Reply to Glanzberg, Soames and Weatherson

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Forthcoming in Analysis Reviews Symposium on Relativism and Monadic Truth

Reply to Weatherson

One of Weatherson's main goals is to drive home a methodological point: We shouldn't be looking for deductive arguments for or against relativism – we should instead be evaluating inductive arguments designed to show that either relativism or some alternative offers the best explanation of some data. Our focus in Chapter Two on diagnostics for shared content allegedly encourages the search for deductive arguments and so does more harm than good.

We have no methodological slogan of our own to offer. Part of what we were trying to do was to clearly articulate what the relevant issues even are. Often relativism is characterized in a way that is offhand and sloppy. The relativist, we are told, accepts 'disquotational truth' for various kinds of claims but denies that they are 'true simpliciter'. What exactly is going on here? Do the relevant distinctions even make sense? Before engaging in various abductive manoevers we need to get much clearer about what it is that we are trying to argue for and against.

That said we are perfectly happy with the kind of inductive enterprise that Weatherson sketches. For our part, we were fully aware (and indeed explicit) that the 'agreement' diagnostic does not 'deductively' settle all of the relevant disputes. A significant part of Chapter Four is dedicated to something in the vicinity of Weatherson's project. Note, indeed, that our diagnostics are even stated using the ideology of 'providing evidence' – hardly the basis for a straightforwardly deductive argument for or against relativism.

Finally, though, we should point out that we are not hostile to deductive arguments against relativism. A philosopher's evidence is theory-laden and in part owes itself to epistemic powers that his or her opponents may not acknowledge. In short, their evidence may not always have the hallmarks of 'evidence neutrality' --- evidence that their opponents would recognize as such. We are perfectly open to there being compelling deductive arguments against relativism from such evidence. Such arguments did not play a central role in our book however, since even though they may undergird knowledge of the falsity of relativism, they are not dialectically effective when it comes to relativistic diehards or even fence sitters.

Let us turn to the diagnostics themselves. We showed that collective belief and say-that reports are far worse evidence of shared content than agreement reports. And we suggested that disagreement reports provide even better evidence of semantic uniformity than agreement reports. Further, we suggested that agreement and disagreement data provides quite telling evidence against certain pictures of content – notably the view that the contents of ordinary present tense claims are neutral about time and can only be evaluated for truth relative to an index on a time parameter. Weatherson is more sceptical than we are about the evidential value of agreement data. Here is a contrast that we took to be important. While 'Alec and Pierre think they have a kind mother' has a 'distributive reading' according to which it means, roughly 'Alec and Pierre each think their own mother is nice' (and where Alec and Pierre have no view about each others mother), such a reading is much harder to recover when it comes to 'Alec and Pierre agree they have a kind mother'. Similarly, suppose that Alec thinks that he is lucky to be born where he was born, but that Pierre was unlucky to be born where he was born. Suppose also that Pierre has analogous views – he thinks he is lucky to be born where he was born, but that Alex was unlucky to be born where he was born. Here it is obviously fine to say 'Alec and Pierre agree they were lucky to be born where they actually were'? We are dubious. But Weatherson's discussion predicts that the latter speech is unproblematic.

Note moreover – a point we make in the book – that disagreement data are even more straightforward. Suppose Alec thinks he was lucky to be born where he was born but that Pierre thinks he was not lucky to be born where he, Pierre, was born. (We may suppose Pierre thinks Alec lucky in the relevant respect and Alec thinks Pierre unlucky.) Here 'Alec and Pierre disagree about whether they were lucky to be born where they actually were' sounds terrible.

Let us turn to the case of epistemic modals. As we have already said we don't expect agreement/disagreement data to do all the work. But even here Weatherson is too quick in his suggestion that insofar as there is data, it tells in favour of a uniform content for 'must' (which, with some additional and fairly plausible assumptions, yields a relativistic conclusion). Recall that we think disagreement data is the most telling. Let us see how that plays itself out with 'must'. Suppose Bob is looking for his keys. Bob has determined that they are not on the ground floor of a two-floor house. He concludes, 'They must be on the upper floor.' He knows Frank knows nothing about where in the house the keys are- Frank knows they are in the house but hasn't looked for them at all. Frank thinks they might be on either floor. Consider the claim, in Bob's mouth 'Frank and I disagree about whether the keys must be on the upper floor'. Most informants did not find this felicitous. Consider a second case. At 9 pm, Bob does not know where the keys are. He says 'They might be on either floor'. At 10 pm, Bob knows they are not on the ground floor. He says 'They must be on the top floor'. Consider the claim, in Bob's mouth 'I disagree with the view I held an hour ago'. Again that is far from felicitous. At best, the data is ambiguous as far as relativism is concerned.

By way of motivating relativism, Weatherson contrasts contextualist versus relativist approaches to speeches of the form 'x has the same mass as y' uttered in a world where mass is inertial frame dependent but where speakers are wholly oblivious to this. The contextualist Weatherson imagines associates a three-place relation with 'same mass', relating two objects and an inertial frame, and then lets context supply the third argument place, which is not articulated by any overt (and arguably not even any covert) bit of lexicon/syntax. He juxtaposes this with a relativist view according to which such sentences express a content that can be evaluated as true relative to certain inertial frames, false relative to others. These two views are contrasted with a third view according to which such claims express a pseudo-proposition that is neither true nor false.

First note that the contrast between the pseudo-proposition view and the relativist view (both of whose contents are labelled in Weatherson's lingo by

'SameMass (a,b)') is not properly made out. Insofar as the relativist says the relativist content is not true or false simpliciter, she would seem to agree with the main dictum of the pseudo-proposition view. Meanwhile, there can hardly be any serious obstacle to the pseudo-proposition view's adumbrating some ideology of 'true relative to' whereby pseudo-propositions can be true relative to an inertial frame. Is the idea that the relativist but not the pseudo-proposition view is underdescribed since the view now has as an additional commitment the thesis that any claim of the form 'x is the same mass as y' has a content that is either true or false. (More on this below.)

Second, note that the contextualist option Weatherson describes is not the only one. One might - with Weatherson's contextualist - think of 'same mass' as expressing a three-place relation that has a third argument place for an inertial frame. But for every n place relation involving a particular nth argument x, there is an n-1 place relation that 'absorbs' that argument place. Thus, there is a property father* such that x is a father* just in case x is the father of Tom Jones. Similarly there is a relation samemass* such that x has the samemass* relation to y just in case x has the same mass as y relative to some particular inertial frame I. This procedure generates a family of two-place relations. One version of contextualism says that 'same mass' picks out not a three-place relation but instead a two-place relation from the family (it being a context dependent matter which is picked out). Whatever mechanism determines the third argument place at a context for Weatherson's imagined contextualist determines the value of the two-place relation at a context for this version of contextualism. One of Weatherson's main worries about contextualism is that it posits 'singular reference' to inertial frames by oblivious agents. If that was the central worry it could be blunted by shifting to the alternative version of contextualism (cf Weatherson's own observation that a 'set of worlds' construal of content would blunt that aspect of his complaint).

Is there really much reason to favour the relativist version over contextualism? The appeal of the relativist picture is largely illusory, we think, an artifact of its being underdescribed. Note first that the relativist picture will almost inevitably have a notion of an inertial frame's being operative on an occasion - the operative inertial frame governing the propriety of a 'same mass' speech. Whatever the relativist says about the mechanism by which an inertial frame becomes operative can smoothly be commandeered by the contextualist as a mechanism by which semantic content becomes determined in context. (And insofar as the relativist allows a measure of nofact-of-the-matter vagueness concerning which inertial frame is operative, so the contextualist can allow supervaluationist elements into his or her semantics.) Note further that the third view needs to be more explicit concerning its ideas about truth. Suppose its proponent rejects any 'same mass'-claim that contains a one-place truth predicate. Then she will say, 'We never say anything true or false by a claim of the form 'x is the same mass as y', hardly a good advertisement for the view (cf. Weatherson's charity-theoretic indictment of the 'pseudo-proposition view'.) Suppose instead she accepts a one-place truth predicate that behaves in a disquotational way (so that, roughly speaking, a willingness to utter 's' at a context brings with it a willingness to utter "s' is true' at that context.) Then, assuming she engages in homophonic translation (as the relativist standardly does), she will say 'People travelling at high speeds say totally false things about what has the same mass as what', again hardly a good advertisement for the view. Further, she will then have the conceptual challenge of distinguishing herself from crude realism – a challenge that we argue at length is far from easy to meet.

Weatherson offers an interesting argument for relativism about epistemic modals. The key bits of data are these: Unembedded epistemic modals are generally autocentric – that is to say, the operative evidence is limited to that of the speaker. When an epistemic modal is embedded in an attitude report it is exocentric – that is to say, the operative evidence includes that of other speakers and may well exclude that of the speaker. Thus, if the speaker says 'It might rain', that is false if the speaker's evidence rules out that it's raining. But if in those circumstances the speaker says 'Frank believes it might rain', then while that encodes a view Frank has about his own evidence, it does not typically encode a view that Frank has about the speaker's evidence.¹

To get clearer on these issues, we'll introduce some new vocabulary:

- We call uses of epistemic modals where the operative evidence is given by that of the speaker at the time of utterance 'speaker-restricted uses',
- We call uses of epistemic modals where the operative evidence includes, but may go beyond that of the speaker at the time of utterance 'speaker-included uses',
- We call uses of epistemic modals where the operative evidence excludes that of the speaker, 'speaker-transcendent uses'.

Weatherson's key generalization is that unembedded uses are typically speakerrestricted – though he makes an exception for explanatory contexts, as in 'He is scared because I might be an axe murderer' - whereas uses embedded in attitude ascriptions are typically not speaker-restricted. According to Weatherson, contextualism cannot happily account for this generalization, but relativism can. Weatherson anticipates that the contextualist will offer a salience-theoretic explanation of the relevant data. In an unembedded use, the salient evidence typically includes the speaker's and so that enters into the truth conditions. The effect of embedding under an attitude, on this proposal, is to make a different body of evidence – one that does not include the speaker – salient and thus, truth conditionally relevant. In response to this move by the contextualist, Weatherson argues that an appeal to salience cannot properly handle the data.

While this is an interesting objection, we are not convinced it gives much of an edge to the relativist. Four points are worth making here:

First - even leaving aside explanatory contexts – it does not seem right that unembedded epistemic modals are autocentric. If 'unembedded' means 'unembedded under an attitude operator' the claim is refuted by past-tense examples. 'You might have been an axe murderer' need not – and isn't naturally – read in a speaker-restricted way. But even if we opt for a more generous reading of 'unembedded' – Weatherson never tells us quite what he means by that expression – the claim is refuted by the occurrence of 'might' in questions. If Bill asks the doctor 'Might Ben die?', Bill is not wondering whether his evidence at the time of asking the question is compatible with Ben's death. Here the operative body of evidence is not speaker restricted and thus, exocentric. Perhaps Weatherson instead intended to endorse the following generalizations – explanatory contexts aside, present tense epistemic modals claims tend to be speaker-inclusive whereas epistemic modals embedded in attitude reports (where the subject is not the speaker) tend to be speaker-transcendent.

¹ Like Weatherson, we have formulated the relevant ideas loosely owing to the fact that it is hard to state them a way that is both neutral between relativism and contextualism and also precise.

Second, it is not at all clear that Weatherson's relativist semantics gives happy results for uses of epistemic modals embedded in attitude reports. Consider the doctor case just described. The doctor utters, 'Bill fears that Ben might die' and 'Bill is wondering whether Ben might die'. The toy, relativist-friendly, semantics Weatherson sketches predicts that the operative body of evidence is restricted to Bill's own in these cases. But that is simply not the case.

Note also that this kind of case is an exception to the generalization that attitude claims involving epistemic modals are speaker transcendent when the subject of the attitude report is not the speaker. Here the subject of the report is Bill and not the speaker (i.e. the doctor), but the relevant body of evidence includes that of the speaker. The weaker generalization that such claims are exocentric – i.e. not speaker restricted – is not threatened, though as we saw above, that generalization does not make for such a sharp contrast with unembedded present tense uses since many of those are exocentric (i.e., not speaker restricted) too.

Third, something like the contrast that Weatherson is talking about arises for many other kinds of claims (details vary according to the kind of sentence involved). Consider these cases:

- 'It is surprising that Jones is at the pub', when used unembedded, tends to get read in a way that requires that the speaker be surprised. This contrasts with, 'Frank finds it/thinks it is surprising that Jones is at the pub' which does tend not to be read in that way.
- 'An enemy just died', when asserted unembedded, tends to get read in such a way that 'an enemy' is heard as an enemy of the speaker. This contrasts with 'Frank thinks an enemy just died' which is not typically heard in that way.
- 'My computer is at home', when asserted unembedded, tends to get read in such a way that 'home' is heard as the home of the speaker. This contrasts with 'Frank thinks his computer is at home', which is not typically heard in that way.

In all these cases the generalizations need all sorts of qualifications, but the relevant autocentric/exocentric contrast is still not altogether empty. However, we doubt that Weatherson would be tempted to a relativistic semantics for, say, 'an enemy' on that score. Are the contrasts really so much more robust when it comes to epistemic modals as to demand a new radical semantics in a way that the analogous contrasts do not?

Fourth, we agree that a crude salience-based explanation will not serve the contextualist's purposes here. A lesson can be learnt from the failures of other salience-based accounts. Consider the project of trying to explain how discourse anaphors pick up on objects that are not introduced by any explicit noun phrase and not demonstrated by anything in the perceptual purview of speaker and hearer. Consider for example 'I scored the winning goals. Those were my favourite pair of football boots from that day on'. One might think that the felicity of using 'those' is captured well enough by an appeal to salience. But we know that will not do. Here is a well-known counter-example: 'Nine bottles were on the table. Eight fell off. It was yellow'. The final sentence crashes. Yet surely the discourse makes the remaining bottle salient. Just as a crude appeal to salience fails in that case to explain the felicity patterns, so it fails in the case of epistemic modals. But this is a reason for giving up on crude salience based explanations, not for favouring relativism over contextualism. Indeed, neither semantic framework can explain the nuances in the data. Consider for

example, the following contrast. Suppose we know we are at work, but Frank doesn't know we are at work. We can say:

(1) Frank won't be able to tell you where we are because he doesn't know whether we are at work

But it is very hard to process:

(2) Frank won't be able to tell you where we are because we might be at work and we might not be.

Meanwhile, it is much easier to process (supposing Frank hates us):

(3) Frank is nervous about going to the pub because we might be there.

Why is (3) so much better than (2)? An appeal to the salience of some body of evidence is not satisfactory since Frank's body of evidence is salient in both contexts (2) and (3). (Here, then, we are in full agreement with Weatherson's pessimism about salience.) Nor will it do to rely on the point that explanatory contexts provide an exception to speaker inclusion since (2) and (3) are both explanatory contexts (marked by 'because').

Has the relativist any better explanation of why (3) is much easier to process than (2)? We see absolutely no advantage to the relativist semantic framework in explaining this contrast. Relativist stories about how an index on a parameter becomes operative often proceeds in a crude salience theoretic way. That story will need refinement in ways that will be no less nuanced than the ones needed by the contextualism. No view gets a significant edge here.

We are very dubious about whether it ought to be incumbent on any general semantic framework to explain this kind of contrast. The story about how particular aspects of context gets fixed is very complex indeed – the psychological end of that story will draw on a wide range of psycholinguistic subtleties that merit investigation, but which will not be adequately modelled or predicted by broad brush semantic theories of either a contextualist or relativistic sort. In sum, there is no significant advantage for relativism generated by speaker-restricted, speaker-inclusive and speaker-transcendent patterns in embedded and unembedded uses of epistemic modals.

Reply to Soames

We welcome nearly all of Soames' discussion. In particular, he offers a vivid and forceful statement of the proper relationship between truth and parameterized truth relative to worlds.²

² One might fuss a little about Soames' gloss on worlds as properties which the universe might have instantiated. Suppose there might have been no universe. There is a world w corresponding to this way things might have been. But one can't say that a proposition p is true at that w just in case, had the universe instantiated w, p would have been true, since this counterfactual has an impossible antecedent and so will not discriminate propositions that are true at w from ones that aren't. If we construe worlds as propositions, then the problem is avoided – on that gloss we can replace 'If

Soames' discussion of 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' views about propositions, as they relate to time, slightly obscures a point that we think important. As he is aware the standard view about worlds is that, typically propositions do not encode reference to particular worlds (though of course there are some that explicitly mention a world state). And as he is aware, the standard view is that this fact does not prevent propositions from being evaluable for truth and falsity simpliciter. Now the traditional view of the relationship between propositions and times is that, by contrast with the world case, the contents of ordinary assertions do typically encode reference to a particular time. So far so good. But what bears emphasis is that there are two very different sorts of non-traditional views. One view is strictly analogous to the view just sketched about worlds. The 'presentist' who thinks that the contents of ordinary assertions do not typically encode reference to a particular time but thinks that this does not raise a problem for evaluating them for truth or falsity simpliciter. Past and future times are, on this view, no more a troublemaker for truth and falsity simpliciter than merely possible worlds. There is a very different sort of non-traditional view – exemplified by Kaplan. On this second view, all times are equally real - there is nothing metaphysically special about the present. This is then used as a basis for thinking that ordinary contents cannot be evaluated for truth and falsity simpliciter. (We are aware that this second step is not trivial.) Soames seems to have only the second version of non-traditionalism in mind in his discussion, which slightly obscured the true conceptual map of positions. (Note, then, that there are versions of both traditionalism and non-traditionalism that are Simplicity friendly.)

Let us turn to Soames' discussion of Kaplan's operator argument. He suggests that our presentation of that argument is 'non-optimal' and attempts to put Kaplan's argument in an even darker light by bringing to the fore some assumptions on which it relies. As far as we can see Soames' critical remarks deploy two themes that are not properly distinguished – or at least not optimally distinguished. One idea is that the tense operators operate on something other than the semantic content of the sentences they embed, but that this does not violate any principle of compositionality worth preserving. He then sketches a view adumbrated by Salmon according to which the proposition expressed by a sentence that occurs within the scope of a tense operator is a proposition that refers to a particular time – the time of the context – but that the operator operates on an entity, the 'schedule', that is 'time-neutral'. We are far from hostile to this approach. But it is worth seeing why such a move was not comfortably available to Kaplan. Crucial to Kaplan's whole semantic framework is his distinction between character and content. The character of an expression is a rule for determining the content at a context. On that story, operators are blind to character – they are sensitive only to content. Would be operators that are sensitive to character are 'monsters'. According to Kaplan, natural language does not truck with monsters and there is not even a natural extension of such languages that contains monsters. What Salmon and Soames characterize as 'the schedule' of say 'I am here' as uttered by one of us at a particular context is not its character. After all, even though the schedule of the sentence at that context is time neutral, it 'fills in' the agent and place of utterance. Still, it is character-like in the time position - that is with respect to the

w had been instantiated' with 'If w had BEEN true'. If we construe worlds as candidate properties of some particular necessary being – say the number three – the problem is also avoided, though the choice of properties to count as worlds would in that case be rather arbitrary. That problem might be avoided if we choose a property that everything would have if the world were a certain way.

present tense morphology. The contribution of the present tense is given by its character – i.e. by a function from the time of the context of utterance to that very time. Consider now the concatenation of a tense operator expression with a present tense sentence. A view that says that this has the semantic profile of an operator operating on a schedule is a thinly disguised version of a view that says that tense operators are sensitive to the character and not to the content of the present tense morphology of the embedded sentence. But it should now be very clear why such a view is not one readily available to Kaplan, since it does not square with the ideas that drive his prohibition on monsters (we say 'the ideas that drive his prohibition' since as we have just noted the schedule view does not say that sentential tense operators operators operate on the character of the embedded sentence, since the schedule is character-like only in one spot). How great a cost is this for the approach Soames advocates? To evaluate this requires a thorough evaluation of Kaplan's programmatic distinction between character and content, as well as the associated prohibitions. There has been a good deal of discussion of that topic lately. Here is not the place to add to it.

There is a second theme in Soames' discussion of the operator argument. As a prelude Soames complains that our presentation 'violates the standard procedure in formal semantics of assigning semantic values to expressions, not their occurences' (Soames, this vol.). He then notes that we are working in a setting which assigns semantic values to occurrences of expressions. His thought is that in that setting Uniformity is a non-starter, since there ought to be 'no presumption' that the contents of the relevant occurrences are the same. Soames claims that we make the operator argument look better than it is, since we don't make it vivid that the uniformity assumption is only plausible in a setting where values are being assigned to expressions and not occurrences.

We would like to make a few points here. First, we were trying to elucidate an argument within a Kaplanian framework that distinguishes character and content and which assigns contents not to expressions, but expressions at contexts. We were using 'semantic value' roughly in line with Kaplanian content rather than Kaplanian character and we don't think it is 'standard practice' in semantics to assign content to expressions at contexts – except when some simplifying assumptions about context-independence are being made.

Second – on behalf of Kaplan – we don't think the relevant Uniformity assumptions are altogether silly when applied to expressions at contexts, or to occurrences of expressions.³ A very Kaplanian thought is that 'Snow is white' has the same content on an occasion when it occurs alone, on an occasion when it is conjoined with 'Grass is green', on an occasion when it is embedded within the modal operator 'It could be the case that', and so on. This is a Uniformity thought about occurrences. It may be wrong. But it is far from silly. It is not right that the prima facie plausibility of Uniformity and related thoughts derives from conflating a framework in which semantic values are assigned to expressions with one that assigns them to occurrences.

³ 'Occurrences' is not quite the same as 'expressions at contexts' owing to the fact that, in Kaplan's framework, an expression can have a content at a context where it does not occur. For many examples no harm is done by speaking of occurrence content and content at a context interchangeably so long as one takes the content of an occurrence of an expression to be fixed by the content of that expression at the context at which it occurs.

Note moreover that a natural construal of the schedule proposal is one that *respects* Uniformity. For it seems to allow that (assuming there are no other context dependent expressions) an occurrence of a present tense sentence within a tense operator has the very same content as its occurrence alone. The main thrust of *that* proposal was that the operator operates on something other than the content of the sentence at that context, not that the content of the sentence at that context is different. After presenting the schedule proposal, Soames slightly mysteriously, changes tack in the later discussion. There, the main emphasis is that the content of the occurrence of the sentence within the operator may well be different from the content when it occurs alone. That is a different kind of criticism from the one surrounding the schedule proposal. And we certainly agree that this criticism is prima facie legitimate. Indeed, it is of a piece with one of the critical threads that we ourselves take up (see our objections to Uniformity in RMT).

Reply to Glanzberg

There is very little in Glanzberg's careful, detailed and sympathetic discussion that we disagree with or do not welcome. We restrict our discussion to two themes.

First a disclaimer: The 'operator argument', as we reconstructed it, relies on Sententiality, an assumption concerning some target expression that it is a sentential operator. It then uses Parameter Dependence – the claim that a certain sentence can be evaluated for truth only when a value along some parameter has been specified – with two other premises (Vacuity and Uniformity) to obtain a Simplicity-hostile conclusion about the semantic values of certain sentences. We noted that in many of the key cases, the assumption of Sententiality is questionable and so a key presupposition of the argument is found wanting. Glanzberg's discussion reinforces this suspicion about Sententiality, as a step to driving home his own view that in almost every case 'the operator argument never even gets off the ground'.

The disclaimer is this: While the operator argument, as we stated it, presupposes Sententiality, there are analogous arguments that do not rely on any such presupposition. Suppose, for example, that some expression E turns out to be a predicate modifier that combines with a predicate to form a larger predicate, and not a sentential operator. There is still a natural analogue of the operator argument available. Here is the analogue of Parameter Dependence: An extension can be associated with a certain predicate only when a value along some parameter has been specified. Here is the analogue of Vacuity: Modifier E is semantically vacuous when combined with a predicate that supplies a value for the relevant parameter. Uniformity says that the semantic value of the predicate is the same whether it is combined with that modifier or occurs alone. The argument then proceeds as follows: E is not semantically vacuous when it occurs with a given predicate F. So F as it occurs in combination with E does not supply a value along parameter P (by Vacuity). So it does not supply such a value when it occurs alone (by Uniformity). So it does not determine an extension when it occurs alone (by Parameter Dependence). It is a short step from there to concluding that the semantic value for a sentence that combines a noun phrase with that predicate does not determine a truth value. (We just need the premise that the concatenation of a noun phrase with that predicate semantically determines a truth value only if the predicate semantically determines an extension.) Hence, while the operator argument as stated can only get off the ground if Sententiality is in place, various alternative proposals may allow that something like it can get off the ground even once Sententiality is relinquished. That is not to say of

course that the new argument will be any good! Responses very similar to those we provide in the body of Chapter three will be available to the variant arguments, the details of the appropriate response depending on the particular choice of predicate modifier chosen.

That is not to say that all syntactic proposals will allow even something *like* the operator argument to get off the ground. Suppose it turns out that when one subtracts E (and all syntactic objects composed from E) from a syntactic tree one is left with materials that are altogether too depleted to provide the materials for a complete thought. Suppose, for example, that E combines with an object of syntactic type X to form an object of syntactic type Y, which can then, in turn, combine with a noun phrase to form an assertable sentence. But suppose that the complex consisting of a noun phrase and X is not a syntactic object that can serve as the fit vehicle of assertion. Then it is very hard to see how to get even something like the operator argument going for all arguments in that family are directed at stand alone vehicles of assertion putatively composed from the materials one is left with when some expression E is subtracted from some more complex sentence. The cash value of Glanzberg's discussion is that this may very well be the case with many of the favourite targets for the so-called operator argument. In that case there may not even be a fall back of the sort described.

Glanzberg raises interesting and important questions about whether, even if parameterized semantic values are not the kind of semantic value attaching to sentences of English, there could have been languages with semantic values like that. There are various questions concerning contingency here.

One question is this: Granting that, as a matter of fact, the belief relation holds between agents and propositions, objects that are true or false *simplicier*, could the belief relation have held instead between agents and objects that are only true relative to values on a parameter?⁴ This is, in effect, a question about the metaphysics of the belief relation. Here we should be prima facie wary. There is a sense in which an object – say, a pair of sunglasses – can be assigned a truth value relative to a parameter: In this case, think of the values of a parameter as candidate properties of the pair of sunglasses. But it would be strained, to say the least, to allow such considerations about parameterization as evidence for the conclusion that a pair of sunglasses could have stood as the object end of the belief relation. (We are more warmly disposed to the idea that a pair of sunglasses could have been at the agent end of the belief relation since it is not clear that someone could not be both a strangely shaped person and a pair of sunglasses.) We are similarly very reluctant to think that the belief relation is so forgiving as to allow non-propositional objects of the sort the relativist envisages at other possible worlds.

We suspect that Glanzberg is himself concerned with a rather different contingency question: Could the semantic values of declarative sentences have been less than truth evaluable propositions? Note that it is prima facie perfectly consistent to say that while we could not have had things other than propositions as the objects of belief, rather different objects could have been the semantic values of stand alone sentences. 'Semantic value' is something of a term of art. The issue Glanzberg is driving at is something like this: Could there have been a language where there was considerable value in a kind of linguistic theorizing that associated things less than propositions with stand alone sentences? His thought is that while it is dubious whether associating non-propositional objects is *in fact* useful for stand alone

⁴ We can also ask similar questions about illocutionary act relations such as assertion.

occurrences of, say, 'water' or 'Herman in Buenos Aires', nevertheless, perhaps we could have spoken a language where a systematic association of non-propositional objects with stand alone sentences was theoretically fruitful. This claim of contingency needs to be sharply distinguished from the one considered above. For example, perhaps there could be a language where noun phrases were habitually uttered by themselves and which were processed in two stages: first by generating a syntactic structure that associated an object with one node and left the other nodes blank and then second by some method of proposition generation that deployed contextual clues to fill in the other nodes. If these were really discrete layers of processing it may well be useful to associate non-propositional objects with the first stage. (It seems to be largely a terminological issue whether to call such objects 'semantic values'.) So long as this contingency claim is not advanced as a basis for thinking that non-propositional objects could have been believed and so on, we have no deep objection. (Matters become trickier if this line of thought is used as a basis for claiming that there are certain non-propositional objects, o, such that people could have *meant that* o by on some occasion by a stand alone sentence. One concern here is that the meaning of the complementizer 'that' generates relations that must have propositions as their relata, and so 'meant that' is no more tolerant of nonpropositional objects than 'believes that'.)

Finally, we note a third possible contingency claim. Granting that the belief relation could not have been directed at non-propositional objects, one might think that its importance (or explanatoriness or jointiness) that is somehow contingent. Consistent with the presumed essence of belief we can recognize a relation – belief\$ - directed at things that are less than propositions. We might further argue that even if belief is explanatorily important as a matter of fact, belief\$ might have eclipsed belief in that respect. Such wild speculations – touching as they do on foundational metaphysical issues concerning fundamentality – are well beyond the scope of the current discussion.

References

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