Abstract

A brief history of the issues and landscape is provided. The contributions to the volume are summarized and put into context with one another and with the overall theme.

Keywords

Intentionality, Propositional Attitudes, Philosophy of Mind, Propositional Content, Propositionalism

1

Non-Propositional Intentionality:

An Introduction

Alex Grzankowski

Michelle Montague

Intentionality, the phenomenon of something’s being about or of something, and phenomenology, the phenomenon of there being something it is like for a subject, experientially, to be in a mental state, are central concepts in the philosophy of mind. Much philosophical energy has focused on whether it is possible to give a ‘naturalistic reduction’ of intentionality, and more recently, on how intentionality and phenomenology may be related in conscious perception, conscious thought, and conscious emotion. An issue that has not received as much attention, but is now attracting much wider interest, is whether allintentionality is *propositional*. In recent discussion of intentionality there has been an almost universal assumption—sometimes explicit, but typically implicit—that all intentionality is propositional. This view is sometimes called ‘propositionalism’. Propositionalism has been so pervasive that ‘intentional attitude’ and ‘propositional attitude’ have come to be used interchangeably.

A few samples from the contemporary analytic literature demonstrate the tendency to characterize the phenomenon of intentionality exclusively in terms of propositions. According to John Perry ([1994](#Ref25): 387–8),

the phenomenon of intentionality suggests that attitudes are essentially relational in nature: they involve relations to the propositions at which they are directed . . . An attitude seems to be individuated by the agent, the type of attitude (belief, desire, etc.), and the proposition at which it is directed.

And Daniel Stoljar ([1996](#Ref34): 191) says that,

in one formulation, the problem of intentionality is presented as concerning a particular class of properties, intentional properties. Intentional properties are those properties expressed by predicates formed from verbs of propositional attitudes.

It is important to note from the outset that the propositionalist approach to intentionality has prominent historical opponents. Franz Brentano ([1874](#Ref4)), who is credited with bringing the topic of intentionality to the forefront of philosophical attention in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, was a thoroughgoing non-propositionalist about intentionality.[[1]](#footnote-1) According to Brentano, all intentional attitudes are *non*-propositional (specifically, objectual),[[2]](#footnote-2) including judgments or beliefs, which (in the analytic tradition) are the paradigm examples of propositional attitudes.[[3]](#footnote-3) In his contribution (Chapter 8), Kriegel offers a spirited defense of Brentano’s objectual account of intentionality, focusing on the attitude of belief or judgment.[[4]](#footnote-4) On this view, all beliefs are existential, they affirm or deny the existence of something, but this affirmation or denial is not to be understood as a belief *that there are Fs*, for example, but rather simply as a belief *in Fs*, where F is taken to be a thing or a concrete particular. Part of Kriegel’s defense of this view depends on the claim that existence-commitment is not a content-property, not a property which features in the specification of the content of a belief, but an aspect of the belief-attitude itself.

Kriegel also offers a two-step dispensability argument in favor of objectualism. The first step defends the claim that every indicative statement that expresses a belief can be paraphrased into non-propositional affirmation or denial of an object’s existence. The second step appeals to ontological parsimony and claims that a Brentanian theory is in a better position since it does not acquire an additional ontological commitment to propositions. In defending the paraphrase strategy, Kriegel considers a wide range of statements including categorical, hypothetical, singular, molecular, and modal statements.

In spite of Brentano’s influence in bringing the phenomenon of intentionality into philosophical focus, his theory of non-propositional intentionality has been largely ignored. This is unfortunate. Implicit acceptance of propositionalism has impeded philosophical discussion about the nature of intentionality in at least three noteworthy ways: (i) a precise statement of propositionalism has been left undeveloped; (ii) the motivations for propositionalism are rarely articulated; and (iii) apparent counterexamples and challenges to propositionalism, along with non-propositional theories of intentionality, are underexplored. The contributors to this volume explore and correct these impediments by discussing in detail what the commitment to propositionalism amounts to; by shedding light on why one might find the thesis attractive (or unattractive); and by exploring the ways in which one might depart from propositionalism.

**1 What is Propositionalism?**

The basic tenet of propositionalism is that every mental intentional attitude, every thought, pro-attitude, belief, desire, perception, adoration, resentment, contemplation, etc. is a fundamentally proposition-involving attitude. What is central to propositionalism is the *structure* of the intentional content of a fundamentally proposition-involving attitude. Most versions of propositionalism parse that structure in terms of predicative structure, which is typically and perspicuously conveyed by a verb-involving sentence. (We’ll go on to discuss how Camp’s contribution in Chapter 2 presses on this minimal starting point for propositionalism by considering the metaphysical nature of propositions.)

This minimal statement of propositionalism is designed to remain neutral on the issue of whether intentionality is relational, and thus whether it is correct to construe intentional attitudes as relations to propositions or something proposition-like. Although such a characterization has been standard among philosophers, it is not universally accepted. In this volume, for example, Searle maintains that propositionalism is true for most intentional states (leaning on his now famous and familiar discussion of directions of fit and conditions of satisfaction), but denies that intentional attitudes are *relations* to propositions: “a belief is not an attitude to a proposition, rather a belief consists entirely in a propositional content under the aspect of being believed” (p. 000). An assessment of this alternative proposal requires careful discussion of what is involved in “the aspect of being believed”, and Searle does not expand on this idea.[[5]](#footnote-5) Nevertheless he accepts the basic starting point that what is at issue is whether the specification of the content of all intentional states requires an entire “that”-clause, which in turn requires appealing to propositions or something proposition-like. In what follows, we’ll sometimes speak of intentional attitudes as relations, but this is for ease of exposition rather than signaling a metaphysical commitment.

Of the contributions in the volume, Mendelovici’s (Chapter 9) is most centrally concerned with clarifying propositionalism. As a first step, she draws a distinction between the *deep nature* of intentional states and their contents and the *superficial characters* of intentional states and their contents. The question of the deep nature of intentional states and their contents is a question about the metaphysical nature of intentional states and the metaphysical nature of intentional content. The question of the superficial character of intentional states and their contents is a question about the features that *characterize* kinds of intentional states, e.g. belief, desire, hope, and what features characterize the particular contents intentional states have, e.g. God or that grass is green.

Given this distinction between deep nature and superficial character, and given that our focus is on the contents of intentional states, Mendelovici argues that there are two different ways of understanding the debate between what she calls ‘propositionalism’ and ‘objectualism’: (1) as a debate between ‘deep propositionalism’and ‘deep objectualism’, which are views about the deep nature of the contents of intentional states; (2) as a debate between ‘shallow propositionalism’and ‘shallow objectualism’, which are views about the superficial character of the contents of intentional states. Mendelovici argues that not only are the pairs of deep and shallow views conceptually distinct from one another, but also that neither deep and shallow propositionalism entail each other nor do deep and shallow objectualism.

According to Mendelovici, what’s at stake in the contemporary debates over propositionalism are the shallow views and, further, that this understanding of the debate sheds new light on the soundness of certain arguments for propositionalism and objectualism. For example, it suggests that arguments for propositionalism or objectualism that are based on claims about the nature of intentional content (for example, if content is best understood in terms of, say, possible worlds or in terms of, say, sequences of objects, properties, and relations) are suspect. Finally, she argues that when there is a conflict between our views about the deep nature and the character of intentional content, the views about character should (for the most part) win out.

In her contribution, Camp pursues the ‘metaphysical’ strand of Mendelovici’s attempt to articulate the commitments of propositionalism by clarifying what it is for a representation to be propositional. Determining the necessary features of representations with propositional structure requires determining the necessary features of propositions themselves.

Camp sets aside the possible worlds theory of propositions on the grounds that it would threaten to trivialize otherwise interesting debates about propositionality if adopted (for many representations such as sentences, pictures, maps, graphs, and so on divide the space of possibilities). Her focus is on structured accounts of propositions and what exactly it takes for a representation to have such a proposition as its content. By considering the now familiar structured theories of propositions often attributed to Frege and Russell, Camp focuses on the idea of predication—a combinatorial operation that connects predicates to subjects. One important aspect of Camp’s chapter is its detailed discussion of predicational structure and the reliance on it by other theorists who have considered the logic and semantics of maps. Camp offers reasons for thinking that maps don’t exhibit predicational structure, but she is in fact out for a bolder conclusion. She argues that thinking about predication and whether maps exhibit it is to enter into the debate concerning their propositionality one step too late. There is an array of modes of combination besides predication that theorists have thought might underwrite representing propositionally and a focus on predication is overly narrow. What’s needed, according to Camp, is a characterization of the genus of which predication is a canonical species.

Camp’s chapter is centered on a discussion about maps, but much of it goes beyond this focus. Maps provide a backdrop against which she inquires into the nature of propositionality. As well as offering reasons for thinking that the notion of predication isn’t quite the right place to look if one wants to understand propositionality, Camp concludes that propositions have four essential features concerning the combinatorial operations of their elements. First, the candidate combinatorial operations are highly *digital*: they take a small number of discrete elements as inputs. Second, they are *universal*: they can combine a wide range of elements. Third, they are *asymmetrical*: either just one element must be of a type that enables it to serve as input for the other or the operation itself creates such an asymmetry. Fourth, the operation is *recursive*: the outputs of the operation can serve as inputs to the same operation. Throughout her chapter maps serve to highlight how a system of representation might meet or fail to meet these combinatorial demands but the upshots are of broader interest. Much of the contemporary literature on the metaphysics of propositions focuses on predication (see e.g. Hanks 2015), and as indicated at the beginning of this section it is not uncommon to contrast propositional and non-propositional representation in terms of predication (see also Grzankowski’s Chapter 6). Camp’s chapter offers a different way of thinking about what is required of propositional representation, and therefore perhaps a different way of contrasting propositional and non-propositional representation.

One lesson that we may draw from the different possible ways of clarifying propositionalism is that not all versions of propositionalism will stand or fall together. It seems plausible that different arguments will undermine or support ‘shallow propositionalism’ and ‘deep propositionalism’, and the force of one’s particular argument for or against propositionalism may depend on which conception of a proposition is in play.

**2 What are the Motivations for Propositionalism?**

A cursory glance at our intentional attitudes may seem to provide clear counterexamples to propositionalism. That is, many intentional attitudes simply do not seem to be propositional attitudes. Mary loves Nancy. She seeks the fountain of youth. She has you in mind. She contemplates the sky. And she wants Nancy’s car. These examples are a serious challenge to propositionalism only if it cannot be shown that they are somehow reducible to or derive from propositional attitudes. It is therefore unsurprising that one motivation for propositionalism is its putative ability to account for such cases in propositional terms.

The philosophy of language and the philosophy of mind have historically been intimately connected, and this connection plays an important role in the debate about propositionalism. One central issue is whether ascriptions of intentional attitudes (very often ascribed using ‘intensional verbs’)[[6]](#footnote-6) can serve as a point of entry into the nature of intentional attitudes, or whether it’s possible to completely divorce the theory of attitude ascriptions from such metaphysical facts.

A natural and familiar view might proceed from the claim that a sentence such as ‘S believes that p’ is true just in case S believes that p and ‘S wants ice cream’ is true just in case S wants ice cream. In turn, with only minor theorizing, one might hold that the former requires a metaphysics of mind that deals in relations to propositions, and the latter a metaphysics of mind that deals in relations to things such as ice cream. More generally, one may hope that our attitude ascriptions will reveal, in a relatively straightforward way, our metaphysics of mind. But matters may be more complicated as a number of contributors make clear.

In Chapter 10, Sainsbury offers ways in which our attitude ascriptions and the metaphysics of mind might come apart. Moreover, he provides a theory of attitude ascriptions which aims to countenance both what he calls ‘sentential’ ascriptions (e.g. ‘She believes it will rain today’) and ‘nonsentential’ ascriptions (e.g. ‘She wants rain’) without commitment to any views about whether there are in fact various kinds of irreducible intentional attitudes, for example, propositional and objectual. His view makes room for the possibility of non-propositional representational states but also shows how the grammar of our ascriptions doesn’t make their existence inevitable. Sainsbury argues that both kinds of attitude *ascriptions* are fundamentally the same insofar as both involve putting a conceptual structure “on display” (which he differentiates from quotation, assertion, and reference). Attitude ascriptions are correct just in case the displayed structure is appropriately related to the structure of the intentional state of the subject of the attribution, but appropriateness turns out to be a very flexible notion. Whereas sentential ascriptions put on display a structure of concepts with a sentence-like structure, nonsentential ascriptions put on display concepts with a non-sentence-like structure, but a match between what’s on display and the state of the subject is merely an ideal. As Sainsbury puts it:

Match is an ideal, but we can expect, and will find, acceptable attributions which do not match. Putting a representation on display is like mimicking a person’s accent to show how they spoke, or playing a few bars on the piano to show how they played. The presentation need not exactly duplicate: it may simply be suggestive or may even be a caricature. Something similar holds for attitude attributions. (p. 000)

One way for an ascription such as ‘Galileo believes that the earth moves’ to be true is for Galileo to be related to a mental representational structure comprising the very concepts structured in the very same way as the corresponding phrase ‘the earth moves’. An ascription such as ‘Galileo is thinking of the number seven’ can be made true by Galileo having in mind a mental representation corresponding to the term ‘seven’. However in some contexts, ‘Galileo is thinking of the number seven’ may be true because Galileo has a propositional thought corresponding to, say, ‘seven is prime’.

That’s just a sampling of the ways in which attitudes and ascriptions may come apart according to Sainsbury. His chapter contains a rich discussion of many ways in which our intentional state ascriptions can depart from what makes them true, and he offers a novel notational system for tracking the diverse complications. One broad upshot of Sainsbury’s view is that purported non-propositionalists must go beyond linguistic considerations if they are to defend their view.

According to some theorists, the complications concerning intentional ascription come even one step sooner. Although on the surface, ascriptions such as ‘Mary seeks the fountain of youth’ and ‘Mary wants a sloop’ look to ascribe a two-place relation between Mary and some non-propositional object such as a concept, or perhaps an ordinary object, some have argued that there are reasons for thinking that looks are deceiving and that the language itself is more complicated at the level of logical form. For example, there is Quine’s influential suggestion (1956) that sentences such as ‘Mary wants a sloop’ and ‘Ernest is hunting a lion’ are (despite appearances) best treated as the propositionalattitude ascriptions ‘Mary wants that she have a sloop’ and ‘Ernest strives that he finds a lion’.

To see part of what motivates this suggestion consider Quine’s distinction between ‘notional’ and ‘relational’ readings of intentional attitude sentences. On a relational reading of the sentence ‘Mary wants a sloop’ there is a particular sloop that Mary wants. This can be captured in first-order logic as follows: ∃x (x is a sloop & Mary wants x). On this reading, the quantifier takes wide scope with respect to the verb ‘wants’. In contrast, on a notional reading of the sentence, where Mary wants a sloop but no sloop in particular, the quantifier must take narrow scope with respect to the verb ‘wants’. Since Quine was explicitly in favor of Russell’s ([1905](#Ref28)) treatment of quantified phrases such as ‘an F’ and ‘the F’, according to which quantifiers do not contribute denotations to propositions, but rather are incomplete symbols that combine with predicates to form meaningful sentences, when a quantifier takes narrow scope with respect to a verb such as ‘wants’ as in the case given, a full sentential complement is needed. In short, given Russell’s theory of quantifiers, without a sentential complement following the verb ‘wants’, we would not be able to adequately represent the notional reading of ‘Mary wants a sloop’.[[7]](#footnote-7) Although on the surface it looks like we have a intentional state ascription which relates a subject to something structurally non-propositional, the logical form (at least given Quine’s other commitments) reveals that the subject is related to something with propositional structure.

A number of contemporary philosophers and linguists have been impressed with the broad outlines of this Quinean idea and have argued that there are syntactic and semantic reasons for generalizing it. In their contribution, Den Dikken, Larson, and Ludlow argue for propositionalism by considering the strong correlation between intensionality and syntax. Sentences create an intensional context when the following two features are present: the substitution of co-referring terms does not preserve truth; and the presence of a non-referring term need not induce falsity.[[8]](#footnote-8) Den Dikken et al. first claim that intensionality is present in all clausal (sentential) complements following an intensional verb. For example, intensionality effects are present with respect to the following sentences: ‘Max imagined that a unicorn was approaching’ and ‘Max imagined that Bill Pratt was approaching’. But intensional contexts also arise in what look to be simpler constructions. In what are commonly called ‘intensional transitive verbs’ such as wants, imagines, looks for, etc., which appear to take (or at least can take) noun phrase direct objects, we find substitution failures and the admissibility of non-referring terms. Moreover, on their surface, such constructions resist an analysis in terms of clausal complements. For example, it is at least not obvious that ‘Max imagined a unicorn’ is easily translatable into a sentence of the form ‘Max imagined a unicorn is F’ (for some appropriate F). However, via the syntax of non-finite complement constructions within the general framework of Chomsky ([1995](#Ref6)), Den Dikken et al. argue that intensional transitive constructions are not transitives at all, but rather clausal complement constructions containing concealed syntactic material. For example, a sentence such as ‘Max wants a bicycle’ looks to have the logical form of a simple two-place relation holding between Max and a bicycle, but semantic and syntactic tests reveal a hidden subject-term, ‘PRO’ (roughly equivalent in this case to ‘Max himself’) as well as a hidden verb, ‘to have’. Upon closer inspection, then, a proposition-expressing sentential complement is revealed and the logical form is closer to that of ‘Max wants that he himself have a bicycle’.

Den Dikken et al. focus primarily on wants/needs verbs, and non-propositionalists are quick to point out a host of other intentional verbs (e.g. Mary loves Nancy, Mary likes chocolate), which “surely” aren’t propositional. The central question is: can Den Dikken, Larson, and Ludlow’s project be extended to the whole range of cases under consideration? If so, then a departure from propositionalism on linguistic grounds looks far less motivated.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Switching gears from linguistic considerations about intentional attitude ascriptions, one might attempt to defend propositionalism with more logico/metaphysical considerations. Two related arguments in this vein concern the role of propositional attitudes inmental causation, and the role propositions play in the theory of logical relations and of inference, and hence in the theory of human reasoning.

David Lewis ([1979](#Ref21)) is not himself committed to propositionalism, but he offers support for it by demonstrating its possible role in explaining mental causation. As he remarks, the phenomenon of mental causation implicates intentional attitudes in several ways—they cause behavior, they are caused by the environment, and they cause one another—and when one theorizes about their causal roles it is sometimes necessary to refer to the logical relations between their objects.[[10]](#footnote-10) Since the logic of propositions is well-established, it will be clear how to capture these entailments if the objects of the attitudes are propositions. If, however, they form a miscellaneous class (e.g. propositions as well as objects that don’t enter into logical relations such as cars, bicycles, and unicorns), it will be far less clear how to proceed.

A similar point applies when considering what is required to capture human reasoning. As reasoners, we make inferences from premises to conclusions, and logic is plausibly characterized as the study and formalization of valid inferences. Aristotelian logic captured valid inferences between four basic types of propositions on the basis of the terms the propositions contained (this is why Aristotelian logic is sometimes called ‘term logic’), but there is no obvious way of capturing certain inferences between propositions simply by appealing to their constitutive terms, and so Aristotelian logic proved inadequate as a general model of reasoning. The schemas *If P then Q, P, therefore Q* and *P or Q, ~Q, therefore P*, for example, represent inferences between propositions which are most naturally captured without any reference to the internal parts of the propositions P and Q. So if logic is the study of good reasoning, and humans are reasoners, it seems that we do a better job capturing our reasoning if we can appeal to truth-functional relations between propositions. However, if human reasoning in any way depends on logical relations between the objects of the attitudes, and if those objects form a messy heterogeneous class, as already noted, how to proceed will be unclear.

Another metaphysical consideration in favor of propositionalism can be found in Searle’s ([1983](#Ref29)) book *Intentionality*. Searle argued that intentionality, by its nature, is a matter of setting conditions, conditions *that* *such and such is the case*, and since conditions *that such and such is the case* essentially involve states of affairs, it follows that the specification of a state of affairs requires a proposition. For the Searle of 1983, then, all intentionality is, most fundamentally, propositional.

Although Searle still believes that most intentional states are propositional, in his contribution to this volume (Chapter 11), he gives up on propositionalism! He argues that although desires, perceptions, and emotions are all propositional, intentional states such as boredom are not.

Since many non-propositionalists cite desires, emotions, and perceptions as examples of non-propositional attitudes, showing that such attitudes are actually propositional would be a significant result. Searle’s strategy for arguing that desires and perceptions are propositional is twofold. He advances syntactic considerations similar to those offered by Den Dikken et al., but he also offers a distinct argument that appeals to phenomenology. According to Searle, whenever you want something, it is made phenomenologically manifest that what you want is an entire state of affairs, and whenever you see something, what you see is an entire state of affairs.

With the propositionality of belief, desire, and perception in hand, Searle offers a propositionalist strategy for dealing with emotions such as loving a person, fearing a scary object, being angry with someone, and so on. In the present volume, Searle (p. 000) defends the view that the things we typically think of as emotions are all “agitated forms of strong desire, typically containing a belief and typically where the belief causes the desire.” So, for example, to be madly in love with someone is typically to be prompted to have certain feelings because of one’s interactions with the other person. One sees the beloved, talks to him, and forms various beliefs about him. Searle argues that these cognitive states (all of which have propositional content) cause in a person the feelings of desire and that by appreciating this we can see how it is that an emotion such as being in love with someone is, at bottom, propositional.

As already mentioned, the falsity of propositionalism, according to Searle, is shown by cases such as boredom. Although boredom has both intentional and non-intentional forms, when it is intentional, as in being bored with someone you know or a television program, it doesn’t appear to have any propositional content. It’s possible to be bored by your friend’s constant complaints about the weather, but according to Searle, it is also possible to be bored by your friend *tout court*. In this latter case, there doesn’t seem to be any propositional content involved. And since boredom is not an emotion, there are no propositional desires to which one can appeal.

What implications does this admission have for Searle’s explication of intentionality in terms of conditions of satisfaction? Central to the notion of conditions of satisfaction is the idea that they can be satisfied or not. Since boredom, construed as a non-propositional intentional state, can neither be satisfied nor unsatisfied, its nature as an intentional state cannot be explicated in terms of conditions of satisfaction.

**3 What are the Ways of Departing from Propositionalism?**

So far we have been concerned with trying to articulate the main commitments of propositionalism and some of the motivations for it. In the beginning of our discussion we noted Kriegel’s Brentanian defense of non-propositionalism, and we now turn to various other ways in which the contributors to this volume are developing non-propositionalist views. They employ a number of different strategies. We have already mentioned Camp, and her chapter is relevant again at this juncture since maps turn out, on her view, to be non-propositional. Forbes (Chapter 4) enters the debate at the level of mental state ascriptions, but through a puzzle about those ascriptions he gives one reason for thinking our ontology of mind must be enriched to include non-propositional attitudes about propositions. A number of contributors focus on particular intentional states to show that they are not propositional, for example, Watzl on attention (Chapter 12), Johnston on perception (Chapter 7), and Farkas on practical knowledge (Chapter 4). Finally, Grzankowski offers a general account of non-propositional attitudes. We’ll take each of these approaches in turn.

Some philosophers have thought that the intentionality of mental representation can be understood as analogous to the ways maps represent. For example, Camp ([2007](#Ref5)) offers ways of thinking about how mental maps might do some of the work asked of mental sentences in other theories of mind. Braddon-Mitchell and Jackson ([1996](#Ref3)) entertain a bolder conclusion, considering whether a mental-map conception of mental representation should replace the more common sentential theories.[[11]](#footnote-11) As we have mentioned, in her contribution, Camp clarifies what it is for a representation to be propositional, but in so doing she also offers reasons for thinking that maps are not propositional. She argues that at least some of the common distinguishing features of propositional structures—that they are digital, universal, asymmetric, and recursive—are absent in the case of maps. To bring out just one example of why one might think this, consider the proposition-expressing sentence “Everyone who is carrying a gun is standing next to someone who is wearing a red shirt, and owes money to someone who was wearing a blue shirt yesterday.” Unlike such a sentence, maps do not appear to permit the construction of indefinitely complex hierarchical structures by repeated iteration of the same operation. On the basis of examples like this one (as well as others), Camp concludes that the mode of combination present in maps is (amongst other things) holistic and symmetrical. Thus, if mental maps are indeed employed by creatures like us, and if maps are non-propositional structures, at least some intentionality would turn out to be non-propositional.

Forbes, in Chapter 5, begins with the commonplace idea that a subject is in an intentional state just in case that subject bears an attitude relation to a proposition. However, he challenges this position by considering and offering a solution to a lesser-known substitution puzzle. Given a classical, relational analysis of attitude verbs, it is puzzling how to block the following, intuitively bad, inference:

1. Holmes {fears/suspects} that Moriarty has returned.

2. That Moriarty has returned is the proposition that Moriarty has returned.

3. So, Holmes {fears/suspects} the proposition that Moriarty has returned.

As Forbes argues, propositions, as it is well known, can serve as the content of a mental state or event and when they do, they serve to set the conditions for satisfaction or accuracy had by the mental state—when one fears that Moriarty has returned, one is in a fear-state that is realized only if Moriarty has indeed returned. What the puzzle shows is that a proposition can also be what an attitude is about or directed upon without playing the role of content. If this is correct, propositional attitudes can’t simply be those mental states that relate one to a proposition. The relation in question must somehow be content-involving. The construction ‘the proposition that Moriarty has returned’ designates the same entity as ‘that Moriarty has returned’, but in a sentence such as 3 it is functioning as a noun phrase and tells us what the fear is about rather than offering a specification of its content.

Forbes’s solution to the puzzle lies in differentiating non-propositional attitudes that just so happen to be *about* propositions (reported by sentences like 3) from attitudes that have propositions as their *contents* (reported with ‘that’-clause involving ascriptions as in 1).This distinction is in turn captured by Forbes in an enriched Neo-Davidsonian event semantics. Forbes distinguishes between the *theme* of an event (e.g. in a sentence such as ‘Tom chased Jerry’, Jerry is the theme of the chasing event—a familiar idea in a Davidsonian framework) from the *content* of the event, which is a novel category in event semantics offered by Forbes. On his event semantics, an attitude ascription such as ‘Holmes fears Moriarty’ requires for its truth that Holmes be the subject of a fearing-event that has Moriarty as its theme. An attitude ascription such as ‘Holmes believes that Moriarty has returned’ requires for its truth that Holmes is the subject of a believing-event that has a propositional content, namely, that Moriarty has returned. In the puzzle, Forbes’s machinery treats sentences like 3 along the lines of ‘Holmes fears Moriarty’ rather than along the lines of ‘Holmes believes that Moriarty has returned’.In effect, Forbes offers a solution to the substitution puzzle by distinguishing between propositional and non-propositional attitudes, but he also provides the reader with a candidate (and indeed well worked out) semantics for intensional transitive verb constructions. One important aspect of Forbes’s contribution is how it connects to discussions by Sainsbury and Den Dikken et al. Recall that those discussions allow one to cast doubt on moving from surface grammar to metaphysical conclusions. Forbes’s chapter doesn’t directly put pressure on this idea, but by bringing out truth-conditional differences between sentences such as 1 and 3, Forbes shows that we may indeed need more categories of mental states in order to make sense of the obvious differences between 1 and 3.

In his contribution, Watzl focuses on the phenomenon of attention, and divides his chaper into two parts. In the first part, he argues that at least some forms of attention are irreducible non-propositional intentional phenomena. According to Watzl, many forms of attention such as *paying attention to something* (perhaps by watching it, listening to it, or tactually feeling it, and so on) are profitably understood as non-propositional intentional attitudes, specifically non-propositional attitudes which are non-conceptual and which entail the existence of that upon which they are directed. One central reason such forms of attention cannot be reduced to propositional attitudes, according to Watzl, is that they lack accuracy conditions, where accuracy conditions are construed as conditions of satisfaction or truth conditions. In line with Searle’s case of boredom, then, we see again that the explanation of the nature of intentionality in terms of conditions of satisfaction under pressure.

Although in the first half of the chapter Watzl argues that attention can be profitably understood as a non-propositional attitude, in the second half he rejects this view. He argues that while it is true that attention is (almost always) non-propositional and (almost always) intentionally directed, it is not an *attitude*. That is, it is not a single intentional state that can be captured in terms of a simple attitude/content structure. Rather, attention, according to Watzl, is a more complex matter—it is *constituted* by an (almost always) non-propositional *structure* of (mostly) intentional states.

Watzl argues for his structure view by arguing that it can solve two problems, which stump the non-propositional attitude view. First, the *Hallucination Problem*: one’s attention can be captured in cases of hallucination and yet there is nothing to attend to. For example, a patient with tinnitus might have her attention captured though there is no sound to attend to. If attention is a relational, non-propositional intentional state, it is hard to see how to make sense of this. Second, the *Dependency Claim*: if a subject *S* attends to *o*, then, necessarily, *S* bears some other intentional attitude to *o*. For example, in order to attend to something, one must also perceive it, have thoughts about it, or feel emotions directed at it. Watzl argues that the non-propositional attitude view can’t adequately explain the nature of this dependence.

The hallucination problem and the dependence claim lead Watzl to question what he calls *mental structure monism*, the thesis that there is exactly one correct partitioning of a subject’s mental life into its most fundamental elements, which are attitudes. Instead he argues for *mental structure pluralism*, the thesis that a subject’s mental life can be partitioned along several equally appropriate dimensions. Mental structure pluralism can then treat attention as a type of structure that ranges over intentional attitudes. In particular, attention, on Watzl’s view, is constituted by some parts of the mind being prioritized over other parts. Attention is thus not a single intentional attitude, and since attention structures intentional attitudes a fortioriit depends on attitudes.

Interestingly, Watzl’s view provides a new tool in the kit for those interested in defending the idea that all intentional attitudes are propositional. As Watzl suggests, his non-attitudinal treatment of attention may allow one to make sense of, say, desiring a cup of a coffee (which looks to be non-propositional) in terms of a propositional desire and the right patterns of attention.

In Johnston’s contribution, he offers a novel theory of perception, a view he calls “Disclosive Realism”, according to which outward-directed sensory experience presents external items (external mind-independent particulars) to the subject. But Disclosive Realism is not Naïve Realism since Johnston’s view is not that things invariably are as they appear, nor does he hold that external items are (as he puts it) “barely” presented. Rather, according to Disclosive Realism, “sensory experience presents external items under various modes of presentation, which they may either satisfy or not satisfy. This is the basis for the veridical/illusory distinction as applied to sensory experience.” (p. 000).

In his defense of Disclosive Realism, Johnston argues against two prominent propositionalist views of perception. One claims that perceptions are attitudes towards propositions, and the other that perceptions are directed at facts, understood as items in our perceived environment. (Since facts are essentially structured entities that typically involve the instantiation of a property or properties, this kind of view counts as a form of propositionalism by our lights.)

Johnston’s main argument against understanding perceptions as attitudes towards propositions focuses on its failure to explain how sensory experience can confer a distinctive epistemic virtue on our immediate perceptual judgments. The distinctive epistemic virtue Johnston has in mind is the following. The things that we sense, including individual characteristics, are by their very nature ‘truth-guarantors’; they guarantee the truth of our immediate perceptual judgments. Johnston offers the following example. A subject can rightly judge that the dirt was thick textured, because he ran his fingers through it, and it felt thick textured. Referring to this sensory experience as an ‘item-directed attitude’, according to Johnston, “the item-directed attitude entails the existence of an item that guarantees the truth of the relevant immediate perceptual judgment” (p. 000). If perception is a propositional attitude, however, it cannot serve as a truth guarantor. Since the propositional state in question is non-factive it always leaves open the possibility that it is non-veridical.

Johnston’s argument against a view according to which we perceive facts is multipronged. Central to Johnston’s view is that tropes, e.g. individual aspects of objects, are among the items presented in experience. Although facts and tropes can both serve as truth-guarantors, Johnston argues that tropes and not facts are presented in experience. One task is to show that the ‘fact version’ and the ‘trope version’ of Disclosive Realism are not mere terminological variants. Through a series of examples, Johnston argues that there are relevant informational differences between facts and tropes that undermine attempts to model perception on the taking in of facts. Johnston further argues that there are experiences of expanses and volumes that do not involve presenting something as instantiating the relevant quality. Given the existence of such experiences, they couldn’t be perceptions of facts. Finally, according to Johnston, facts are best understood as pleonastic entities, thus making them poor candidates for being the objects of perception.

With Farkas’s chapter, the volume turns to a variety of kinds of knowledge with special attention paid to knowledge-how and whether it involves non-propositional intentionality. Farkas points out that the question of whether there are distinctive kinds of knowledge (say between factual and practical) is usually approached through asking whether “know-how” is distinct from “know-that”. According to one important, “non-intellectualist” approach, for example, knowing-how is a matter of (roughly) having certain abilities, which isn’t to be accounted for in terms of propositional attitudes. In contrast, intellectualists argue that knowing-how is species of knowing-that and is importantly connected to the tradition which sees knowledge-that either as a propositional attitude or as entailing that one is in a propositional attitude state such as belief. Such a dialectical dichotomy naturally leads opposing parties to try to construct cases where we do, or do not, naturally attribute “know-how”. For example, one might consider cases where certain abilities are present or lacking. But Farkas argues that people’s basic intuitions on many cases diverge, and so she proposes that instead of trying to account for every ordinary usage of ‘know-how’, we should purposefully narrow our question and consider knowledge and its nature more directly. In particular, Farkas recalls a certain tradition of talking about knowledge, present in Plato and Aristotle (and which motivated Ryle’s anti-intellectualist considerations), that sees knowledge as a uniquely human cognitive achievement with a normative aspect. The central and paradigmatic case of this achievement has always been a certain kind of relation to the truth. But Farkas thinks that ‘practical knowledge’ (a term she prefers to ‘know-how’) is a similarly valuable, normatively loaded, uniquely human cognitive achievement that does *not* aim at the truth, but which is nonetheless usefully classified together as a type of knowledge.

Farkas’s discussion provides a novel approach to the know-how/know-that dispute that will no doubt be of interest those engaged in that debate but her chapter also makes an obvious contribution to questions about propositionalism. In keeping with a number of other authors in the volume, Farkas takes propositional attitudes to be essentially evaluable for truth. In the case of knowledge, *evaluability* for truth may seem misguided since propositional knowledge can’t have something false as its object, but knowledge does *aim* at truth and on traditional accounts we can see how a component of knowledge (i.e. belief) can be assessed for truth. Propositional knowledge is achieved when it connects one to the truth in the right way. Reliable success in action, on the other hand, is not evaluable for truth nor does it aim at truth. Rather, practical knowledge is achieved when one is *reliably successful in action*. So, despite this important difference in achievement, in cases of both propositional knowledge and practical knowledge, agents make a cognitive achievement worthy of the label ‘knowledge’. In light of this, Farkas’s understanding of practical knowledge combines elements of intellectualism and anti-intellectualism about knowledge-how while motivating the idea that practical knowledge is not propositional.

A full departure from propositionalism requires a positive account of non-propositional intentional states. In Chapter 6, Grzankowski argues that the ‘standard theory’ of propositional attitudes, according to which propositional attitudes are two-place relations holding between subjects and propositions, provides a framework for thinking about non-propositional attitudes such as thinking of a number, loving one’s brother, and so on. Grzankowski argues that many of the motivations and advantages that have made the standard theory of propositional attitudes attractive apply to non-propositional attitudes, but in the case of non-propositional attitudes, objects other than propositions are called for. Grzankowski’s suggestion is that non-propositional attitudes are two-place relations holding between subjects and properties. When one loves, say, Sherlock Holmes, one is related to the property of being Holmes and when one fears the mangy dog, one is related to the property of being the mangy dog. This raises the immediate worry that when one, say, fears the dog, one does not thereby fear a property (a worry not dissimilar to Forbes’s puzzle). This concern is addressed by considering more carefully the following two things: (i) the nature of the relations in which subjects stand to abstract objects such as propositions (in cases of propositional attitudes) and properties (in cases of non-propositional attitudes) and (ii) the point of making use of such abstracta in a theory of mind in the first place. In short, Grzankowski advocates a view according to which propositions and properties serve to categorize mental states in terms of what they represent. Propositional attitudes represent things as being some way and so propositions (which themselves represent things as being some way) serve to categorize them in terms of how they represent things as being. Non-propositional attitudes represent things (without representing them as being some way) and so properties which are instantiated by objects serve to categorize them in terms of which things they represent. With this categorizing conception in hand, the idea that one must fear, like, love, and so on properties when one fears, likes, or loves ordinary objects can be blocked.

It is evident from our short discussion that the debate about propositionalism is far-reaching. It intersects with questions about the metaphysics of propositions, about the nature of mental causation, and about the nature of knowledge—among other things. Most importantly, however, it concerns the very nature of intentionality. The propositionalist view dovetails very nicely with explaining intentionality in terms of conditions of satisfaction, but if not all intentional states have conditions of satisfaction, this explanation of intentionality will be inadequate.

Can the phenomenon of intentionality be adequately captured in terms of intentional attitudes? If intentionality is more than intentional attitudes, should we think of any possible extra ingredients in propositional or non-propositional terms, or is the application of this distinction limited to intentional attitudes? One key question is not discussed in detail in any of the contributions: how might we account for the logical relations amongst the attitudes that lack a propositional content? We believe that an answer to this question is essential for a satisfactory defense of non-propositionalism. Recall that one of the central motivations for propositionalism is that it provides a way to account for mental causation and logical reasoning. If non-propositionalism is really to stand on solid ground, we need a logic that shows us how to treat the logical relations between (propositional and) non-propositional objects in a rigorous way. At the end of his contribution, Kriegel indicates how Brentano attempted to meet this challenge.[[12]](#footnote-12) We hope that this volume will bring to the fore the need to address this question and others like it.

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1. Husserl ([1900](#Ref17)–1/[2001](#Ref17)) also accepted non-propositional intentionality. Those who deny propositionalism in the contemporary analytic tradition include R. Montague ([1974](#Ref23)), Dretske ([1980](#Ref8)), Heil ([1992](#Ref16)), Ben-Yami ([1997](#Ref1)), Forbes ([2000](#Ref9)), Crane ([2001](#Ref7)), Szabó ([2003](#Ref36), [2005](#Ref35)), M. Montague ([2007](#Ref24)), Grzankowski ([2012](#Ref11), [2014](#Ref13)). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. As a gloss, an objectual attitude, understood as being about an object, is a candidate way of being a non-propositional attitude. In the context of this debate, philosophers sometimes use ‘non-propositional’ and ‘objectual’ interchangeably. This terminology seems harmless so long as one has a suitably wide conception of ‘object’ in mind. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For our purposes we are treating belief and judgment as equivalent ignoring difficulties that may arise if beliefs are essentially dispositional. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See also Textor [2017](#Ref37). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. For other examples of non-relational accounts of intentionality see e.g. Hare ([1969](#Ref15)), Sellars ([1969](#Ref30)), Rapaport ([1979](#Ref27)), Goldstein ([1982](#Ref10)), Kriegel ([2007](#Ref18), [2008](#Ref19), [2011](#Ref20)), Mendelovici ([2018](#Ref22)). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See Chisholm (1976) for further discussion of the connection between inten**s**ional constructions in language and inten**t**ional phenomena. It is widely recognized that intentional phenomena (aboutness or ofness) is very often (though not only) that which intensional constructions report. More will be found on intensionality in Chapter 3 by Den Dikken, Larson, and Ludlow, but just briefly, intensional constructions in language are those which allow for at least one of the following: (i) truth despite featuring empty object terms (e.g. ‘John imagined Pegasus’); (ii) non-specific readings (e.g. ‘I want a new car’ read as not entailing that there is a specific car one wants); and (iii) the failure of substitution of co-extensional terms (e.g. ‘renate’ and ‘chordate’). Interestingly, mental states that many agree are intentional such as belief, desire, hoping, imagining, and so on look to exhibit mental analogs of these linguistic features. One might imagine Pegasus, want a new car but not yet have a specific one in mind, or believe that renates are living things but not believe that chordates are living things. Given these connections, many philosophers have found it at least helpful to let inten**s**ionality in language guide our understanding of inten**t**ionality in the mind. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See Grzankowski ([2013](#Ref12)) for further discussion. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. As mentioned in n. 5, nonspecificity is also often cited as a mark of intensionality, as is the case in the Quinean sloop example. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See Montague ([2007](#Ref24)) for further discussion. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See Sinhababu ([2015](#Ref33)) for related propositionalist considerations and see Grzankowski ([2016](#Ref14)) for a reply. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See also Blumson ([2012](#Ref2)) for further discussion. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. On this issue, see Simons ([1984](#Ref31), [1987](#Ref32)). See also Tichy ([1988](#Ref38)) for an intensional logic that can capture logical relations between non-propositional objects. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)