Idealism and the Identity Theory of Truth

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1 Introduction

Idealism is not as popular as it once was. There was a time when you couldn't kick a stone without hitting an idealist, but now they are relatively few and far between. However, in a recent article, Hofweber (forthcoming) presents a new, and surprising, argument for idealism.[1] His argument is surprising because it starts with an apparently innocent premise from the philosophy of language: that 'that'-clauses do not refer.

I do not think that Hofweber's argument works, and my first aim in this paper is to explain why. However, I entirely agree with Hofweber that what we say about 'that'-clauses can have important metaphysical consequences. My second aim is to argue that far from leading us into idealism, denying that 'that'-clauses refer is the first step toward a kind of *direct realism* about belief.

2 Hofweber's Idealism

Hofweber's (forthcoming: §2) idealism concerns the relationship between facts and thoughts. Facts come in certain *forms*: for example, the fact that Socrates is wise has the form of an object's instantiating a property. Thoughts come in corresponding forms: the thought that Socrates is wise has the form of an object's being attributed a property. Why do the forms of thoughts correspond to the forms of facts? The *realist* answers that the forms of our thoughts were shaped to fit the forms of the facts. The *idealist* answers that the forms of the facts were somehow shaped to fit the forms of our thoughts.[2]

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[1] Versions of this argument can also be found in: Hofweber 2016b: §10.3.4, 2018a.

[2] Hofweber describes his brand of idealism as *conceptual*, as opposed to an *ontological* idealism. However, since I am focussing for now only on Hofweber's idealism, I will not bother including the 'conceptual' qualification.

On the face of it, the realist's answer seems by far the more compelling. We even have a rough idea of how their story would go. It would have something to do with human evolution, and how it was advantageous for people to have forms of thought which could represent the facts they had to deal with. There would be lots of hard details to fill in, but that is the rough shape that the story would take. In stark contrast, it is hard to imagine the idealist's story in even its barest outlines. How could the forms of *our* thoughts shape the forms of facts? Maybe we could get a grip on the idea if the 'our' was wide enough to include some kind of god or transcendental subject. But Hofweber (forthcoming: 3–4) is very clear that when he talks about *our* thoughts, he means the thoughts of ordinary flesh and blood humans, like you and me.

Nevertheless, Hofweber argues that the idealist has it right. He (forthcoming: 8–10) begins his argument by focussing on one important difference between idealism and realism. It may not be entirely clear what exactly idealism amounts to, but at the very least it seems to imply the following: the possible forms of fact are limited by the possible forms of thought; it is in principle impossible for there to be *structurally ineffable* facts, i.e. facts whose forms we cannot represent in thought. Realism, on the other hand, seems to have the opposite implication: our forms of thought were adapted to represent the local facts we encounter day-to-day, but there is no reason to expect that they will allow us to represent all the facts there are; it is in principle possible for there to be structurally ineffable facts.

In short, idealists, and only idealists, have reason to expect the following to be in principle false:

>   *Structural Ineffability:* There is a structurally ineffable fact.

Hofweber's strategy is to argue for idealism by arguing that *Structural Ineffability* must, as a matter of principle, be false.

3   From 'That'-Clauses to Idealism

Structural Ineffability is a generalisation about facts. How should we understand such a generalisation? Well, facts are meant to be things we refer to with 'that'-clauses. For example:

 (1) That grass is green is plain to see.

The *Standard View* amongst philosophers is that 'that grass is green' appears in (1) as a singular term, referring to the fact that grass is green. 'That'-clauses do not always refer to facts, for example:

(2) Simon believes that grass is blue.

Grass is not blue, and so there is no fact that grass is blue. But the Standard View still has it that 'that grass is blue' is a referring singular term; it refers to the false *proposition* that grass is blue. Philosophers disagree over the exact relationship between facts and propositions. It may be that they are totally different kinds of thing, or it may be that facts are just true propositions. But for the time being, that issue does not matter much. The important thing for now is that on the Standard View, 'that'-clauses are referring singular terms, sometimes referring to facts, and sometimes referring to propositions.

Hofweber rejects the Standard View. He denies that 'that'-clauses are referential terms: they do not refer to facts; they do not refer to propositions; they do not refer, or even *purport* to refer, to anything at all. He has argued against the Standard View at length in his (2016b: ch. 8), but I will not rehearse his arguments here. The official conclusion of Hofweber's (forthcoming) paper on idealism is a conditional: *if* you reject the Standard View, *then* you are led to idealism. So for now, let's just assume for the sake of argument that the Standard View is false, and follow the rest of Hofweber's argument.

If 'that'-clauses do not refer, then what *do* they do? That is a good question, but Hofweber does not answer it. (We will come back to it in §6.) Instead, Hofweber (forthcoming: §3.2) focusses on a challenge that anyone who rejects the Standard View will have to face. Consider the following simple inference:

(3) Sharon believes that grass is green.

(4) Daniel believes that grass is green.

∴ (5) There is something that Sharon and Daniel both believe.

This inference is, I take it, obviously valid. But how should we account for its validity? It's easy if you buy the Standard View. On the Standard View, 'that grass is green' appears as an ordinary, referential singular term in (3) and (4), and so (5) can be treated as a straightforward first-order existential generalisation:

(5a) $\exists x$(Sharon believes x and Daniel believes x).

But if we reject the Standard View, then we cannot read (5) in this way.

Hofweber solves this problem by distinguishing between two different readings of natural language quantification. There is the *external* (or 'domain-condition') reading. This is the familiar reading we were all taught in our first-year logic modules. On this reading, 'There is something such that F(it)' is true iff something in the

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domain satisfies the condition expressed by '$F(\ldots)$'. But there is also the *internal* (or 'inferential') reading. On this reading, 'There is something such that F(it)' is equivalent to the big (perhaps infinite) disjunction of all of the instances of '$F(x)$' in our language, which we can abbreviate as $\bigvee_x F(x)$. For example, on its internal reading, 'Someone is wise' is equivalent to '$\bigvee_x x$ is wise', which is an abbreviation for 'Socrates is wise $\vee$ Plato is wise $\vee$ Aristotle is wise $\vee$ ...'. This disjunction carries on until it has run through every English instance of 'x is wise'.[3]

Now let's return to (5). If we have rejected the Standard View, then we cannot give the quantification in (5) the external reading. But we can still give it the internal reading:

(5b) $\bigvee_p$(Sharon believes that p and Daniel believes that p).

This is an infinitely long disjunction, where each disjunct is a grammatical English instance of 'Sharon believes that p and Daniel believes that p'. Since one of these disjuncts will be 'Sharon believes that grass is green and Daniel believes that grass is green', (5b) can be validly inferred from (3) and (4).

The important point here is that, according to Hofweber, quantification 'over propositions' or 'over facts' must be given the internal reading. It must because quantification over these things is quantification into the position of 'that'-clauses, and by rejecting the Standard View, we have lost access to the external reading. So now let's return to *Structural Ineffability*. This is quantification 'over facts', and so must be given the internal reading:

$\bigvee_p$(Our forms of thought cannot represent that p).

This is an infinitely long disjunction, one disjunct for each English instance of 'Our forms of thought cannot represent that p'. But since each disjunct is an *English* instance, it is clear that each disjunct is false. English sentences can be long and complicated, but no English sentence expresses something which transcends the limits of our forms of thought. So the whole disjunction is false.

Recall that Hofweber's strategy was to argue for idealism by arguing that *Structural Ineffability* must, as a matter of principle, be false. So at this point, Hofweber (forthcoming: 18–22) concludes that idealism is true.

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[3]I am here presenting the simplified account of internal quantification that Hofweber gives in his (forthcoming: §3.2). Hofweber's (2016b: ch. 9) account is a bit more complicated, but these complications will not affect the argument of this paper.

4   Higher-Order Quantification

The aim of the next two sections is to undermine Hofweber's argument for idealism. One strategy would be to defend the Standard View, but that will not be my strategy, for two reasons. First, I also reject the Standard View (see Trueman 2018a).[4] Second, as I mentioned earlier, Hofweber's official conclusion is merely conditional: *if* you reject the Standard View, *then* you are led to idealism. So let's continue to assume that the Standard View is false.

What I want to challenge is Hofweber's way of understanding quantification 'over facts' and 'over propositions'. Hofweber is surely right that if we reject the Standard View then we cannot give this kind of quantification the familiar external reading. Hofweber jumps from here to the conclusion that we must give it his internal reading. But Hofweber neglects an alternative. Rather than reading (5) as (5b), we might read it as:

(5c) $\exists p$(Sharon believes that p and Daniel believes that p).

The quantifier in (5c) is not a first-order quantifier. First-order quantifiers bind variables in term-position, but p is in sentence-position. The quantifier in (5c) is a *higher-order* quantifier.

Philosophers have historically been somewhat suspicious of higher-order quantification. Many have subscribed to the Quinean (1970: 66–8) dogma that all real quantification is first-order quantification. The closest to higher-order quantification that we can get is mere *substitutional* quantification. Indeed, Hofweber's distinction between external and internal quantification is just a new manifestation of this Quinean dogma: external quantification is real first-order quantification, and internal quantification is merely substitutional.

However, the tide has started to turn in more recent philosophy. More and more philosophers are willing to accept a more liberal conception of quantification.[5] On this more liberal conception, quantifiers can bind variables in any syntactic position. Here is how MacBride put it:

> the role of a quantifier that binds a position X is to generalize upon the semantic function of the category of constant expressions that occupy X; *how* a quantifier generalizes depends upon *what* semantic function

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[4]Here are some more philosophers who reject the Standard View: Bach 1997; McKinsey 1999; Moltmann 2003, 2013: ch. 4; Rosefeldt 2008.

[5]I have defended this more liberal conception of quantification in: Trueman 2012. And here is a list of far more illustrious defences: Prior 1971; Boolos 1985; Grover 1992b; Rayo and Yablo 2001; Williamson 2003, 2013: ch. 5; Wright 2007; Rosefeldt 2008; Rumfitt 2014; Uzquiano 2018.

the corresponding category of constant expressions perform. (MacBride 2006: 445)

Singular terms refer to objects, and so first-order quantifiers — which bind variables in term-position — quantify over objects. But sentences don't refer to objects.[6] We use sentences to express claims about how things are. The sentence 'Grass is green' expresses a way things are, the sentence 'Grass is blue' a way things aren't, but both sentences express ways for things to be. Quantification into sentence-position should, then, be understood as quantification over ways for things to be.

If this is how we read quantification into sentence-position, then (5c) becomes:

(5d) There is a way for things to be, such that Sharon believes that things are that way, and Daniel believes that things are that way.

It is important to emphasise that *ways for things to be* are not meant to be thought of as a kind of object, to be quantified over with a first-order quantifier. Rather, 'things are that way' as a whole is meant to be thought of as a pro-sentence, the natural language analogue of the sentence-variable p (just as a pro-noun is the natural language analogue of a term-variable). The quantifier 'There is a way for things to be' is then meant to bind that pro-sentence. If we don't mind a clumsy turn of phrase, we could follow a suggestion of Prior's (1971: 37–9), and make this even clearer by translating (5c) as:

(5e) Sharon believes that things are somehow, and Daniel believes that things are thus too.

Now there is no suggestion that we are quantifying over special objects called 'ways for things to be'.[7] However, in what follows I will continue to read quantification into sentence-position as quantification over ways for things to be, safe in the knowledge that this will not now be misunderstood.

Hofweber does consider the possibility of reading quantification 'over facts' and 'over propositions' in this higher-order way elsewhere (Hofweber 2018b: §3).[8] He grants that *sui generis* higher-order quantification is intelligible, but he objects to it as a reading of English quantification. The trouble is that English does not appear to respect rigid type distinctions. Consider the following generalisation:

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[6]That is a bald assertion. For some argument to back it up, see (Trueman 2018b). I do not directly discuss whether sentences refer to objects in that paper, but the version of the Reference Principle that I argue for there quickly implies that they don't.

[7]This way of translating quantification into sentence-position has its roots in a remark of Wittgenstein's (1953: §134). It has recently been recommend by Rumfitt (2014: 27).

[8]Hofweber was replying to Uzquiano (2018: §3), who also recommended the higher-order reading. Uzquiano did not, however, consider the implications of this reading for Hofweber's idealism.

(6) Something is annoying Simon.

This sentence could be validly inferred from either of the following:

(7) Daniel is annoying Simon.

(8) That he hasn't eaten yet is annoying Simon.

If we interpret quantification 'over facts' as higher-order quantification, then we must distinguish between two readings of (6): if it is inferred from (7), then it must be read as a first-order quantification; if it is inferred from (8), then it must be read as a higher-order quantification. But on the face of it, that is implausible. After all, we might assert (6) precisely because we know that one of (7) and (8) is true, but not which.

This is certainly an important objection, but I do not think that its target is really the first-order/higher-order distinction. The objection really enters the scene as soon as you reject the Standard View. In (7), '... is annoying Simon' predicates something of the person referred to by 'Daniel': it says of that person that he is annoying Simon. (That is what makes it possible to read (6) as an external, first-order quantification.) But if we reject the Standard View, then we cannot think of '... is annoying Simon' as playing the same role in (8): the 'that'-clause does not refer to anything, or even *purport* to refer to anything.[9] It seems, then, that we must distinguish between two readings of '... is annoying Simon', one for (7) and one for (8). And that in turn will force us to distinguish between two ways of reading (6), depending on whether it was inferred from (7) or from (8).

Now, you might think that all this shows that we should not give up on the Standard View in the first place. But that is a debate for another day. The important point here is that if we do reject the Standard View, as Hofweber advises us to, then there is no further objection to reading quantification 'over facts' or 'over propositions' as higher-order quantification.

5   Re-Reading *Structural Ineffability*

We can now distinguish *three* ways of reading quantification 'over facts'. The first two are Hofweber's: we could read it as external (first-order) quantification, or we

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[9]We can also safely assume that the 'that'-clause does not quantify over objects which might be said to be annoying Simon. (8) can be true even if no ordinary object is annoying Simon. So if the 'that'-clause did quantify over objects, then it would have to quantify over extraordinary objects, like facts and propositions. But the whole point of abandoning the Standard View is to get away from facts and propositions, thought of as kinds of object.

could read it as internal quantification. The third is the *sui generis* higher-order reading. If we read it in this third way, then *Structural Ineffability* becomes:

$\exists p$(Our forms of thought cannot represent that p).

We can then translate this back into natural English in one of these two ways:

There is way for things to be, such that our forms of thought cannot represent that things are that way.

It is not the case that however things might be, our forms of thought can represent that things are thus.

It was easy for Hofweber to argue that *Structural Ineffabiltiy* must be false when we read it as an internal quantification. But there is no similar easy argument to show that it must be false when we read it as a higher-order quantification. On the face of it, there is nothing obviously incoherent about the idea that there might be ways for things to be that we cannot represent with our forms of thought.

This is enough to undermine Hofweber's argument for idealism. If we are allowed to read quantification 'over facts' as disguised higher-order quantification — and Hofweber has not shown that we cannot — then even if we reject the Standard View, we can allow that there might be structurally ineffable facts. But now I want to go further. I want to argue that it is *better* to read quantification 'over facts' as higher-order quantification than as internal quantification. To see this, consider the following claim:

English Ineffability: Some fact cannot be expressed in present-day English.

English Ineffability seems hard to deny, even if you think that no fact is structurally ineffable. It seems intuitively correct to say that 1,000 years ago, no one could express modern quantum theory in any of the languages they spoke. Those languages just couldn't express concepts like *lepton* or *superposition*. By analogy, it seems inevitable that in 1,000 years time, there will be new theories which we cannot express in present-day English.

If we read *English Ineffability* as a higher-order quantification, then there is nothing stopping us from accepting it as true:

$\exists p$(Present-day English cannot express that p).

There is some way for things to be, such that present-day English cannot express that things are that way.

> It is not the case that however things might be, present-day English can express that things are thus.

However, if we read *English Ineffability* as an internal quantification, then it must be false:

$$\bigvee_p (\text{Present-day English cannot express that } p).$$

This is the infinite disjunction of English instances of 'Present-day English cannot express that p'. Since every disjunct is an *English* instance of this scheme, every disjunct is trivially false. So the disjunction as a whole is false.

Hofweber (2006, 2016a, 2016b: chs 9–10) is well aware that his way of understanding quantification 'over facts' has this surprising result. However, he argues that it is one of those surprising results that we should simply accept.[10] Present-day English is already powerful enough to express 31st Century physics. Those future physicists might be better than us in all sorts of ways, but, Hofweber insists, they are not better at expressing facts.

But now imagine a conversation between some future physicists. Hofweber claims that in so far as they are speaking meaningfully, we can translate everything they say into present-day English. And it may be that we can translate much of what they say: pleasantries about the weather, for example, might not pose any serious problems. But as the conversation turns technical, the things they say might resist translation. Hofweber is certainly not in a position to deny that this is how things might go. All he can do is insist that if what they say cannot be translated, then it isn't really meaningful. But it might be that the physicists carry on their conversation just as if they were speaking meaningfully. They might, for example, withhold from uttering a certain sentence until the right evidence came in. Or they might continue making inferences, and some of these inferences might involve sentences that we *can* translate as well as those we cannot. All of this would strongly suggest that they were speaking meaningfully, just in ways we cannot yet translate.

It is hard to see how Hofweber could rule out the possibility that this is how a 31st Century chat would go. Insisting that we read quantification 'over facts' internally certainly does nothing to legislate against it. And if this is how things

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[10]This is a bit of a simplification. As I mentioned in fn. 3, Hofweber's (2016b: ch. 9) full account of internal quantification is a little more complex than the one I have presented here. The complications allow Hofweber to simulate the effect of extending English by adding new names for every object to be named. But Hofweber stands by the claim that so extended, English can express every fact. For ease, I will set this complication to one side. After all, on the face of it there seem to be plenty of facts which English could not express even if we added all the names we could to it, like the facts discussed by physicists 1,000 years in the future. These are facts that we cannot express not because we are short on names, but because we lack the means to express certain concepts.

could go, then it would be implausible to maintain that English can express every fact, just as it stands. Crucially, though, we do not need to maintain that, even if we reject the Standard View. We can read *English Ineffability* as a true higher-order quantification, rather than a false internal one. But if that is how we read *English Ineffability*, then that is how we should read *Structural Ineffability* too.

6   The Prenective View

I said at the start of this paper that I had two aims. I have now finished with my first, purely negative, aim, which was to undermine Hofweber's argument for idealism. Now I want to move onto my second, more positive, aim. I will argue that rather than forcing us into Hofweber's idealism, rejecting the Standard View can lead us to a kind of *direct realism* about belief.

The first step in this argument is to pick up an issue which Hofweber set aside: If we reject the Standard View, and deny that 'that'-clauses refer to objects, then what *should* we say they do? In what follows, I will focus on 'that'-clauses as they appear in belief attributions, such as:

(9a) Simon believes that Sharon is funny.

Exactly the same remarks would apply to the attributions of other propositional attitudes, but it is less clear whether it would apply to other uses of 'that'-clauses. Fortunately, however, for our purposes it will suffice to deal exclusively with belief.

Recall that on the Standard View, (9a) should be parsed as follows:

[Simon] believes [that Sharon is funny].

Here we are supposed to have two singular terms, 'Simon' and 'that Sharon is funny', and a two-place predicate joining them together, 'x believes y'; the idea is that 'Simon' refers to a thinking subject, 'that Sharon is funny' refers to the proposition that Sharon is funny, and 'x believes y' expresses the *believing* relation that holds between them.

How should we read (9a) if we reject the Standard View? I think we can make a good start by following Prior (1971: ch. 2), who parsed (9a) as follows:
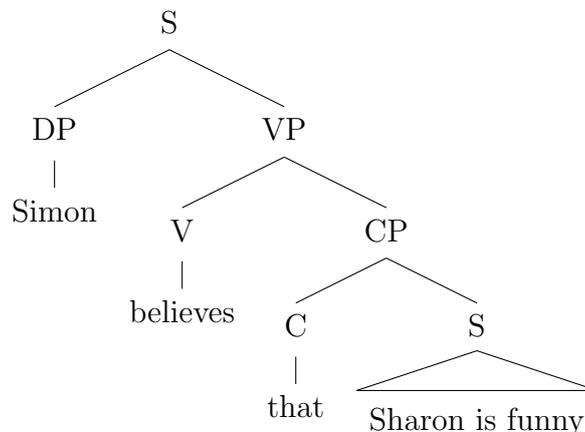
[Simon] believes that [Sharon is funny].

Now we have a singular term, 'Simon', a sentence 'Sharon is funny', and what is sometimes called a *prenective* joining them together, 'x believes that p'. ('x believes that p' is called a 'prenective' because it behaves like a predicate at one end, and

a sentential connective on the other: the x marks an argument place for a singular term, whereas the p marks an argument place for a sentence.[11]) When we read (9a) in this way, we neatly avoid the reification of propositions. There is no term referring to a proposition in (9a). Instead of getting at the content of Simon's belief by using a term to refer to a proposition, we simply use the sentence 'Sharon is funny' to express that content for ourselves.

Prior's *Prenective View* is a simple, philosophically attractive alternative to the Standard View. Unfortunately, however, it is almost certainly false. According to Prior, 'that Sharon is funny' does not appear as a syntactic unit in (9a). But it certainly seems to. We can, for example, transform (9a) into (9b):

(9b) That Sharon is funny is what Simon believes.

When we move from (9a) to (9b), the 'that' follows 'Sharon is funny'; it does not stick where it is, on the other side of 'believes'. And as Künne (2003: 68–9) points out, this strongly suggests that 'that Sharon is funny' does appear as a syntactic unit.[12] What is more, this suggestion has been taken up by empirical linguists. They standardly represent (9a) with the following phrase structure tree:[13]


In this tree, the sentence 'Sharon is funny' is first combined with the complementiser 'that', and then the whole complement phrase 'that Sharon is funny' is combined with the verb 'believes'. It is then easy to transform this into a tree for the relative clause 'what Simon believes':

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[11]It was Künne (2003: 68) who first coined the word 'prenective'.

[12]This is a point to which I was insufficiently sensitive in my (2018a). The rest of this section should be seen as a correction to that paper.

[13]For an excellent textbook introduction to phrase structure trees, see: Heim and Kratzer 1998.

NP

wh$_1$ S

DP   VP

Simon   V t_1

believes
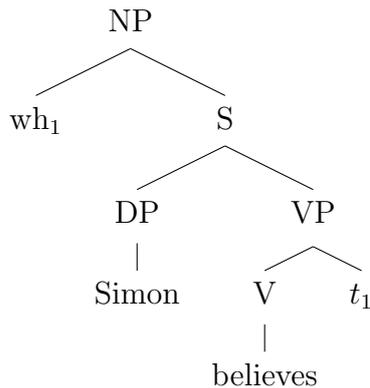
In this tree, 'wh$_1$' binds the trace 't_1', and importantly, that trace replaces the *entire* complement phrase 'that Sharon is funny'.

This is certainly a serious problem for Prior's version of the Prenective View, but I do not think it requires rejecting it entirely. We just need to tweak it slightly. I want to propose a new version of the view, which concedes to the Standard View that 'that Sharon is funny' *is* a syntactic unit, but denies that it functions as a singular term. Instead, my version of the Prenective View has it that 'that Sharon is funny' functions as a *sentence* in (9a). In other words, this use of the complementiser 'that' is semantically vacuous, and 'that Sharon is funny' has exactly the same sense as 'Sharon is funny': 'that Sharon is funny' is there to express a claim about how things are, just like the unadorned sentence 'Sharon is funny'; they both simply say that Sharon is funny.[14]

Just like Prior's original version of the Prenective View, this way of reading (9a) breaks it down into a term, a sentence and a prenective. The only difference is that Prior took the prenective to be 'x believes that p', whereas I take it to be 'x believes p'. On a purely syntactic level, 'that Sharon is funny' is a complement clause, not a sentence. But on my view, this a syntactic distinction without a semantic difference. So 'x believes p' counts as a prenective, because it combines with a term on the left, and something with the semantic role of a sentence on the right.[15]

There is no obvious contradiction between this new version of the Prenective View and empirical linguistics. It is certainly not a given that if 'that Sharon is funny' is a syntactic unit, then it functions as a singular term. It is philosophers, not linguists, who make that jump. Of course, what is true is that linguists standardly assign entities they call 'propositions' (which are normally just functions from indices to truth-values) to 'that'-clauses as their semantic values. But as Hofweber

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[14]To be clear, this is a claim about the role of 'that'-clauses in propositional attitude reports only. I do not mean to make any claim about how they function elsewhere in this paper.

[15]In the terminology of (Trueman 2018b), (9a) is a result of sense-substituting 'Sharon is funny' for 'p' in 'Simon believes p', even if it is not a result of the corresponding simple-substitution.

(2016b: 210–4) rightly emphasises, it is a big leap from there to the conclusion that 'that'-clauses are singular terms which refer to those semantic values.[16] Indeed, it is also common to assign the very same semantic values to sentences themselves, but no one would take that as proof that sentences are a kind of singular term.

The semantic value of an expression is meant to encode the *semantic role* of that expression, i.e. the contribution which that expression makes to the truth-values of the sentences in which it appears. So when we say that the semantic value of a 'that'-clause is a certain function from indices to truth-values, we are saying that the semantic role of that 'that'-clause can somehow be extracted from the fact that it has that function as its value. When we then deny that 'that'-clauses *refer* to their values, we are denying that a sentence which *uses* a 'that'-clause thereby *says something about* the semantic value of that 'that'-clause.[17] (9a), for example, does not express a relation between Simon and the semantic value of 'that Sharon is funny'. What it expresses is a relation between Simon and a way for things to be, the way expressed by 'Sharon is funny'.

At this point, though, you may wonder why we bother turning sentences into 'that'-clauses if I am right, and 'that' is semantically vacuous. But it may be that 'that' has a useful *non-semantic* role to play. If nothing else, 'that' certainly plays a useful *syntactic* role. By attaching 'that' to 'Sharon is funny' in (9a), we indicate that 'Sharon is funny' appears as the complement to 'believes', rather than as a free standing sentence. Now, this may not seem all that helpful when we focus on sentences like (9a), since the word order also makes it clear that this is how 'Sharon is funny' appears. But its utility quickly becomes evident when we consider sentences like (9b), where word order is not such a helpful guide.

I want to recommend this version of the Prenective View to anyone who rejects the Standard View. What do 'that'-clauses do if they do not refer to propositions? They do exactly what sentences do! I will not try to offer much by way of argument for this recommendation here. (I present my arguments in: Trueman 2018a.) I simply intend to explore what happens next if we accept it. However, I hope that the attractions of the Prenective View will be obvious to anyone who is in the market for an alternative to the Standard View. In fact, it is worth remarking that it fits quite well with what Hofweber says about 'that'-clauses:

> On the face of it ['that'-clauses] do not stand for an object, but specify
> the content of a belief. They do not refer to the content, but say or
> specify what that content is. (Hofweber 2016b: 205)[18]

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[16]Rosefeldt (2008: 318 & 325) also makes this point.
[17]For similar remarks, see: Grover 1992a: 140–3.
[18]A similar view of 'that'-clauses is suggested by McKinsey (1999) and Rosefeldt (2008).

7 The Identity Theory of Truth

In this section, I will argue that if we accept the Prenective View, then we will be led to a kind of direct realism about belief. The first step is to ask how an advocate of the Prenective View should define truth. Ramsey provided us with the natural way of defining truth for beliefs in his unfinished manuscript *On Truth* (1991: 9):

(T) x has a true belief $\leftrightarrow \exists p(x$ believes that $p \wedge p)$.

It is not only the advocates of the Prenective View who might want to define truth with (T). In fact, anyone who is happy with higher-order quantification should be happy with this definition. It is just a higher-order formalisation of the truism that for someone to have a true belief, they must believe that things are the way that they are. However, exactly how you should *understand* (T) will depend on whether you subscribe to the Standard View or the Prenective View.[19]

Consider the following two questions we might ask about someone's belief:

(i) What does x believe?

(ii) How must things be for x's belief to be true?

If we read (T) in accordance with the Standard View, then we will give these questions two different answers: we will answer the first question by referring to a proposition with a singular term, 'that p'; we will answer the second question by expressing a way for things to be with a whole a sentence, 'p'. This is the difference between referring to the proposition that Sharon is funny, and actually saying that Sharon is funny.

But if we read (T) in accordance with the Prenective View, then we will give (i) and (ii) exactly the same answer. On the Prenective View, 'that p' is not a term referring to a proposition. There is no semantic difference between 'that p' and 'p': they both simply express ways for things to be. So setting aside a purely syntactic distinction, p is both what x believes, and how things have to be for that belief to be true. Or to put it another way: saying what x believes is itself a matter of saying how things must be for x's belief to be true.

By giving the same answer to (i) and (ii), advocates of the Prenective View subscribe to a version of the *identity theory of truth*. Now admittedly, it is not

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[19]Künne (2003: §6.2) advocates a similar definition of truth, precisely on the grounds that it is just a formalised platitude. However, Künne reads (T) in accordance with the Standard View. Rumfitt also defends this definition of truth in his (2014), although in that paper he takes no stance on whether we should read it in accordance with the Standard View or the Prenective View; however, his remarks in (Rumfitt 2016) suggest that he may prefer the latter.

quite the *classical* version of the identity theory. The classical theory deals with propositions, and gets its name by *identifying* true propositions with facts. But by rejecting the Standard View, we have set facts and propositions to one side.[20] However, we still have a version of the identity theory: on the Prenective View, if x has a true belief, then what x believes is a way things are. McDowell articulates the core of this identity theory as follows:

> there is no ontological gap between the sort of thing one can mean, or generally the sort of thing one can think, and the sort of thing that can be the case. When one thinks truly, what one thinks is what *is* the case. So since the world is everything that is the case [...], there is no gap between thought, as such, and the world. (McDowell 1994: 27)

This version of the identity theory is, I contend, a form of direct realism applied to belief. This might initially be a little surprising. When people are first introduced to the identity theory, they often accuse it of being a version of idealism. The argument runs as follows:

> On one very influential conception, the world is all that is the case.[21] We might equivalently say that the world is all the ways things are. But on the identity theory, *ways things are* are the type of thing that can be thought. In that sense, they *are* thoughts. So the world is a totality of thoughts. What clearer statement of idealism could there be?

There is absolutely nothing wrong with this train of thought, *except* the suggestion that it leads us to a version of idealism. The first thing that needs to emphasise is that there is an important difference between *acts* of thinking, and the things which *can be thought*. Here is Hornsby on this distinction:

> Someone who objects to [the identity theory] supposes that, by denying any gap between thought and the world, one commits oneself to a sort of idealism. But such an objector confuses people's thinkings of things with the contents of their thoughts. If one says that there is no ontological gap between thoughts and what is the case, meaning by 'thoughts' cognitive activity on the part of beings such as ourselves, then one is indeed

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[20]Or at least, we have set facts and propositions *thought of as kinds of object* to one side. I would be pleased to reclaim talk about facts and propositions as a handy, rough-and-ready way of translating higher-order quantification into natural language.

[21]This is the Tractarian conception of the world (1922: 1). Hofweber (forthcoming: 5) also makes use of this conception of the world, but he is keen to emphasise that this is just one legitimate conception, no better or worse than a conception of the world as a totality of *things* rather than facts.

committed to a sort of idealism: one has to allow that nothing would be the case unless there were cognitive activity — that there could not be a mindless world. But someone who means by 'thoughts' the contents of such activity, and who denies a gap between thoughts and what is the case, suggests only that what someone thinks can be the case. (Hornsby 1997: 1–2)

Ways things are are 'thoughts' only in the sense that they are the type of thing which can be thought. Following McDowell (1994: 28), we might call them *thinkables*. But even this label needs to be treated with care. As I emphasised in §5, there is nothing incoherent in the suggestion that there are ways for things to be which humans simply cannot think. Now, maybe we can grant that with enough idealisation, each way for things to be could be thought by some possible agent or other. But that is not part and parcel of the Prenective View. We could endorse that view, and the identity theory which flows out of it, and still insist that some ways for things to be simply could not be thought by anyone at all. Ways for things to be are 'thinkables' only in the sense that they are the *type* of thing which can be thought, and by 'type' I mean *logical type*: we express ways for things to be with whole sentences, and we also use whole sentences to express what people believe.

Very well, according to the identity theory, the world is a totality of thinkables. How is *that* not a statement of idealism? It is at this point that it becomes helpful to compare the Prenective View with *direct realism* about perception. I have in mind here the kind of direct realism which opposes the sense-data theory. According to the sense-data theory, we perceive the objects in our environment only indirectly; the direct objects of perception are sense-data, which somehow represent the worldly objects. Direct realism is a rejection of this picture of perception. According to direct realism, perception is a direct relation between the perceiver and the objects in their environment, without any representational intermediaries.[22]

The Standard View is a lot like the sense-data theory. To have a belief is to take a stand on how things are. If Simon believes that Sharon is funny, he takes a stand on whether Sharon is funny; his belief is right iff things are a certain way — in this case, iff Sharon is funny. But on the Standard View, belief is not a direct relation between Simon and this way for things to be. It is a direct relation between Simon and a special object, called a 'proposition'. Somehow, standing in the *believing* relation to this proposition amounts to taking a stand on whether Sharon is funny.

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[22]For careful discussion of different senses in which perception might be 'direct', see (Foster 2000: ch. 2). On Foster's taxonomy, I have *weak direct realism* in mind. Modern naïve realism (Martin 1997; Campbell 2002: ch. 6; Fish 2009) and intentionalism (Tye 1995; Siegel 2010) both count as types of direct realism in this sense.

This is, presumably, because the proposition *represents* Sharon as being funny, and so is true iff she is funny.

You might think that we could turn the Standard View into a version of direct realism, simply by identifying facts with true propositions. (This is the classical version of the identity theory that I mentioned earlier.) A true belief that Sharon is funny would then be a direct relation to the *fact* that Sharon is funny.[23] However, the belief would remain at one remove from *how things are with Sharon.* By closing the gap between facts and true propositions, we open a new gap between facts and the way things are. Now, that might sound a little strange, since 'a way things are' is precisely what a fact is meant to be. But it is important to remember that, on the Standard View, propositions are objects. So by identifying facts with true propositions, we treat facts as objects too. And as I emphasised in §4, 'a way things are' is not an object we *refer* to with a singular term; it is what we *express* with a whole sentence. Thought of as an object, the fact that Sharon is funny can only *represent* how things are with Sharon: it represents her as being funny, by being true/a fact iff she is funny.[24]

To get a theory of belief which is truly analogous to direct realism, we need to turn to the Prenective View. On the Prenective View, belief is not a relation to a proposition. 'x believes that p' has two arguments. The 'x' stands for a believer, and according to the Prenective View, 'that p' expresses a way for things to be. 'x believes that p' thus expresses a direct relationship between a believer and a way for things to be. To have a true belief that Sharon is funny is not to stand in a relation to a proposition which represents how Sharon is; it is to stand in a *direct* relation to how Sharon is. So on the Prenective View, thinkables are not propositions, special representational objects which depict ways for things to be. Thinkables *are* ways for things to be.[25]

If we conceived of thinkables in the way that the Standard View told us to, as propositions which represent ways for things to be, then to assert that the world is a totality of thinkables would be to subscribe to a form of idealism. This idealism would trade the external world for mere representations. That is not only a type of idealism, it is dubiously coherent. Propositions are meant to represent ways for

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[23]Thanks to Hofweber for suggesting this to me. The following remarks apply equally to Speaks' (King et al 2014: ch. 5) proposal that we identify the proposition that p with the property *being such that p.*

[24]See (Johnston (2013: §5) for related discussion.

[25]Of course, it may be that in order to have a belief, your brain has to be in a certain representational state. But the point here is that your belief is not a relation to that representational state, or to any other representation. It is a relation to a way for things to be, the way represented by the brain state.

things in the world to be. But if we then identify the world itself with a totality of propositions, what is there left for these propositions to represent?

However, the identity theory that we are interested in is the identity theory which flows out of the Prenective View. And if we conceive of thinkables in the way that the Prenective View tells us to, then there is nothing idealistic in the claim that the world is a totality of thinkables. Thinkables are *themselves* worldly. They are ways for things to be. The identity theorist is not, then, trading the external world for mere representations. The identity theorist is rejecting the idea that belief is a relation to mere representations. If you have a true belief, then you stand in a direct relation to how things are, without any representational intermediaries. To steal a remark from Wittgenstein:

> When we say, and *mean*, that such-and-such is the case, we — and our meanings — do not stop anywhere short of the fact; but we mean: *this-is-so*. (Wittgenstein 1953: §95)

8 Conclusion

I had two aims for this paper. First, I wanted to undermine Hofweber's argument for idealism. He claimed that if you reject the Standard View, then you will be compelled to read quantification 'over facts' internally, and this in turn will lead to a version of idealism. However, I argued that even if we reject the Standard View, we can read quantification 'over facts' as a variety of higher-order quantification. If we do, then we will not be forced down the path to idealism.

Although I do not think that Hofweber's argument for idealism was successful, I do think that it was based on an important insight: rejecting the Standard View has important metaphysical consequences. My second aim for this paper was to present an alternative path to Hofweber's, one which starts with a rejection of the Standard View, but ends with a kind of direct realism about belief. If we abandon the Standard View, then we have to put *something* in its place. The Prenective View is an attractive candidate. And if we accept the Prenective View, then we are led to a version of the identity theory of truth, which in turn is best thought of as a brand of direct realism.

I should be clear that I have not tried to argue for this form of identity-theory-meets-direct-realism in this paper. Like Hofweber, I have not presented any of the arguments against the Standard View here. Nor have I tried to suggest that the Prenective View is the *only* alternative to the Standard View.[26] I have only tried

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[26]Moltmann (2003, 2013: ch. 4) has suggested that we should resuscitate a version of Russell's

to trace the metaphysical consequences of replacing the Standard View with the Prenective alternative.

I should also admit now that there are many unanswered questions about the identity theory of truth. The most important of these concern *false* beliefs. It is all well and good saying that having a *true* belief is a matter of standing in a direct relation to a way things are. But what is involved in having a *false* belief? What, if anything, are we in a direct relation to then?

At this point, we might pursue the analogy with direct realism about perception further, and try a kind of *disjunctivism* about belief: true beliefs are direct relations to ways things are, but false beliefs are not direct relations to anything. But if, like me, you would prefer a uniform account of belief, then it would be better to say that belief in general is a direct relation to ways for things to be: true beliefs are direct relations to ways things *are*; false beliefs are direct relations to ways things *aren't*. Grass is not blue, but 'Grass is blue' still expresses a way for things to be. And if you believe that grass is blue, then it is that way for things to be, a way things aren't but could have been, that you stand in the *believing* relation to.

Of course, many philosophers will find it difficult to stomach this kind of realism about *ways things aren't*. But whether or not it turns out to be too extreme, the important point for now is just that the Prenective View has led us to a kind of realism, not idealism.

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