

UNPROPOSITIONAL ATTITUDES

Let us call sentences of the form 'X believes/says/denies/fears/... that *p*' *attitude ascriptions*. The *relational analysis* of attitude ascriptions claims that they contain two singular terms, 'X' and 'that *p*', and should be interpreted as claims concerning relations to propositions:

'X believes that *p*' is true just in case X bears the belief relation to $\langle p \rangle$.

'X says that *p*' is true just in case X bears the saying relation to $\langle p \rangle$.

—and similarly for other attitude ascriptions. The most familiar arguments for the existence of propositions rest on the relational analysis. For instance:

'Floyd believes that snow is white' is true.

'Floyd believes that snow is white' is true just in case Floyd bears the belief relation to $\langle \text{Snow is white} \rangle$.

Therefore: $\langle \text{Snow is white} \rangle$ exists.

Tobias Rosefeldt (2008) has argued against the relational analysis by showing that we should not regard 'that'-clauses appearing in attitude ascriptions as singular terms. But he does not consider whether his work has implications for arguments which offer to establish the existence of propositions. Rosefeldt is not concerned with ontology and is happy to presuppose that propositions exist. His arguments about 'that'-clauses have no direct bearing on the most familiar arguments for the existence of propositions. For these rely on claims about the interpretation of attitude ascriptions—for instance,

'Floyd believes that snow is white' is true just in case Floyd bears the belief relation to $\langle \text{Snow is white} \rangle$.

—which are entirely consistent with Rosefeldt's view of 'that'-clauses. Indeed, Rosefeldt does nothing to deny these interpretative claims, and it is highly probable that he regards the usual arguments for the existence of propositions as sound. In this paper, I extend Rosefeldt's work on 'that'-clauses by offering an alternative interpretation of attitude ascriptions. My aim is to undermine the usual arguments for the existence of propositions.

I begin by summarizing the debate over attitude ascriptions and Rosefeldt's contribution to it. I then explain how Rosefeldt's work is significant for ontology and offer my own alternative to the relational analysis.

Philosophers generally argue for the relational analysis on the ground that it best explains the validity of inferences such as the following:

Floyd believes that snow is white.

Therefore: there is something Floyd believes.

Royd believes everything Floyd says.

Floyd says that snow is white.

Therefore: Royd believes that snow is white.

The relational analysis faces well-known problems of its own.

Rosefeldt's account of attitude ascriptions invokes a philosophically neglected type of quantification. We are familiar with quantification into name position: 'Someone drank the tea', 'Something is in the cupboard'. Now consider:

Bill is chaste.

Ben is chaste.

Therefore: there is something Bill and Ben both are.

This argument is valid. But its conclusion quantifies into predicate position rather than name position, as we can see if we extend it as follows:

There is something Bill and Ben both are, namely, chaste.

To extend it as follows would make no sense:

There is something Bill and Ben both are, namely, chastity.

Let us call quantification into positions other than singular term position *non-nominal quantification*, and return to:

Floyd believes that snow is white.

Therefore: there is something Floyd believes.

It should no longer be obvious that the conclusion involves quantification into singular term position. Rosefeldt suggests that it should instead be understood as quantification into 'that'-clause position. Why think that the quantifier is non-nominal? The evidence is among the examples that caused trouble for the relational analysis:

Neave says that snow is white.

Therefore: Neave says the proposition that snow is white.

The fact that the conclusion is ungrammatical should make us doubt that the quantifier replaces a singular term. If 'that'-clauses were always singular terms, then the conclusion would be grammatical. It isn't, so they aren't. (See Rosefeldt 2008: 309–315.)

Rosefeldt presupposes the existence of propositions because he claims that they are the semantic values of 'that'-clauses. I will suppose that Rosefeldt has shown that we should deny the status of singular term to 'that'-clauses appearing in attitude ascriptions. That does not contradict any premiss of the usual arguments for the existence of propositions. Even if 'that'-clauses are not singular terms, attitude ascriptions may still entail the existence of propositions. ('Tom is a father' only mentions one entity but entails the existence of more than one.) In order to extend Rosefeldt's work to bear on these arguments, we require an ontologically revealing semantic theory. In addition to claiming that 'X' and 'that *p*' are

singular terms, the relational analysis offers ontologically revealing claims about the truth-conditions of attitude ascriptions, and it is these that are invoked in the arguments for propositions. The philosopher who wants to undermine these arguments ought to offer an alternative to these claims.

My alternative is a new version of the *property analysis*. According to standard versions of the property analysis, attitude ascriptions consist of a singular term ('X') and a predicate, and they should be interpreted as ascriptions of properties. For instance:

'X believes that *p*' is true just in case X has the property of believing-that-*p*.

Standard versions of the property analysis interpret attitude ascriptions too coarsely. The phrases 'believes that snow is white' and 'asserts that snow is white' appear to have a semantically significant common element: 'that snow is white'. Interpreting these phrases as two distinct predicates rides roughshod over the similarity (Fodor 1978). I draw on Rosefeldt's work to show how to do justice to the structure of these phrases. My theory interprets attitude ascriptions more finely than standard versions of the property analysis but avoids the ontological implications of the relational analysis. It accounts for the data. And it is more metaphysically revealing than the intensional semantics invoked by Rosefeldt.

Works cited

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