property problem. The dialectic I am mainly concerned with involves what D’Ambrosio (2021) calls the non-structural approach to the many-property problem. This is the approach Kriegel takes and thereby structures Grzankowski’s objection to Kriegel’s attempted solution to the many-property problem. My reply here is focused exclusively on the non-structural approach to the problem, which basically involves fusing the terms in attitude reports in a way that renders the report syntactically simple and not subject to compositionality. The structural approach, as seen in D’Ambrosio (2021) and Banick (2021), responds to the many-property problem by treating attitude reports – intentional state ascriptions – as subject to compositionality, thereby opening up the possibility of providing an adequate semantics for them. I do not evaluate the versions of the structural approach in the present paper. But the constraints I lay out on a proper understanding of the problem apply to both the structural and non-structural approaches adverbialist take to solving the many-property problem.

In section 2, I explain how we must understand the many-property problem if we are to avoid attributing unwarranted assumptions to the adverbialist. In section 3, I give Kriegel’s solution to the problem that depends on the determinable-determinate relation. In section 4, I explain Grzankowski’s objection to the determinable-determinate-relation reply, focusing on how we must understand the many-property problem as outlined in section 2. In section 5, I explain how the adverbialist can respond to Grzankowski’s objection from the non-structural approach. In section 6, I offer reasons for why the non-structural approach should be abandoned by adverbialists in favor of the structural approach.

## 2. The many-property problem for adverbialism

The many-property problem traces back to Jackson (1977).<sup>5</sup> Jackson’s target was adverbialism about sensory states, but the problem seems to threaten adverbialism about

thought content as well. Let us briefly review the problem for sensory states. The first difficulty arises when the adverbialist must account for sensory states that have multiple adverbial properties. Jackson's example involves distinguishing someone who has a red, square afterimage and a green, round afterimage from someone who has a green, square afterimage and a red, round afterimage. One worry is that adverbialists can't get the correctness or satisfaction conditions of the sensory states right because they render the states as a mere conjunction of properties: *being appeared to redly*, *being appeared to squarely*, *being appeared to greenly* and *being appeared to roundly*. The adverbs that make up the sensory state ascriptions can be moved about while preserving the truth conditions of the sensory state ascriptions given the commutativity of conjunction. Thus, the view seems incapable of distinguishing between the two clearly distinct sensory states (having a red, square afterimage and having a green, round afterimage). To fail at the level of the intentional state ascriptions is to fail to properly express the correctness or satisfaction conditions of the sensory states.<sup>6</sup> To solve this problem the adverbialist must fuse the adverbs together and use compound adverbs such as 'red-square-afterimage-ly' and 'green-round afterimage-ly' to get the correctness conditions of the states right. The fused adverbs allow the adverbialist to preserve the correct ordering of the adverbs and therefore express the correctness conditions desired. After all, the state of having a red, square afterimage and the state of having a green, round afterimage are clearly distinct. So without appeal to the fused adverbs, adverbialism seems to fail to distinguish between clearly distinct sensory states.<sup>7</sup> However, this move has its own problem. Here is Jackson on why the fused-adverb move ultimately fails.

[T]he meaning of 'red-triangular-ly' is not to be viewed as being built out of independently semantically significant components like 'red' and 'triangular'; and likewise for 'green-squarely', etc. Put this baldly, this view obviously faces in a more acute form the difficulty just considered. Having a red, triangular after-image is a special case of having a red after-image, hence any adverbial theorist must treat sensing red-triangular-ly as a special case of sensing red-ly. But on this view in question, sensing red-triangular-ly fails to have sensing red-ly as a component (Jackson 1977, 66–67).

Though he doesn't use the term 'inference' here, it is not uncommon in the literature to see this problem described as one in which certain inferences cannot be made.<sup>8</sup> What sort of inference is at issue, though? It might be an inference a subject makes about her own thought, an inference that an outside interpreter makes about a subject's thought, or perhaps a pure entailment relation between thought contents or propositions themselves and not an inference drawn by any subject. The exact nature of the inference to my mind has never been properly addressed in this debate. In the original objection, Jackson doesn't put things in terms of inference. Rather, it seems to be taken as an obvious fact that a red, triangle after-image is a species of a red after-image. In what follows, we shall see that this talk of an image being a species of another image, and by extension a thought being a species of some other thought, is not so innocent.

Grzankowski (2018), in discussing why the fused-adverb move fails, puts the point in terms of a thought following from another.

From the fact that one is thinking about a red square, it follows that one is thinking about a red thing. From the fact that one is thinking about a green circle, it follows that one is thinking

about a circular thing. But these inferences apparently fail on the fused view. Because the ‘fused’ adverbs are syntactically simple (which is supposed to reflect the existence of wholly distinct properties), there seems to be no way to recover the property of being red from the property of red-square. (47)

This may seem harmless enough. However, it glosses over an important issue. We need to be careful in talking about thoughts following from other thoughts in this context. There is a way to do this that is improper because it fails to capture subjects’ perspectives on the world and hence subjects’ conceptions of things. Note that we would not accept the following inference without qualification.

- (a) John believes that the fifth president of the United States of America followed the fourth president of the United States of America in the US presidency.
- (b) Therefore, John believes that James Monroe followed James Madison in the US presidency.

It is entirely possible that John is ignorant of the identities of the respective presidents. This will not prevent him from believing (a), but it will prevent him from believing (b). Admittedly, if we are interested in what philosophers have called the *de re* sense of belief, then the inference from (a) to (b) seems fine. But it’s certainly not fair to say that adverbialists understand all thought content in this way. Of course, it is fine for us to infer (b) from (a) if it is known that John knows the identities of the fourth and fifth presidents of the US. However, supposing John is ignorant of the identities, the inference from (a) to (b) loses his perspective on the world and is therefore illegitimate.<sup>9</sup>

This talk of a subject’s perspective on the world is obviously important for understanding the nature of thought content. We don’t want to assume from the outset that the adverbialist has no interest in capturing this perspective, so we need to be clear about the nature of the inferences in question. The inferences must be understood to concern subjects’ thought contents or the concepts that compose those contents – as subjects understand them. If we do not respect this constraint, we run the risk of assuming that adverbialism is a theory of intentionality that ignores subjects’ perspectives on the world. This clearly is an assumption that cannot structure the many-property problem.

Another potential issue here is thinking of the inferences in question as being from one proposition to another proposition. Many theorists take propositions to be the objects of thought, so perhaps for some theorists it is harmless to think of a thought following from another in terms of whether some proposition follows from another proposition in the sense that the proposition that Juventus is a football club based in Italy follows from the proposition that Juventus is a football club based in Turin, Italy. Understanding the inferential connections to concern entailments between propositions in this context, again, begs the question against the adverbialist. Adverbialism about thought content is – by design – a theory that attempts to understand what it is for a thinker to think a thought without ineliminable reference to things outside of a thinker. If we assume that intentional content is to be understood by essential reference to propositions, we will have clearly assumed something illegitimate in this context. The very issue is whether a non-relational theory of intentionality of the adverbialist variety can be developed, so the objection cannot assume that propositions are the objects of thought or else we beg the question against the adverbialist.

Another way that the objection might assume something illegitimate is by assuming that the inferences to be captured are of a first-person nature, that is, inferences that a subject would make about what she herself thinks. It's plausible, though not completely uncontested, that subjects typically know the content of their own thoughts without the need of inference.<sup>10</sup> If the objection to adverbialism assumed that the inferences at issue are the ones that subjects make about what they are thinking, then the adverbialist could legitimately cry foul. The adverbialist could claim that subjects know what they think without inference in the vast majority of cases, so any objection that held that subjects are blocked from making inferences about what they think would not be a special problem for adverbialism but a problem for all theories of intentionality that also adopt the plausible view that self-knowledge of content is typically non-inferential.

One might object to the current line of thought by saying the following. All of this talk about inference tracks epistemic issues while the question of the truth of adverbialism is a *metaphysical* issue. The issue, the objection runs, is whether having thought A necessitates having thought B. That is not an epistemic issue at all: it's an issue about the metaphysics of thought. To construe the issue in this way ignores the foregoing points about the objects of thought and subjects' perspectives on the world. Whether the instantiation of the property of *being red* also instantiates the property of *being colored* is a purely metaphysical issue. However, whether having a certain thought entails having another thought is not an issue that can be settled so cleanly and simply. If the contents of thoughts are propositions, and having a thought means that one is committed to a proposition that stands in entailment relations to other propositions, then we have a purely metaphysical issue. However, adverbialists cannot appeal to propositions without giving up the non-relationality that is essential to their view. The inference about presidents mentioned earlier is a reminder that in talking about whether or not the fact that a thinker has thought A entails the fact that the thinker has thought B is a matter that must be settled by a careful examination of the thinker's conceptual repertoire. It is not so simple as the question of whether the instantiation of one property thereby instantiates other properties or whether a proposition considered in isolation from a thinker entails another proposition.

In sum, we cannot assume the following when understanding the inferences that the adverbialist supposedly cannot draw.

- i The subject's perspective on the world can be ignored when considering the inferences.
- ii The objects of thoughts are propositions.
- iii Self-knowledge of content (the way a thinker knows her thoughts) is inferential.

What remains of the many-property problem after these strictures are in place? The main issue here is really one of the syntactical simplicity of the intentional state ascriptions for adverbialists who adopt the non-structural approach. Here is Kriegel (2011) articulating this approach.

The natural move for the adverbialist to make is to propose the following distinguishable renderings: 'I am thinking green-dragon-wise and purple-butterfly-wise' for the former and 'I am thinking purple-dragon-wise and green-butterfly-wise' for the latter. However, these newer

paraphrases lose a level of compositionality present in the original sentences. This may be problematic in a number of ways, but the main one is that the compositionality of the original sentences enabled certain inferences which may be disabled in the paraphrase. In particular, the claim is that while from “I am thinking green-dragon-wise” one cannot infer “I am thinking dragon-wise” because “dragon-wise” is only a morphological component, not a syntactic component, of “green-dragon-wise” (“green-dragon-wise” being syntactically simple). If this is right, then the adverbial paraphrases, despite purporting to be equivalent to the original sentences, would actually fail to preserve the inferential connections of the latter to surrounding sentences in the logical neighborhood. (162)

The problem, in short, is that interpreters are blocked from making any inferences about the thought contents of others if adverbialism is true. We naturally want to make inferences about what subjects think based on the language that is used to describe their intentional states. Such inferences require that the language in question be subject to compositionality. I can infer that someone thinks of a dragon in virtue of that person saying, ‘I am thinking of a green dragon,’ because the report can be broken down into more simple syntactical elements.<sup>11</sup> If the thought content is reported using a fused adverb, then it appears as an entirely new phrase to me – one which is not subject to compositionality. Thus, I would have to learn such phrases as one learns idiomatic expressions, by learning what standard linguistic meaning is associated with them. The case is worse with the ascriptions in question as there is no standard linguistic meaning associated with such fused adverbs.<sup>12</sup>

This is a problem, then, for adverbialists who adopt the non-structural approach, and it doesn’t assume any of the above controversial points (i-iii). Here is how we should understand the many-property problem for adverbialism about thought content.

- (1) If the non-structural approach is true, intentional state ascriptions lack compositionality.
- (2) If ascriptions lack compositionality, then they cannot be used as evidence for natural inferences.
- (3) If the non-structural approach is true, then ascriptions cannot be used as evidence for natural inferences. [from 1 and 2]
- (4) Ascriptions are one of the main sources of evidence we have for the contents of thoughts of others.
- (5) So, if the non-structural approach is true, interpreters cannot make natural inferences about what a subject is thinking in the vast majority of cases. [from 3 and 4]

It is important to notice that there is nothing in the conclusion that says the inferences must always be correct. What of the premises? Kriegel and others who adopt the non-structural approach accept (1). Of course, adverbialists who adopt the structural approach do not accept this, so the argument above is no problem for them. (4) is a fact that all must adopt. (3) follows from (1) and (2) by hypothetical syllogism. So, it appears that the main spot for potential resistance for those who adopt the non-structural approach is (2). As for (2), there is a compelling case for believing it. As stated, to know the meaning of novel ascriptions interpreters must break them down into their component parts. This is the first thing that an interpreter must do

in the vast majority of cases. But the compound adverbs are syntactically simple, so this cannot be done. If it cannot be done, then the natural inferences cannot be made.

### 3. Kriegel's determinable-determinate-relation reply

Uriah Kriegel (2007, 2008, 2011) has argued that the determinable-determinate relation can help us use the ascriptions in question to draw the natural inferences that are wanted. To capture the inference the adverbialist can say the following.

[A]nother principle our reasoner could appeal to is that the property of thinking dragon-wise is a determinable of which the property of thinking green-dragon-wise is a determinate. So we can reason as follows: I am thinking green-dragon-wise; whatever is a green-dragon-wise thinking is a dragon-wise thinking; therefore, I am thinking dragon-wise. (Kriegel 2008, 89)

As long as we read this as the reasoning that an interpreter would perform about Kriegel's thoughts, we do not violate (iii). On this understanding, the move can seem to allow for an interpreter to draw the natural or desired inferences even if the adverbialist paraphrases lack compositionality. The determinable-determinate relation is a tool that the interpreter has at her disposal, along with the ascriptions (and much else of course), to draw the natural inferences. Interpreters draw on previous knowledge about the determinable-determinate relation applying to adverbial properties expressed by the compound adverbs in order to draw the natural inferences about what someone is thinking. (In section 6, I explain why it merely seems that the inferences can be made.)

### 4. Grzankowski's objection to Kriegel

Grzankowski argues that this appeal to the determinable-determinate relation applied to intentional properties has absurd results given some truisms about determinables and determinates. Here are the truisms.<sup>13</sup>

T1: An object instantiating a determinate also necessarily instantiates every determinable that determinate falls under.

T2: An object instantiating a determinable must also instantiate some determinate under that determinable.

T2 causes a real problem for the adverbialist because if the determinable-determinate relation applies to intentional properties, and T2 is true, then thinkers, in some cases, will think one thought too many. Here is his example.

[S]uppose that Mary is thinking about a square, i.e. she is thinking square-ly. There are, according to Kriegel, more determinate thoughts that fall under the determinable thinking square-ly such as thinking red-square-ly. By T2, there must be some more determinate thought of Mary's by virtue of which she is thinking the determinable thought. But this demands too much of a thinker. Surely even Kriegel agrees that it is possible to think square-ly without thinking, say, red-squarely or thinking round-squarely ... (Grzankowski 2018, 49)

The basic idea is that subjects can obviously be thinking simple thoughts without thereby thinking distinct and more detailed versions of the first thoughts, which would be licensed by T2 combined with adverbialism. Surely, I can think of red *simpliciter* without thinking a distinct second thought about a more determinate shade of red.

## 5. An adverbialist reply to Grzankowski

Grzankowski's objection clearly understands the determinable-determinate relation to concern thought contents themselves. The most pressing concern here is to avoid commitment to (i): that the subject's perspective on the world can be ignored when considering the inferences. Of course, just as we do not want to assume (i) in the formulation of the many-property problem, we do not want to assume this at any point in the dialectic. Suppose, as I have personally witnessed, someone thinks that Madagascar is a fictional island in a popular movie series and not a real island nation. When this person comes to form the belief that Madagascar is an actual place, they will likely in that moment have no more determinate thoughts about Madagascar. If we attribute to them a more specific thought, by allowing T2 to range over the generic content *that Madagascar is a place*, then we will have clearly assumed that their perspective on the world can be ignored.<sup>14</sup> For instance, *Madagascar is a country in the southern hemisphere* is determinate of the determinable *Madagascar is a place*. In the moment that one realizes Madagascar is a real place, one doesn't thereby also think that it is a country in the southern hemisphere or any number of other thoughts that would be entailed if we let T2 range over subjects' conceptions as opposed to what those conceptions represent. From the person's view in that moment, there simply is no specific thought that is a more determinate version of the thought that Madagascar is a place. There are no doubt many other examples like this which give us good reason for not allowing T2 to range directly over thought contents and the conceptions that compose them without regard to other interpretive tools.

To respect (i), something more complicated is needed. Interpreters will use the determinable-determinate relation; the content of the ascriptions; their knowledge of the person's behavioral history, character, and dispositions; and their general background knowledge to infer what else the thinker might be thinking in virtue of thinking some thought. For example, if a subject thinks – in adverbialist terms – red-square-wise, we obviously want to infer that this subject thereby thinks square-wise as well. We can do this, the suggestion goes, because we understand the thinker to be thinking about a red square and there is nothing in their personal history that would prevent us from legitimately attributing to them the thought that they are also thinking of a square – from their perspective. Notice that some attributions would naturally be resisted. If the thinker in question is a three-year-old who clearly doesn't have the concept QUADRILATERAL, then we would not attribute to them the thought that they are thinking of a quadrilateral in virtue of thinking of a square. If we straightaway apply T1, then we would infer that the child was thinking of a colored quadrilateral since *being red* and *being square* are determinates of the respective determinables *being colored* and *being quadrilateral*. We cannot infer that the child also has these thoughts without more wide-ranging knowledge of the child's conceptual repertoire. Since the determinable-determinate relation is being used as one tool for interpretation among others – and is not being strictly applied to the contents of thoughts alone – we do not see the absurd consequences

drawn by Grzankowski. The more detailed versions of thoughts only follow if we understand the determinable-determinate relation to apply to the contents of thoughts directly and without regard to other interpretive resources. We naturally use more tools for interpreting the thoughts of others, and we should not restrict our options here.

We of course make mistaken content attributions to others. But these mistakes are not absurd. They are the inevitable outcomes of the complex process of assessing the intentionality of others. Grzankowski's worry is not that we make these sorts of mistakes. His main worry is that there is indeed an actual thought that is more specific than the one the agent is clearly thinking. But this worry doesn't follow once we drop the idea that T2 applies to thought contents themselves, which we must do to avoid running afoul of (i).

Once this reply is understood, it should be clear that it is not really essential that the adverbialist make use of the determinable-determinate relation at all. In order to draw the desired inferences, interpreters can make use of the logical relation between concepts as well. If someone is thinking green-dragon-ly, then we can infer he is also thinking about a green object or about a dragon because the concept GREEN DRAGON is built from the concepts GREEN OBJECT and DRAGON – assuming there is nothing else that would cause us to question this inference. Likewise, we could infer that the thinker is also thinking about a mythical object since dragons are mythical objects.<sup>15</sup> Of course, such an inference would be unwarranted if it concerns an individual who doesn't (for some reason) believe that dragons are mythical. At any rate, the basic idea is that interpreters can bring their knowledge of the logical relations between concepts or properties to bear on intentional state ascription, in lieu of appeal to the determinable-determinate relation, in order to make these very natural inferences.

## 6. Abandoning the non-structural adverbialist solution to the many-property problem

So far, in following both Kriegel and Grzankowski, I have accepted the assumption that we can meaningfully apply the determinable-determinate relation to intentional state ascriptions that consist of the fused adverbs that feature in the non-structural approach. To properly use the determinable-determinate relation as a tool, interpreters must still understand the content of the ascriptions formed by the fused adverbs. But the content cannot be understood in the normal way we understand novel sentences: by their compositionality. The biggest problem with the non-structural reply is that it implicitly appeals to the idea that the terms fused together in the adverbial modifiers can be understood in isolation and not as the novel expressions they form. If the non-structural approach is right, these ascriptions are idiomatic expressions with which interpreters are unfamiliar and cannot understand based on the meaning of their parts. Interpreters would thus be at a loss as to how to proceed in their assessment of the thought content of others, which nearly always runs by way of – though not always in a straight path – the linguistic content of ascriptions. The language used to express thoughts is some of the most important evidence used in coming to know the thoughts of others. If we cannot *work* with that language by decomposing it, then the natural inferences are truly lost. Because of this lack of compositionality, an interpreter cannot break into, as it were, the modifier and extract individual terms in the way that is need to

properly use the determinable-determinate relation as a tool for interpretation. Each ascription is like a new idiomatic expression to be learned on its own without the benefit of context.

Because of this consequence of the non-structural approach, it seems to me that adverbialists have decisive reasons for exclusively pursuing the structural approach, as has been done recently by Banick (2021) and D'Ambrosio (2021). Of course, the treatment of the many-property problem in these structural approaches should also be constrained by a proper understanding of the nature of the inferences at the heart of the many-property problem.

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## Notes on contributor

*Dr. Casey Woodling* is Director of Academic Outreach and Continuing Education/Senior Lecturer at Coastal Carolina University. His research is on intentionality, other philosophical topics related to mind and language, and Malagasy philosophy.

## Notes

1. This is not without controversy. Casullo (1983) argues that Wilfrid Sellars's adverbialism makes ineliminable reference to sensory objects and is thus not a thoroughgoing form of adverbialism.
2. See Crane (2001a, 2001b, 2013) and Woodling (2016a, 2016b) for internalist views that appeal to a phenomenological notion of an intentional object. These views, which are act-object conceptions of intentionality, do not appeal to dubious entities.
3. Sometimes in this paper, I talk of thought content for ease of expression. For the adverbialist, all thought content reduces to the adverbial properties of thinkers or the adverbial properties of intentional states. Developing adverbialism by providing a semantics for the adverbs that express the content of attitudes may very well require a choice here about what the adverbial properties truly modify. Banick (2021) commits to the idea that the adverbial properties modify experiences. He writes, 'On my conception of adverbialism, adverbialism is in this tradition in which the explanation of conscious intentionality foregrounds the active contribution of the mind in its posit of concrete experiences that have adverbial properties' (675). He explicitly defends an events-based semantics of adverbial modification over an intensionalist development rooted in Montogavian intensional semantics and suggests that the intensionalist view would commit to the idea that adverbial properties modify subjects themselves.
4. I say 'partial' here because while Kriegel has written much about adverbialism, he has never, to my knowledge, fully endorsed it.
5. Usually the 1977 work is cited, and I follow suit here, but the objection first appears in Jackson (1975).

6. It is standard to think of intentional states such as beliefs as having correctness conditions. My belief that Antananarivo is the capital of Madagascar is true just in case it correctly represents the fact that Antananarivo is the capital of Madagascar. Desires are thought to have satisfaction conditions. My desire to live in Fianarantsoa one day is satisfied just in case I come to live in Fianarantsoa one day.
7. This idea of fusing adverbs is first suggested by Wilfred Sellars (1966), though not in direct reply to the many-property problem.
8. See Kriegel (2008), Jacobson and Putnam (2014), Dinges (2015), and Grzankowski (2018) for examples.
9. I don't mean to suggest that Grzankowski – or any other single theorist – intentionally attributes all these assumptions to the adverbialist. I lay these conditions out to flesh out how we must properly understand the inferential problem.
10. See Carruthers (2011) and Ryle (1949) for defenses of the inferential nature of self-knowledge.
11. This obviously oversimplifies how we come to know the intentional content of others. We are not limited to the verbal reports of those states, whether they are from the subjects themselves or from others. There are other resources we use to make inferences about the thoughts of others such as knowledge of a person's behavioral history, character, and dispositions, our own general background knowledge, and so on.
12. Dinges (2015) makes a similar point. (See his footnote 2).
13. Grzankowski finds support for these truisms in Funkhouser (2006), Johnson (1921), and Prior (1949).
14. By use of 'generic content' here, I intend to convey the idea of a proposition or a potential content of a subject's thought without considering for how the subject is conceiving of things.
15. Note that there are two possible senses of 'thinking about' in such contexts. See Searle (1983) and Crane (2013) for further discussion. I follow Crane (2013) in thinking that there is only one true sense of 'about' in the expression 'thinking about'. The sense of 'about' that derives from what a thinker takes his or her thought to be about.

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