

Review of Stephan Krämer's *On What There Is For Things To Be*

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Here is an inference: Simon is funny; Daniel is funny; so, there is something for an object to be which Simon and Daniel both are. And here is another inference: Simon is funny; Daniel is funny; so there is some property which Simon and Daniel both have. There is a long history of philosophers trying to assimilate the first of these inferences to the second: really, the first inference is just a misleading formulation of the second, or at the very least, the conclusion of the second inference more perspicuously displays the ontological commitments of the conclusion of the first. But now things have started to change. More and more philosophers are willing to grant that *second-order* quantification, quantification into the positions of predicates (or their natural language counterparts), is a legitimate *sui generis* kind of quantification, not to be reduced to *first-order* quantification, quantification into the positions of singular terms. Stephan Krämer's book is an important contribution to this change.

The purpose of this book is to defend the coherence of what Krämer calls *second-orderism*: 'second-order quantifications do not carry the same ontological commitments as their first-order counterparts' (p. 25). It is important to emphasise that Krämer only hopes to defend the coherence of second-orderism; he does not aim to offer any substantial argument *for* second-orderism (p. 28). In fact, as Krämer later tells us (pp. 211–2 & 239), he only really hopes to show that second-orderism is coherent *by the second-orderist's lights*: if you are already sympathetic to second-orderism then this book will reaffirm your sympathies, but if you started off suspicious of second-order quantification then you may find yourself unmoved by what Krämer has to say. There is a sense, then, in which Krämer's ambitions are quite modest. But that certainly does not make his book any less worthwhile. There has always been a suspicion that second-orderism is *internally* incoherent, a suspicion fuelled by puzzles like Frege's paradox of the concept *horse*, and so there is real value to Krämer's internal defence.

The book comes in two parts. Second-orderism is only really broached in Part II. Before that, in Part I, Krämer focusses on the very idea of ontological commitment. My most substantial criticism of the book concerns this arrangement. It is of course easy to see why one might want to begin a book on the ontological commitments of second-order quantification with a discussion of ontological commitment in general, and everything Krämer says in Part I is very plausible and very carefully worked through; however, it

is not clear to me that everything dealt with in Part I is needed for Krämer's eventual defence of second-orderism. Chapters 2 to 4 are mostly spent developing a number of different criteria for ontological commitment: criteria for explicit theories, criteria for ordinary theories, criteria that seem like sensible explications of Quine's criterion, and fully general criteria that we could apply to any language whatsoever. However, only one of these criteria re-appears even once in Part II (p. 210), and I suspect that Krämer could still have made his point if he had stuck to a more intuitive, rough-and-ready version of this criterion. Similarly, Chapter 2 ends with precise formulations of what second-orderism amounts to (pp. 71–6), but these precise formulations do not re-appear in Part II at all. However, I want to be clear that I am not saying that none of Part I is needed for Krämer's defence of second-orderism. Most notable here is his distinction between *subject matter relations* and *semantic auxiliaries* (pp. 123–32), which plays an important role later on (pp. 206–11).

In Part II, Krämer defends second-orderism from three objections: *Translation*, according to which we can only understand second-order quantifications by translating them as first-order quantifications (chs 5–6); *Nominality*, according to which variables can only occur in term-position (ch. 7); and *Objectuality*, according to which second-order quantification may well be *sui generis*, but it is still quantification over objects that can also be quantified over with first-order quantifiers (chs 7–8). In the course of defending second-orderism, Krämer builds on the work of a number of other philosophers, including Boolos, Rayo and Yablo. One of the great virtues of this book is the way in which Krämer manages to present the ideas of these other philosophers more clearly than they did themselves (see esp. chs 5–6). What is more, he also develops those ideas further than anyone else I can think of, adding his own insights as he goes along (see esp. chs 7–8). The result is a coherent and compelling defence of second-orderism. I would certainly recommend this book to any philosopher who was interested in ontological commitment or second-order logic, and given its clarity, I would recommend Part II to students as well.